

# **Keeping it 'Tidy': Maintaining Order in a Welsh Local Prison**

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## Abstract

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This thesis explores the maintenance of order in the contemporary British prison. The data presented here was collected during an extensive period of fieldwork in HMP Cardiff, a Category B male local prison in South Wales, UK. With the prison remaining steadfast in its position as the cornerstone of modern penality, it is vital that research continues to explore what it is like to be in a prison, what it is like to work in a prison, and how the prison functions on a daily basis. I spent one year conducting qualitative, ethnographic-style research to gain an insight into precisely these questions. This thesis converses with established thinking in the field of prison studies, applying existing conceptualisations of prisoner compliance, prison pains, and forms of prison officer authority to HMP Cardiff specifically. Informed by distinctively deep and long-term immersion in the field, I provide a unique analysis of the mundane rules of prison order and the mutual, if asymmetrical, interdependence of groups residing and working in a closed institution. I evidence that HMP Cardiff is relatively well-ordered, partly due to its retention of highly experienced officers. I then examine the circumstances in which prisoners might be more (or less) likely to comply with prison rules and consider the role that officers play in shaping daily prison life. I then explore the experiences of a particular group of prisoners that occupy a relatively privileged position and which have been neglected in much previous research-theorising – wing workers. I show that demonstrating obedience can significantly decrease the intensity of the modern pains of imprisonment, particularly for these wing workers. I conclude by recognising the permanence of the superordinate officer-subordinate prisoner relationship and suggest that there are certain conditions in which the prison environment is more likely to be humane, legitimate and well-ordered.

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## Fieldnote and Quotation Conventions

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Pseudonyms have been assigned to all participants.

All participants offering written memoirs provided self-assigned pseudonyms.

Where participants referred to others by name, these have been anonymised within the text using 'X' in all instances.

Where participants referred to places and other establishments, these have been removed and replaced with generic terms.

Images of original hand-written data provided by participants have been anonymised.

'Participants quoting other people'.

"Words used by participants".

Data arising from prisoner group interviews denoted as 'Prisoner Group Interview', and participants have not been disaggregated nor assigned pseudonyms.

Data arising from interviews with more than one participant denoted as 'ad hoc joint interview', and participants have been disaggregated and assigned pseudonyms.

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## Abbreviations and Prison Argot

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1s/the ones: First landing/floor on a wing

2s/the twos: Second landing/floor on a wing

3s/the threes: Third landing/floor on a wing

4s/the fours: Fourth landing/floor on a wing

ACCT: Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork Assessment and Care Plan for prisoners at risk of suicide or self-harm

App: Application forms submitted by prisoners to obtain goods and services, such as telephone numbers added to their accounts and catalogue orders; as well as applications for resettlement services such as housing

AQR: Association for Qualitative Research

Bang-up: Period of time when all prisoners locked in their cells

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

BICS: British Institute of Cleaning Service. Shorthand for the training that prisoners must complete prior to beginning work as a cleaner, entitled 'Cleaning Operators Proficiency Training'.

Bird Killer: The experience of time passing rapidly during a prison sentence

Bird: Time spent in prison, 'doing bird', similar to the popular 'doing time'

BME: Black or Minority Ethnic

Bobby: Coffee

Borstal Whistle: The practice of emitting a loud squeaky whistle around the wing using folded paper during bang-up

BSC: British Society of Criminology

Burn, Baccy: Tobacco

Business Hub: Prison administration Department

C&R: Control and Restraint

Canteen: Weekly service allowing prisoners to purchase everyday items such as toiletries, snacks and books

CARATS: Counselling Assessment Referral Advice and Throughcare, providing substance misuse support

Catalogue: Catalogue of items available for prisoners to purchase, including shoes and electronic items

CC: Cellular Confinement

CCTV: Closed-Circuit Television

Chopsy: Welsh vernacular for cocky, talkative

CM: Custodial Manager

C-NOMIS: Computer-National Offender Management Information System

Co-D: Fellow prisoner that is the co-defendant in a criminal case

Con: Slang for Prisoner, usually adopted by officers

Core Day: Prison regime

CSRA: Cell Sharing Risk Assessment

CSU/Seg: Care and Separation Unit, also known as Segregation Unit

Custody Compact: Contract between the prisoner and the institution, setting out behavioural expectations for prisoners and what prisoners can expect of the establishment

Detox Unit: Wing designated for prisoners undergoing detoxification from substances

Double Bubble: The doubling of debt owed, usually in reference to tobacco

E-man: Prisoners deemed at high risk of escape, placed on the Escape List and dressed in bright stripy clothing

ESRC: Economic and Social Research Council

Fraggles: Slang term for prisoners housed on the vulnerable prisoners wing

General Alarm: Alarm sounded throughout entire establishment in the event of a serious incident

GOAD: Good Order and Discipline

Grassing; Snitching: Informing officers about the behaviour of another prisoner

Greens: Green work clothing worn by wing workers whilst cleaning

HMIP: Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons

HMP: Her Majesty's Prison

HMPPS: Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service

HMPS: Her Majesty's Prison Service

Hot Plate: Food servery on each wing

IEP: Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme

IMB: Independent Monitoring Board

Listeners/Peer Advisers: Prisoners working with The Samaritans and St Giles Trust, respectively, to provide support to fellow inmates

Lock-down: All prisoners locked in their cells during or in anticipation of an incident

MDT: Mandatory Drug Testing

MoJ: Ministry of Justice

MQPL: Measuring Quality of Prison Life survey

**Napalming:** Throwing boiling water mixed with sugar over another inmate. The addition of sugar makes the mixture stick to the skin and intensifies burns.

**Negative:** A negative entry on a prisoners' sentence report on C-NOMIS that will accompany him throughout his sentence

**Nicked/Nicking:** Called to a formal adjudication hearing

**NOMS:** National Offender Management Service

**Number One wing worker:** chief wing worker, in charge of all other workers on each wing

**NVQ:** National Vocational Qualification

**NWOW:** New Ways of Working. Government initiative introduced within prisons in 2013 designed to make prisons work more efficiently

**OMU:** Offender Management Unit

**Orderly:** Prisoner employed to clean and maintain a designated area of the prison, such as the chapel or prisoner reception

**OSG:** Operational Support Grade prison officer

**PACT:** Prison Advice and Care Trust, a national charity providing advice for prisoners and their families

**Pad mate:** Cell mate

**Personal Spends:** Account which includes money sent in from the outside or in a prisoners' possession at reception into the institution. Also known as 'private spends'

**Peta Thief:** Cell burglar

**PINS:** Prisoner telephone system. Prisoners are given a unique PIN number when they arrive in the establishment to allow them to make calls to the outside world using the on-wing telephones. Telephone numbers must be approved in advance by the Security department in the prison. Wing staff may assist prisoners by following-up on telephone number approval (aka 'PINS') applications.

**POA:** Prison Officers Association

**PPE:** Personal Protective Equipment

**PSI:** Prison Service Instruction

**Red Band Prisoner:** Prisoner permitted to clean and work unsupervised in areas where inmates are not usually allowed unattended, such as The Centre

**Roll count/Roll call:** Count to check all prisoners accounted for

**Roll-call:** All prisoners counted, and numbers reported to the Centre at the end of the day shift and following incidents

**Screw boy:** A prisoner that is viewed by other prisoners to be particularly close with prison officers

**Screw:** Slang for Prison Officer, usually adopted by prisoners

**Shipped out:** Transferred to another prison

**Shops:** Workshops

**Skins:** Cigarette papers

SMT: Senior Management Team

SO: Senior Officer

Soc: Association

Spending Account: Account containing money earned through in-prison employment

Spooning: Retrieving drugs or other items forcefully from another inmate's anus using an implement such as a spoon

The Centre: The central landing in the prison. Residential wings A and B radiate from this landing. Also houses the central control room where the incident book is held and from which the Duty Governor works and records prisoner roll-calls and daily occurrences

Tidy: Positive affirmation, Welsh term for good, respectful

Twoed up: In a two-man cell with a fellow prisoner

UK: United Kingdom

UoF: Use of Force

VEDS: Prison officer Voluntary Redundancy scheme

Whites: White work clothing worn by wing workers whilst working on the servery

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## Dedication

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Sarah, the wisest, kindest and bravest woman I have ever known

1959 – 2016

and to my father, Chris, my dearest Daddy, my champion

1956 - 2019

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Mum, Dad – I did it!



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# Chapter One: Introduction

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## 1.1 Crossing the Threshold

*On arrival in the prison, I aim to act as confidently as possible when handing over my mobile phone and explaining that “I am doing research here, but I don’t have a locker” quickly adding “I draw keys” and proceeding to fish my prison issue key-belt out of my bag as evidence of my right to set foot in the prison. At this point I usually receive a satisfied nod and my phone is locked away for the day. Thankfully, as time has progressed my presence is questioned less and less by staff working on the gate as I begin to become a ‘known’ entity in the institution. Sometimes, however, I may still be asked to sign in, to explain further who I am, what I am doing and with whom I am meeting. On these occasions, it is presumed that I have a scheduled meeting with a prisoner or member of staff as opposed to being able to come and go as I please – a privilege that I am continually earning throughout my time conducting research in Cardiff.*

*Once this initial access has been negotiated, I must then proceed through the double-doored security gate. I walk up to the first door, smiling at the guard, trying to reassure them (and myself) of my right to be there. Slowly the doors will open, and I will be admitted into the small security holding room. The door will scrape closed behind me and I will be enclosed for a few seconds, holding my belt in full view, trying to show that I have done this many times before. The second door will then slide open and I will be admitted into the prison-proper. The next stage of the obstacle-course is to draw my keys. After clumsily securing my key belt around my waist, fighting with the chain which insists on becoming tangled on a daily basis, I will touch the finger-print scanner and wait to be recognised and verified (a moment which unfailingly makes me hold my breath as a wave of imposter syndrome takes hold – ‘am I really here, doing research in the prison?'). As the green light flashes and I breathe a momentary sight of relief, I then have up to 20 seconds to open the key cabinet door, press the button to withdraw my keys from the highlighted spot and close the door fully; all under the watchful eye of the gate staff, a CCTV camera, and without setting the prison-wide alarm off. I can then attach my keys to my key belt and continue on my way up to the ‘Business Hub’ - a maze of several corridors home to all manner of important people including the ‘number one’ (the prison governor) and key operational and administration staff. I make my*

*way to 'my' office, greeting various members of staff along the way, to drop my belongings before heading on to the wings.*

- Fieldnotes, March 2015

This fieldnotes excerpt was written three months into my doctoral fieldwork undertaken in HMP Cardiff, a male Category B local public prison in South Wales. This thesis is the culmination of the year I spent conducting fieldwork in Cardiff prison to explore the informal and formal mechanisms that serve to maintain order. The use of the word 'tidy' in this thesis title, a Welsh colloquialism for 'good', reflects both the context of the research and its focus. It is a term that appears several times in this thesis, being used by my participants to describe people and relationships, but it can also be used to describe a place: people can be 'tidy' (polite, respectful), and a prison can be 'tidy' (well-ordered). HMP Cardiff was found, at the time of my fieldwork, to exist in a state of relatively good order, with order being defined as a situation comprised of orderly social relations, as outlined below in section 1.3. The contextual and empirical chapters that follow explore why this might be so.

The above fieldnotes excerpt has been included for several reasons. Firstly, it provides a descriptive point of entry into the prison world, and this research, for those that have not previously set foot inside the walls of a prison. Secondly, it provides a crucial reminder of the culture of surveillance that pervades the prison. Whilst I was observing and trying to make sense of what was happening around me, I was also constantly being watched and judged, whether by cameras, security staff, officers, or prisoners. This persistent observation is something that prisoners must endure daily. Thirdly, the above fieldnotes demonstrate that doing research in the prison can be a highly emotional endeavour (see Liebling 1999; Jewkes 2011). So why did I do it?

## 1.2 The Context

I first became interested in places of human confinement during my employment as a carer for adults with mental illnesses at the age of 18. This care home was in many ways a 'total institution' (Goffman 1961, see chapter two below) in that it was a secure and closed institution containing individuals living to a set regime with barriers to contact with the outside world. Something of a paradox existed in that residents were supposedly able to move around the complex freely, yet locked doors prevented free movement and only I and other staff members possessed keys. In addition, residents were supposedly able to leave whenever they wanted to, yet if they did leave the grounds, we as staff were required to inform the police, find absconders and return them to their residential area. On the one hand these individuals were confined under the Mental Health Act and could be legally detained within this tightly controlled environment. On the other hand there was a pervading discourse surrounding freedom and autonomy. It was only after beginning my

Undergraduate Criminology degree that I truly began to reflect upon my time as a carer; and the significance of some of things that I had witnessed and participated in. I became aware of my own feelings of discomfort surrounding human confinement and enforced estrangement from loved ones, and, in studying a criminology course with strong sociological groundings, my interest turned to the prison.

I can vividly remember the first time that I crossed the threshold of HMP Cardiff. It was 17<sup>th</sup> June 2011 and I was nearing the end of my second year of my BSc in Criminology. I had been invited to attend an interview for a Dissertation placement within the prison. On this day I was met at the prison gate by an officer, along with my Dissertation Supervisor and a handful of other students applying for the placement. We were chaperoned to the interview room within the Security portacabin in the main yard – a journey that I would eventually make alone many, many times over the next few years. After passing through from the ‘sterile area’<sup>1</sup> into the main yard we were met with shouts, leering and wolf-whistles from the dozens of men that could see us through the barred windows on their cells. I remember looking up in a vain attempt to see inside the cells and put faces to the voices that I could hear – something that I continued to do every time I made this journey through the yard. Over time, the wolf-whistles and shouts lessened but did not cease, and they became peppered with shouts of my own name as I became more well-known to the prisoner population during my PhD fieldwork. Shortly after my placement interview, I was delighted to learn that I had been successful and that I would soon begin my research journey in Cardiff prison, commencing in October 2011.

In 2012 I submitted my Undergraduate Dissertation, entitled “Reducing Re-offending through Prisoner Education: The Impact of Age and Disability”, for which I used a prison-wide paper survey and semi-structured interviews to collect my data. At this point I was already in possession of my own set of keys, however I seldomly walked around the prison un-escorted. During my Masters level research, I again carried keys and was afforded slightly more ‘freedom’ with the prison. In September 2013 I submitted my MSc Dissertation, entitled: “What does a ‘decent prison’ look like? The Practical Implications of the Decency Agenda in HMP Cardiff”, for which I used focus groups with staff and prisoners as my core method of data collection. It was only upon commencing my PhD research that I was able to move wholly freely around the institution, coming and going as I pleased, albeit under the watch of those inhabiting the institution and in observance of fieldwork rules and rituals as explained in chapter three.

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<sup>1</sup> Areas of the prison that are out-of-bounds to prisoners are referred to as ‘sterile areas’. These include the administrative buildings and prison vehicle parking areas at the entrance of the prison, past the front gate. The use of the term ‘sterile’ to refer to areas of the prison which are out of bounds to prisoners always fascinated me, in a morbid way, as it suggested that the presence of prisoners somehow ‘contaminated’ the vicinity.

I have therefore become increasingly familiar with HMP Cardiff over a number successive research projects, becoming able to explore a topic directed entirely by my own inclinations and observations in the field. This was made possible by my own willingness to conduct this type of research as well as the receptiveness of the prison due to the successful execution of my earlier research projects, for which they had prescribed the general area of study. In contrast, during my doctoral research I entered the field armed with lots of ‘theoretical baggage’ but without a clear research focus in mind, beyond that I knew that I wanted to explore the sociology of prison life at the ‘micro level’. I spent a great deal of time in the prison during weekdays, evenings, weekends and on special holidays such as Christmas Day and Easter. Then, after observing and talking to people, as well as conducting group interviews with prisoners to find out what was important to them, I was struck by the lack of disorder in the prison, and this became the primary focus of this research.

### 1.3 Defining Prison Order

It is useful to now draw attention to the definitions of ‘order’ and ‘control’ offered by Anthony Bottoms in 1999, which are adopted within this thesis:

Order: an orderly situation is any long-standing pattern of social relations (characterized by minimum levels of respect for persons) in which the expectations that participants have of one another are commonly met, though not necessarily without contestation.

Control: the use of routines and a variety of formal and informal practices – especially, but not only, sanctions – which assist in the maintenance of order, whether or not they are recognized as doing so (Bottoms 1999: 250-251).

This definition of ‘order’ is particularly useful as it acknowledges the role of interpersonal relationships in maintaining order, whilst recognising that discontent may occur even within environments that are ‘well-ordered’<sup>2</sup>. Bottoms’ conceptualisation of ‘control’ is also applicable here because it suggests that order is not maintained through sanctions alone, and that a variety of aspects of prison life interact to preserve order - some visible, some less so. Taken together, these definitions of order and control suggest that to truly understand the maintenance of order in the contemporary British prison<sup>3</sup> it is important to view the prison holistically. This is precisely why this thesis contains chapters dedicated to other aspects of the experience of imprisonment which may

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<sup>2</sup> With this in mind, this thesis generally uses the term ‘order’ as opposed to ‘social order’, both of which are used interchangeably by Bottoms (1999).

<sup>3</sup> As explained further in chapter eight, this conceptualisation of order may not be applicable to other, non-Western penal institutions (see, for example, Martin et al 2014).

not immediately appear to be relevant to the question of order, but in fact have been found to be highly pertinent. These include: prisoner-officer relationships, the pains of imprisonment, and the prisoner wing worker scheme.

This research is concerned with the maintenance of mundane order as opposed to the prevention of large-scale disorder such as riots. It touches only briefly on what happens when order does completely break down, as this was something that I did not directly experience during my empirical data collection. However, it is wholly acknowledged that rule-breaking, bullying, fighting and conflict are all part of the fabric of life in prisons. Although extremely serious and harmful to all involved, non-collective disturbances do not disrupt the everyday functioning of the institution (Bottoms 1999: 206), nor do they signify the complete breakdown of an ordered (prison) society (Wrong 1994: 7). Therefore, their existence does not undermine this examination of mundane order maintenance. By describing the prison as a place of 'order', the very real suffering that prisoners experience is not denied, dismissed nor diminished. Prisons are places that inflict hardship, mental anguish, physical pain and stigma, and there has been a significant rise in incidences of suicide and self-harm in prisons since the 1980s (Liebling 2006; Pope 2018). It is also recognised that the work of prison staff is highly demanding and stress-inducing. Furthermore, *large-scale* disturbances, riots and "collective violence" (Bottoms 1999) do indeed occur, and these seriously disrupt the entire social and physical order of the institution. They are, fortunately, seemingly quite rare within the prison estate in England and Wales.

Many commentators have cautiously noted that the prison is generally 'well-ordered': "The extensive space between open rebellion and absolute consent represents the normal reality of prison life, in which order prevails, but often tenuously and uneasily, based on a combination of forces." (Crewe 2007a: 257). In 1961, Donald Cressey noted that "one of the most amazing things about prisons is that they 'work'...without degenerating into a chaotic mess"<sup>4</sup> (Cressey 1961: 2). In 1999, Anthony Bottoms called for further analyses into the "too-often ignored question as to how daily social order is in fact maintained in most prisons most of the time" (Bottoms 1999: 213). Drawing upon data collected during an extended period of immersive fieldwork in HMP Cardiff, this thesis hopes to contribute to answering this question.

In thinking about the current state of criminological research based in prisons, it is common to cite Wacquant's 2002 article '*The Curious Eclipse of Prison Ethnography in the Age of Mass Incarceration*', within which he observed a concerning lack of ethnographic research within prisons in the US. Wacquant identified difficulties in terms of gaining access to the US prison system,

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<sup>4</sup> Not to suggest that this does, or could, never occur.

including a “lack of openness” (Wacquant 2002: 387) on the behalf of prison authorities, as well as an apprehension within the academy and amongst ethical review boards. Whilst issues of access and ethics certainly remain pertinent to the UK and European research context, Wacquant himself noted that prison sociology was burgeoning outside of the US at the time. Indeed, within the 2015 *Handbook of Prison Ethnography*, Deborah Drake, Rod Earle and Jennifer Sloan characterised the global state of prison research as “vibrant, critical and engaged” (Drake et al 2015: 1). The present research sits within this lively field of prison-based research, however it offers several novel contributions to the field, as follows.

Firstly, the very recent history of publications in the field of prison studies has not focused explicitly upon the maintenance of order. In contemplating empirical research undertaken in prisons in England and Wales with a clear focus upon this topic, much work originates from the 1990s (King and McDermott 1995; Sparks and Bottoms 1995; Sparks et al 1996; Bottoms 1999), as well as the early 2000s (Crewe 2007a; Crewe 2009; Liebling et al 2011a). More recently, a few publications have been dedicated to exploring social order in the American and Canadian penal systems (see, for example, Skarbek 2014; Ricciardelli and Sit 2016 respectively) and internationally (Skarbek 2020). Within this latter recent book, *The Puzzle of Prison Order: Why Life Behind Bars Varies Around the World*, David Skarbek dedicated a chapter to discussing prison social order within prisons in England, drawing upon several of the aforementioned studies, many of which are cited within this thesis. It is therefore not necessary to fully explore these individual studies further here, beyond noting Skarbek’s prominent observation concerning the perceived absence of the prisoner ‘gangs’<sup>5</sup> within the English<sup>6</sup> prison system, and a lack of racial segregation<sup>7</sup> in comparison to prisons in America (Skarbek 2020, also see Phillips 2012). As shall be seen in chapter four, this would appear to be relevant to the Welsh prison context, with potential implications for the order of the establishment. This thesis, therefore, provides a crucial contemporary contribution to the field by focusing on prison order maintenance.

Secondly, this thesis provides a unique insight of the experiences of a very specific group of prisoners – wing workers. There is a distinct lack of existing research dedicated to this group, and my research has shown that the experience of imprisonment is in many ways unique for this group of prisoners.

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<sup>5</sup> Defined as a “self-perpetuating and criminally-oriented organization which controls the prison environment through intimidation and violence against non-members, operating within a chain of command and code of conduct” (Lyman 1989, cited in Maitra 2020: 130).

<sup>6</sup> In acknowledging the anglophile tendencies of much criminological literature (Jones 2016), it is important to note that the case studies drawn upon by Skarbek were undertaken in English prisons, as opposed to Welsh prisons.

<sup>7</sup> Although there is emerging evidence of social cohesion amongst Muslim prisoners in England, see Liebling, Arnold and Straub 2011 and Philipps 2012.

This is a theme that runs throughout this thesis, with chapter seven being dedicated to this hitherto unexplored topic.

Thirdly, whilst it has been noted that ethnographic-style prison research is flourishing globally, this research is methodologically unique due to the depth and breadth of access that was achieved, secured through building rapport and establishing my credibility during both the current and previous projects in the institution. The amount of time spent in the institution, the physical and emotional energy that was expended, and the sheer amount and variety of data collected render this study methodologically sound, with the validity and reliability of this resulting account arguably strengthened.

Fourthly, this research has considered the views of both staff and prisoners within HMP Cardiff. In answering Sykes' call:

[I]t is by the simultaneous consideration of divergent viewpoints that one begins to see the significant aspects of the prison's social structure (Sykes 1958: 148).

It was decided that to provide a full appreciation of the prison social world it would be advantageous to explore the views of both staff and prisoners. This is not necessarily a straightforward endeavour however. The extent to which it is possible to effectively 'do justice' to the views of two parties belonging to a clear hierarchy has been explored by Becker (1967) and Gouldner (1975) and, more recently, Liebling (2001). To provide a necessarily brief overview, Becker (1967) argued that all research will inevitably be shaped by personal sympathies and that it is impossible not to 'take sides' during research. Commonly within prison research the 'side' that is taken is that of the prisoner. Liebling (2001: 476) has asked why it is acceptable to exclusively award the subordinate "intellectual hegemony" and to ignore the stories of those that manage prisons. This research has endeavoured to address this imbalance by giving consideration to all prisoners and all staff in the establishment, including prisoners of all 'types' and staff of all grades. The voice of any party that has been willing to participate in whichever form has been given the opportunity to be heard. I argue that I have adopted a "third party" position (Becker 1967: 245), but one which is more than simply a further 'side' not involved in the immediate conflict. Rather, by allowing for existing theory to influence my interpretations of the views of all parties (Liebling 2001), this has enabled me to take a 'standpoint on the standpoints' of my participants (Gouldner 1975). Within the empirical chapters in this thesis I have endeavoured to look at these two groups, prisoners and prison officers, together as much as possible.

## 1.4 Thesis Structure

Chapter Two ('The Sociology of Prison Order'), following this introductory chapter, examines existing literature concerning prison order and the sociology of imprisonment. The chapter begins by considering established theories concerning the 'problem' of order in prisons and associated 'solutions'. Drawing upon existing empirical research, the chapter then provides an account of what a 'healthy' prison environment comprised of 'good' officers might look like. The chapter then explores classical and contemporary thinking on the pains of imprisonment and ends by outlining the primary research questions underpinning this research.

Chapter Three ('Methodological Considerations') provides a detailed account of the study's methodological design and processes. I explicate the methods of data collection used, the data analysis approach adopted, and consider some issues highly pertinent to all qualitative research, and prison-based research specifically. Issues include: research ethics, risk, negotiating access and establishing rapport in the field. The chapter provides an honest and 'open' account of the joys, pains and pitfalls of doing research in prison.

Chapter Four ('HMP Cardiff and the Wider Prison Estate') examines the extent to which HMP Cardiff could be considered 'well-ordered'. The chapter uses statistical data to conduct a comparative analysis of Cardiff prison in relation to other prisons, identified as comparable in terms of size and function. The composition of the prisoner population and officer workforce in HMP Cardiff is then given, followed by an analysis of officer and prisoner perceptions of Cardiff as an institution. I also consider whether HMP Cardiff may be considered unique, and if so, how and why this might be so.

Chapter Five ('Coercion or Consent? Maintaining an uneasy peace in prison') presents the perspectives of prisoners in HMP Cardiff concerning prison order, and specifically analyses their motivations for offering their compliance with the prison rules and regime. Three primary reasons for compliance are identified. The impact of institutional-level processes and discourses upon compliance are also considered. Within this chapter, I examine forms of non-compliance and consider implications for debates surrounding prison legitimacy and prison order.

Chapter Six ('Alleviating the Pains of Imprisonment') presents an account of six key pains of imprisonment, as attested to by prisoners in HMP Cardiff. The chapter considers the extent to which each of these pains may be considered an implicit feature of punishment by imprisonment. Officers views of prisoners, and their own role, are discussed; and questions are raised concerning the extent to which officers recognise their ability to 'make or break' the prison experience.



Chapter Seven ('The Boys in Green') provides a unique account of the experiences of prison wing workers. I explore practices surrounding the recruitment of wing workers, their standing within the institution, and how their experience of imprisonment differs compared to the general prisoner population. In doing so, the chapter provides a novel lens through which to explore the concepts of officer discretion and power in prisons. The chapter also provides a substantial contribution to the field of prison studies by filling the gap in existing literature concerning wing workers.

Chapter Eight ('Conclusion') brings together the themes discussed within the fore-going chapters to explicitly address the research questions that drove this study. The chapter also further embeds the findings from this research within existing literature. Implications for prison practice are outlined, and opportunities for further research are identified.

### 1.5 Cardiff: Capital City of Wales

Prior to examining the existing literature that provides the backdrop to this thesis, it is important to firstly describe the fieldwork site to enable familiarisation with Cardiff prison and the city within which it is situated. In mid-2015 the UK population was estimated to be around 65 million, with 3 million people living in Wales. Cardiff was estimated to have just over 350,000 residents, representing the most densely populated area in Wales (StatsWales 2020). In terms of demography, the 2011 UK Census identified most residents of Cardiff to be white (85%), originating from Wales (69%), and belonging to the Christian faith (51%) or having no religion (32%). In terms of health, 82% of Cardiff residents had 'good health' and one third (32%) were qualified up to level four (post A-level) and 21% had no qualifications (Cardiff Research Centre 2012). Cardiff is home to several universities and therefore has a large student population, and like many other major cities in the UK, Cardiff contains areas of high and low deprivation.

Overall, Wales has lower levels of inequality compared to the rest of the UK due to having relatively few 'very rich' earning the highest salaries. Approximately one fifth of the population of Wales live in poverty, with a proportion of these being in-work. In-work poverty is most prevalent amongst those who rent, Asian households and lone parent households. Whilst the median hourly wage of men in Wales is slightly higher than the overall median UK wage (£9.88 in Wales compared to £9.81 in the UK), low-paid employment is higher and individual earnings are, on average, lower in Wales compared to the rest of the UK (Davies et al 2011: xv-xvi).

Whilst power over other areas of government administration, such as housing, health and education services (the provision of which is crucial to prison life and for prisoners beyond the prison gate), have been progressively devolved to the Welsh Government, criminal justice administration has remained in the hands of the UK Government. The singular jurisdiction of England and Wales was

formed in the sixteenth century, something that was intended to produce uniformity, but instead resulted in Wales becoming assimilated into England (Jones 2016). Consequently, much criminological research has made inferences about the criminal justice system in England *and* Wales, whilst only England was the unit of analysis (Jones 2016). Throughout this thesis, I have endeavoured to remain sensitive to the geographical context within which my research took place, discussing at length in chapter four the perceptions of Welsh culture described by my participants. However, I recognise that much of the existing literature that I draw upon, and certainly most policy, perpetuates Anglocentric discourses.

### 1.6 Her Majesty's Prison Cardiff

HMP Cardiff is a public prison holding 800 adult males from across South Wales. Perched on the edge of the city centre, just a few hundred metres from the bustling city centre and overlooking a local train station, the site starkly juxtaposes incarceration with liberty. In contrast to the trends of the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century where prisons were built away from residential areas so as not to offend civilised sensibilities (Pratt 2002: 54-55), Cardiff prison, the oldest building in Cardiff excepting churches, has stood firm in its current location for almost 200 years, retaining its original gaol function throughout (Mortimer 2014). Since its construction in 1832 the prison has been extended and reinforced through 1854 to the present day (Mortimer 2014) to accommodate the rising demand for prisoner housing. As typical of prisons built during the 1800s the exterior of HMP Cardiff is austere and menacing with a high sandstone block wall (Mortimer 2014), intended to deter offending and communicate an ideal of functional bureaucracy (Pratt 2002: 43). The interior of the prison also reflects bureaucratic functionality, with little in the way of decoration or embellishment beyond that which is necessary for the efficient running of the prison, as described further later. The towering wall adorned with barbed wire which surrounds the complex works to prevent ordinary citizens from gaining an insight into punishment by imprisonment, the “most hidden part of the penal process” (Foucault 1977: 9) and to effectively contain the punished - a clear illustration of the shift from the spectre of corporal punishment to invisible carceral punishment. Interestingly, the main entrance to the prison has a somewhat more benevolent image, being comprised of an open carpark, the prisoner-staffed<sup>8</sup> Clink restaurant, and some vegetation. The wide road leading up to the gate looks almost welcoming and allows for easy access to the prison. Within the waiting area one finds comfortable chairs and a bright, new poster displaying the ‘journey’ that prisoners make through their sentences and out of the prison gate, into the waiting arms of the local Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC). It is here that the families of prisoners are processed and searched

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<sup>8</sup> The prisoners that work in The Clink restaurant are not housed in Cardiff but rather the nearest Open/Category D establishment.

prior to enter the visiting room, which is on full display to those in the front waiting area. To the right of the front entrance is the gate hatch where the literal 'gatekeeper' of the prison sits safely behind thick, reinforced glass. The officer manning this hatch signs every visitor into the prison, storing mobile phones and other contraband items. On entering the prison each day this is my first stop, as described within the fieldnotes above. There are six wings in HMP Cardiff, each with a distinct role to play in the daily life of the institution. Throughout their sentences prisoners will journey through the prison, often spending time in each area of the jail. Although the six main residential wings vary in terms of the prisoners that they house, their size, and the average staff - prisoner ratio; every wing follows a similar 'Core Day', or daily regime. An account of the daily life of the institution is given in Appendix 14, and the composition of the prisoner (and officer) population is explored further in chapter four. Presently, this thesis now turns to exploring the current state of the art concerning what we know about prison order, staff-prisoner relationships, and the pains of imprisonment.

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## Chapter Two: The Sociology of Prison Order

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### 2.1 Introduction

To foreground this account of prison order maintenance, it is firstly important to provide a review of relevant existing literature. This is the primary aim of this chapter. To begin, this chapter examines existing conceptualisations of prison order, why maintaining order can be problematic, and established theories concerning the preservation of prison order. Looking in greater depth at one of these theories - normativity - the chapter then discusses prison legitimacy. Next, it draws upon existing empirical research to provide a characterisation of staff-prisoner relationships at their best, including the institutional features that serve to undermine or strengthen the forging of positive relationships. It pays due attention to several prominent themes in the field of prison studies that are relevant to this thesis, including empathy, trust, and officer discretion. Historical and contemporary thinking on the pain that imprisonment causes is then discussed. This review of the literature finishes by outlining the research questions that drove this study – questions which were informed by the present exploration of significant criminological and sociological literature, as well as my own venture inside the prison walls. In constructing this chapter, I have been highly selective in terms of discussing the empirical literature and theoretical topics that most strongly contextualise this thesis. I place a spotlight on literature that discusses the inner workings of the prison - the sociology of prison life – and it does so in a way that complements the primary aim of this research. That is, to explore how the prison may best function daily, in an ordered manner, and in a way that is most likely to foster positive staff-prisoner relationships.

### 2.2 The Problem of Order in Prisons

Why may order in prisons be considered a ‘problem’? What is it about the prison that could incite disorder to arise in the first place? There are broadly five commonly-cited reasons given within existing literature. The first, ‘deprivation theory’, holds that prisoners rebel as a means of coping with the pains of imprisonment (Sykes 1958; Sykes and Messinger 1960). The second, ‘importation theory’, suggests that prison disorder arises due to the beliefs and attitudes that prisoners bring with them into prison – namely, but not limited to, loyalty to their criminal peers and a distrust of authority (Irwin and Cressey 1962). Thirdly, the maintenance of order in prisons may be problematic due to a combination of these ‘deprivation’ and ‘importation’ factors (Thomas 1977). A fourth source of disorder in prisons is institutional failures including poor officer conduct, ineffective policies and unstable communication (Useem and Kimball 1989, cited in Carrabine 2005). This has

been extended into the argument that illegitimacy and lack of fair treatment present the greatest threat to prison order (see, for example, Sparks and Bottoms 1995; Sparks et al 1996; Bottoms 1999; Liebling et al 2005).

The first three reasons attribute prison disorder to the organisation and attitudes of prisoners themselves. The final reason, however, places the blame for disorder in the hands of the institution, and by extension, the *disorganisation* of the state (Carrabine 2005: 900). In this view, a view that is progressed within this thesis, one should not expect prison disorder to ensue because prisoners are all ‘dangerous criminals’ or ‘bad people’<sup>9</sup> but because the prison is intrinsically a place that inflicts suffering and holds people against their will:

When the issue of order has been considered in prison, most commentators have been struck by the fact that the institution generates intrinsic and fundamental conflicts, not least since prisoners are confined against their will, with people they would normally not choose to be with, in circumstances they can do little to change and are governed by custodians who police practically every aspect of their daily lives (Carrabine 2005: 897-898).

This characterisation of prison life holds true in HMP Cardiff and is arguably applicable to all penal institutions. At its core, the prison forces individuals into confinement and dictates every aspect of their lives, and this fundamental antagonism between freedom and lack of freedom, between individual autonomy and lack thereof, between individual interests and the interests of the institution, is what makes the maintenance of prison order so fascinating, and so vulnerable.

### 2.3 Solutions to the Problem of Order: Constraint, Instrumentalism, Normativity and Fatalism

In thinking about order maintenance in prison there are three core schools of thought, each adapted from wider thinking in sociology, politics and philosophy about the preservation of order in wider society (see Wrong 1994). These include the coercive, the instrumental, and the normative. These classical approaches may be variously used to explain an individual’s inclination to comply with social rules and expectations. Each will now be explored in turn drawing upon Anthony Bottoms’ 1999 article concerning social order in prisons (specifically, Bottoms 1999: 251-254).

The coercive, or constraint-based, approach explains compliance through reference to the imposition of physical restrictions, prevention of access, and structural constraints. In terms of physical and access restrictions, compliance is secured through curtailing physical movement, for

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<sup>9</sup> This standpoint was also articulated to me by a senior governor in HMP Cardiff: “*we should never expect people to be violent, rude, aggressive, why would we?*” (Officer Harry).

example through segregation or preventing access to confidential information kept within out-of-bounds areas. In terms of structural constraints, compliance is secured through compelling prisoners into obedience through the sheer weight of the power relations in operation, and/or resignation to the immutable way of things. The imposition of routines also falls within this category.

From an instrumental perspective, there are two straightforward things that encourage compliance – incentives and disincentives. In the prison context this refers to the promise of rewards, such as progression under the Incentives and Earned Privileges scheme (IEP, see section 2.7 below) or the attainment of good employment; and the threat of punishment, such as privilege removal or segregation.

There are two normative reasons for compliance. The first is “normative consensus or acceptance” (Bottoms 1999: 252) which refers to an individual’s commitment to certain moral guidelines. For example, there generally exists a normative consensus within society that ‘killing is wrong’. The second ‘normative’ reason for compliance is legitimacy, defined by Bottoms as follows:

The other reason for compliance, from within a normative framework [other than normative consensus based upon acceptance], is *legitimacy* - that is, compliance with a rule because it has been promulgated by a person or body with legitimate authority, acting in a proper way to exercise that authority. Hence, some people might obey the speed limit on a motorway, not because they are normatively committed to it (they might prefer a much higher limit), but because the speed limit has been set by the appropriate legal authorities within a democratic state (Bottoms 1999: 253, italics in original).

At the crux of Bottoms’ definition, he states that for a rule to be legitimate, it must have been “promulgated by a person or body with legitimate authority, acting in a proper way to exercise that authority”. There are two important parts here, firstly, compliance with a rule because it has been promulgated by a legitimate person or body, and secondly, that that person or body has acted in a proper way to exercise authority. Instrumental and coercive reasoning may initially appear to be most relevant to the prison context. However, Bottoms argues that in fact normative acceptance of the prison’s right to punish is of paramount importance to maintaining order in prison. Drawing upon the work of Tyler (1990) and Beetham (1991), this is because an individual is more likely to offer their compliance when they perceive those in power to be, firstly, acting in a fair and consistent manner and, secondly, able to offer justifications for their decisions. In other words, those in power must act in a ‘procedurally fair’ manner (Tyler 1990), and this is a more important consideration for those subject to power than the actual outcome of a decision. Thus, illegitimate

treatment represents a significant threat to social order because it undermines the observance of social and legal rules. In terms of the implications of Tyler's work for the prison context, Bottoms (1999: 256) signposts to the importance of staff-prisoner interactions in shaping the perceived legitimacy of the institution and its staff in the eyes of prisoners.

Whilst this thesis promulgates the prominence of staff-prisoner interactions in shaping the prison experience, it is important to consider criticisms of this 'value-centric' normative approach. The suggestion that prisoners are more likely to offer their consent to regimes which are considered more legitimate or 'fair' could be interpreted to imply that prisoners can reasonably withdraw their consent when they perceive their treatment to be unfair. Withdrawal of consent is unlikely to exist as a viable option for most prisoners, most of the time, due to their position of sheer powerlessness and the might of penal power that can be brought against them in the event of non-compliance (see Crewe 2011a, explored further below in section 2.8.2). Secondly, whilst Sparks et al (1996: 89) acknowledge that there is a distinction between power arrangements that are "taken-for-granted" or "accepted-as-legitimate", it has been suggested by Carrabine (2005: 903) that the implications of this have not been sufficiently interrogated. In response, Carrabine (2005) proposes a fourth solution to the problem of order:

[I]n a number of ways, power in prisons represents an inevitable, 'external fact' for prisoners - in which the experience of confinement is endured without any reference to some version of legitimacy. [...] [T]hrough Durkheim's (1966, orig. pub. 1897) overlooked concept of fatalism...[it is possible to]...explain why crises of disorder are not more frequent, even when penal power lacks legitimacy (Carrabine 2005: 903).

For Carrabine, penal power is experienced by many prisoners as an 'inevitable' and 'external' fact which can powerfully shape prisoner conduct without any reference to its legitimacy. A prison's social order may remain intact even when power is exercised illegitimately and/or experienced as unfair. Here, compliance may be offered due to an acceptance of the inalterability of the powerlessness of one's situation, as opposed to a belief that one's powerlessness is legitimate. This fatalistic form of compliance is strengthened by the imposition of and engagement with rituals, something that is of course a core characteristic of the prison environment. In such an arrangement, rebellion against the institution often takes the form of minor disruption (Cohen and Taylor 1972; Scott 1985, cited in Carrabine 2005: 905); yet the order that is brought about by the 'dull compulsion'<sup>10</sup> of the prison routine is somewhat fragile. This is because it does not rely upon any degree of normative belief in the prison's right to rule or the validity of the prisoners' subordinate

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<sup>10</sup> A term first used by Sparks and Bottoms (1995: 53) and employed as a key concept by Carrabine (2005).

position. Instead, it is a pragmatic and realistic response to the inalterable situation that the prisoner finds himself in.

Although presented by Carrabine as a distinct and novel solution to the problem of order, there are quite clear similarities with Bottoms' (1999) description of 'structural compliance' outlined above. Indeed, it is most likely that prisoner compliance and correspondingly the maintenance of prison order occurs variably due to constraint, instrumentalism, normativity and fatalism. Wrong (1994: 9) noted that the application of any of the above theories does not, and should not, preclude the application of others – an error often committed by social analysts. Instead, all may be amalgamated or variably applicable within different prisons, amongst different prisoners, and even dynamically by the same individual prisoner in different social situations. The present study will enable empirical investigation of the applicability of these theories of prisoner compliance within HMP Cardiff.

## 2.4 Justifying Punishment by Imprisonment: External and Internal Legitimacy

It may be prudent to exercise caution whilst applying the 'legitimacy theory' to the problem of order in prisons so as not to over-estimate the extent to which prisoners can reasonably withdraw their consent. However, the perceived legitimacy of the institution remains a salient consideration, particularly if legitimacy is regarded as a *process* rather than an *outcome* (James et al 2005). Demeaning and unfair treatment undermines prison order by decreasing the likelihood of prisoner compliance, as discussed, however it also causes distress and negatively affects prisoner well-being (Liebling et al 2005: 211). It is therefore important to stress that achieving a legitimate and just prison system is an important end in itself, not only a means to an end. In keeping with this framework, it is important to interrogate the negotiation of prison legitimacy in the eyes of society, as well as in the eyes of prison captives and captors.

### 2.4.1 External Legitimacy

Punishment by imprisonment has historically been justified through reference to various stated aims, including preventing future victims through reforming or rehabilitating offenders, incapacitating offenders, or through deterring criminal behaviour. Alternatively, it may be framed as an end in itself, justified because offenders are seen to simply 'deserve it' due to their transgressions. These respective consequentialist and retributivist aims are the *explicit* or '*accepted*' aims of imprisonment - the justifications utilised to legitimise the power of the state to incarcerate its citizens. These aims have variably enjoyed precedence throughout history in England and Wales, called upon to claim that a system that at its core inflicts punishment and suffering upon individuals is morally and politically 'right'. Without these stated aims, the prison would arguably not be able to



function in society as a just social institution overseen by the state - it would suffer from a 'crisis of legitimacy' (Fitzgerald and Sim 1982: 23-24).

Any arrangement which involves an inequity of power requires legitimation (Beetham 1991), and the prison, with its inherent power relations, must seek to be justifiable. A legitimacy deficit may occur if the prison is revealed to be morally questionable, for example if it is seen to hold prisoners in inhumane conditions, if order breaks down, or if it fails to achieve its publicly-touted aims (Cavadino et al 2013: 22-25). A distinction may be drawn between the *external* legitimacy and *internal* legitimacy of the prison (Bottoms 2003: 186). The former refers to the validity of the prison as a social institution in the eyes of those outside the prison walls. This legitimacy must be continually negotiated through reference to the publicly-accepted aims outlined above (Fitzgerald and Sim 1982; Scott 2007; Cavadino et al 2013) because the prison reflects the power of the state to coerce its subjects (Morgan and Liebling 2007: 1126). The latter, interior legitimacy, refers to the legitimation of the prison's power to punish in the eyes of those held captive, without which the prison would suffer from a 'legitimacy deficit' (Sparks and Bottoms 1995). This, it may be argued, can only be achieved through the development of positive inter-personal relationships in prison.

#### 2.4.2 Internal Legitimacy

Prison regimes are orderly not only when there is an absence of disorder, but when they are acceptable to the prisoners living within them (Jackson et al 2010: 10).

The above quotation from Jonathan Jackson and colleagues introduces well the next theme discussed within this chapter: the importance of perceptions of the 'rightfulness' of penal power amongst those subjected to it. Arguably, it is the everyday conduct of officers which shapes these perceptions. Staff-prisoner relationships shape the "moral climate" of the prison - their quality and nature can exacerbate or ease the pains of imprisonment (Crewe 2007b: 142), and the way in which 'frontline' prison staff work with prisoners can have a significant impact upon claims to legitimacy (Woolf 1991; Sparks and Bottoms 1995). Whilst some have argued that the prison can never be considered legitimate (for example, Scraton et al 1991), I agree with Sparks and Bottoms' (1995: 52) assessment that this claim has the potential to be exploited in support of ever more punitive policies. Suggesting that it is not at all possible to govern prisons with compassion and without force could undermine all attempts at doing so. Instead, it may be possible to identify and champion penal practices which can help to achieve a more humane, and therefore a more legitimate, prison system. This may best be achieved when legitimacy is framed as existing on a continuum, rather than as an absolute (James et al 1997). Conceived of in such a way, it is possible to explore the micro-level sociology of life in different prisons and to distinguish between practices that are coercive, excluding

and illegitimate and those that are humanising and inclusive, with greater legitimacy in terms of staff-prisoner relationships. One further point regarding legitimacy is required here.

The prison must also be seen as legitimate by those that represent its power – prison officers – for without a belief in the morality and ‘rightfulness’ of their own position, prison officers are unlikely to fulfil their role effectively (Bottoms and Tankebe 2013). Thus, for the prison to be considered acceptable and ‘just’ it must be seen as both legitimate by society, by the incarcerated, and by prison officers. So, what might a humane, fair, and ‘legitimate’ prison look like? This will now be explored.

## 2.5 Getting relationships right

Following the distribution of a quality-of-life survey completed by over 1000 prisoners housed in 12 prisons across England and Wales, Liebling et al (2005) found that distress amongst prisoners was lowest in prison environments that were perceived to be physically safe and where prisoners were treated with respect, fairness and care (Liebling et al 2005: 220). Other features of prison life that have been found to increase a prison’s legitimacy and the ontological security of prisoners include the existence of clear rules and decency (Auty and Liebling 2020), transparent behavioural expectations (Crewe 2007a), procedurally fair treatment (Bottoms 1999; Reisig and Mesko 2009; Jackson et al 2010), relationships with officers that are friendly yet professional (Liebling and Arnold 2004), prison officers that are physically and emotionally present and do not over-use their authority (Crewe et al 2014a), availability of constructive activity (Rocheleau 2013) and the facilitation of family contact (Hairston 1991). This list is not intended to provide an exhaustive and all-encompassing account of what makes for a ‘decent’ and ‘legitimate’ prison; indeed this would be a highly difficult task considering the variability that exists in terms of types of prisons and the concerns of individual prisoners. However, it is reasonable to suggest that there exists some consensus within the academy that each of the above are important for ensuring reasonable prisoner quality of life, and each are variably tied to the discussions and findings that follow within this thesis. A recurring theme within this list has been the way that prisoners are treated by officers, something that now requires a full examination.

The health, decency and security of prisons rests upon getting staff-prisoner relationships right (Home Office 1984, cited in Liebling et al 2011a: 1). Yet what does getting it ‘right’ mean? At their best, the ‘right’ sorts of relationships are “respectful, fair, trusting, supportive, considerate, flexible-within-boundaries, humane and honest” (Liebling et al 2011a: 17). When such staff-prisoner relationships are achieved, the health and decency of the entire prison is enhanced (Liebling and Arnold 2004). It is now important to unpick some of the facets of positive staff-prisoner relationships

identified within existing literature, ultimately enabling this thesis to converse with, and add to, current understandings of prison life.

### 2.5.1 Decency and Respect in Prisons

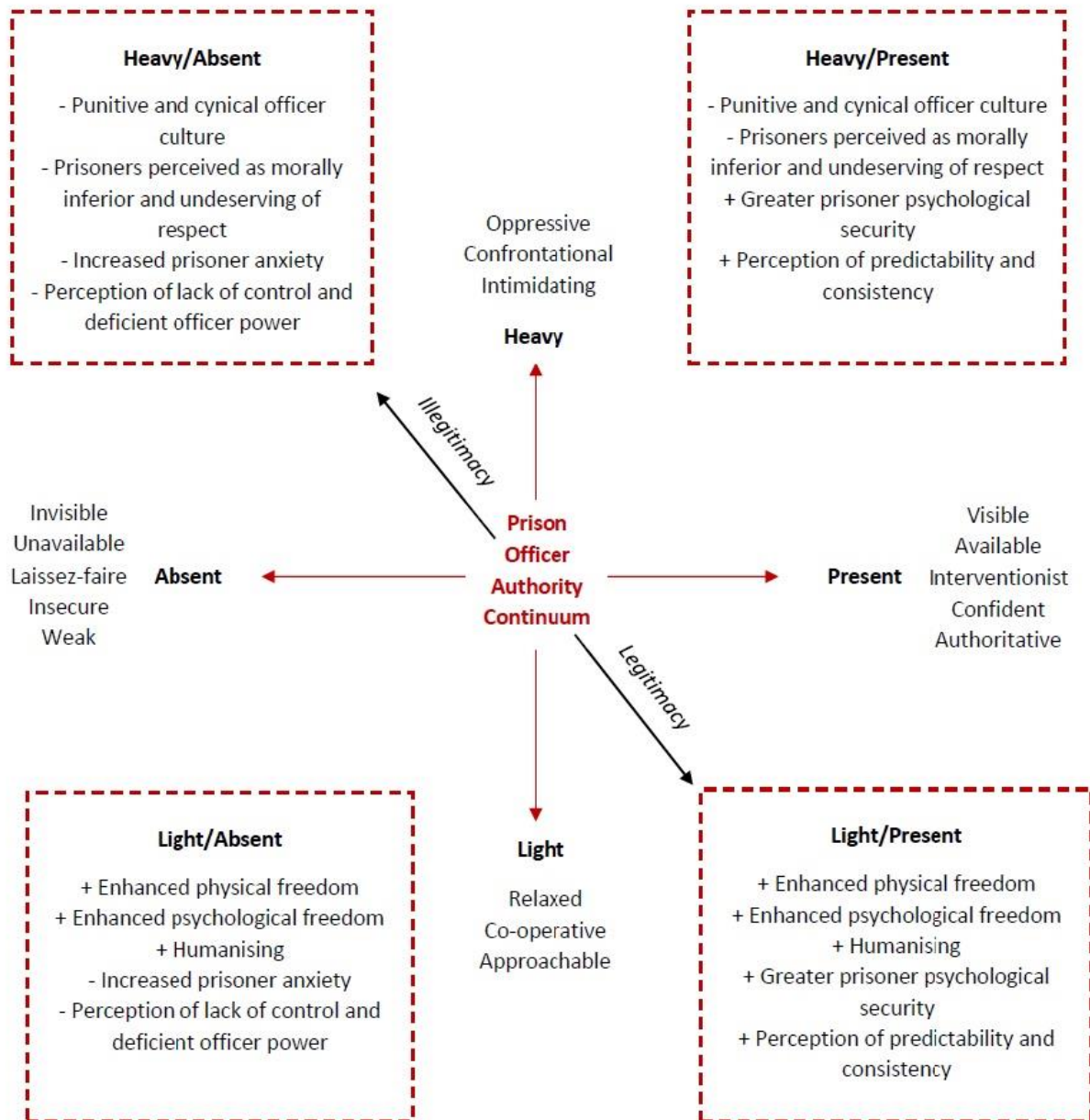
During my own previous research conducted in HMP Cardiff in 2013 (Doubleday 2013), I found that respect is both a complex issue in prison, and one which is tightly bound to achieving prison decency. The introduction of the Decency Agenda in prisons across England and Wales in 2001 represented in many ways a significant step forward in terms of bringing concerns for the moral and decent treatment of prisoners to the fore. The then Director General of the Prison Service, Sir Martin Narey, championed decency in prisons by criticising the service for ‘tolerating inhumanity’, and by highlighting the ‘immoral’ and ‘degrading’ prisoner treatment occurring in some prisons (Cavadino et al 2013: 187-188). Whilst both prisoners and officers in HMP Cardiff at the time conceived decency in a similar manner and expressed a mutual desire for its implementation, I found something of a discord between the rhetoric of decency and the reality of prison life. In particular, the government’s commitment to decency was undermined by inadequate resourcing, and the sentiments and rationale underpinning the decency agenda were difficult to operationalise (Doubleday 2013).

A key finding of this research was that decency could be engendered by encouraging a working culture in prisons that sees respect as a basic human right, something that should be afforded to all due to a moral obligation, as opposed to something that is earned (Doubleday 2013). ‘Respect-as-consideration’ (Butler and Drake 2007) is a form of respect that may be achievable in prisons because it suggests that all individuals have the right to be treated in a considerate, polite and courteous manner. The other form of respect, ‘respect-as-esteem’ (Butler and Drake 2007) is more difficult to achieve in prisons because it rests upon one’s perceived status as a successful and autonomous being, something that is difficult for prisoners to earn by nature of their position. This conceptualisation of respect in prisons aligns well with Sir Martin’s original vision for prison decency: “Those who manage the service and those who work within it have a moral obligation to treat prisoners with dignity and decency irrespective of their crime or their behaviour in custody” (Sir Martin Narey 2013, personal correspondence). It is this working definition of respect, respect as a human right, that I adopt throughout this thesis.

### 2.5.2 Prison Officer Authority

In thinking about what makes for a prison environment which allows for prisoners to flourish, I rely upon a highly useful characterisation offered in a 2014 article by Ben Crewe, Alison Liebling and Susan Hulley. Within this article they discuss forms of order and control in prisons, drawing a

distinction between prison environments that are 'light', 'heavy', 'present' and 'absent'. Within the diagram below, adapted from Crewe et al (2014a: 404) I summarise this distinction:



**Figure 1 - Heavy, Light, Absent, Present Prison Environments**

This diagram serves several purposes within this thesis. Firstly, it sets out the definition that is used throughout this thesis of what a humane and just, or simply 'good', prison environment looks like – an environment where prisoners have confidence in the authority of officers, but where this authority is not felt to be oppressive. The characteristics that comprise a 'light/present' institution, including increased freedom, humanity, feelings of security, and fair and consistent treatment from officers have implications for the findings given in subsequent chapters concerning order

maintenance, the pains of imprisonment and the differential treatment of wing worker prisoners. Secondly, the diagram demonstrates the variability that exists across, as well as arguably within, individual establishments in terms of officer working practices and culture. This is an important observation for chapter four of this thesis which examines HMP Cardiff in relation to the wider prison estate in England and Wales. Thirdly, the model suggests that certain prison environments may possess greater claims to legitimacy than others, something that is returned to later in this chapter and within subsequent chapters. Finally, this visual representation of Crewe et al (2014a) article acknowledges the important observation that not all forms of power are intrinsically 'bad'. For example, asserting authority is an avenue through which adults can demonstrate care for children (Sennett 1980: 15). This form of power, power combined with care, is arguably more benign compared to power combined with apathy or malice, for example (Crewe et al 2014a: 392-393). This observation serves to disrupt assumptions that to be humane, penal power should be 'light'. On the contrary, "it is a mistake to equate 'lightness' with quality if the environment is laissez-faire or dangerously under-policed" (Crewe et al 2014a: 392).

This recognition that the prison environment is 'healthiest' or 'at its best' when officers can exercise a *degree* of control provides important context for several key themes within this thesis. It enables me to explore prison order maintenance in relation to its capacity to enhance prisoner quality of life, not simply because preserving order helps the prison to achieve its aims or to protect staff and prisoners from physical harm. Maintaining order is about more than safety and penal credibility, it relates to humanity, decency and legitimacy. Secondly, it supports my endeavour to allow prison officers to be humanised, to feature their voices, and to show that speaking of 'the prison officer' in a one-size-fits-all manner is in many ways unhelpful and overly simplistic (Crawley 2004; Martin 2018) – just as it is with prisoners. Thirdly, it supports my repeated claim that the way that imprisonment is experienced, and the dynamics between officers and prisoners, varies greatly. Some prisons, some prisoners, and some officers fare better than others, and to identify areas of best practice - as well as poor practice - can aid our understanding about what a well-ordered and humane prison environment might look like. Part of this includes understanding what makes for a 'good' officer in the eyes of prisoners, to which I now turn.

## 2.6 The Good Prison Officer

In keeping with this chapter's aim of looking at prison life at its best, this section provides a working definition of a 'good officer', drawing upon empirical research offered by Liebling et al (2011b), Crawley (2004) and Arnold (2016):

- Skilled in their use of authority and discretion; able to communicate consistent boundaries in terms of prisoner behavioural expectations; in possession of ‘moral fibre’ and ‘professionally orientated’; realistic, yet optimistic in their outlook; able to understand the pain that imprisonment causes; enthusiastic and confident; perceptive and able to use force appropriately (Liebling et al 2011b: 52-53)
- Ability to persuade, and to say ‘no’ when needed; assertive, with good communication and listening skills, patient, psychologically resilient, a sense of humour, and a professional and fair working style (Crawley 2004: 111)
- Honestly and integrity, moral values, composed, confident and self-assured, empathetic towards the plight of prisoners and able to understand human behaviour and needs, ability to balance compassion and care with offering firm, consistent and fair treatment, adaptable, tolerant, reliable, vigilant, non-judgement and non-confrontational, self-reflexive and aware of the impact of their own behaviour upon others, including their own weaknesses and strengths. Good officers establish appropriate boundaries with prisoners. They are authoritative yet not *authoritarian*; they ‘talk straight’ so as to avoid the unnecessary use of formal sanctions or force but are able to do so if needed. In sum, they possess and can exercise ‘emotional intelligence’ (Arnold 2016: 273).

This depiction of an ideal officer is most certainly that – an ideal. In reality, few prison officers will ‘tick all the boxes’ and most establishments will contain a mixture of officers displaying different working styles. Arnold (2016: 273) has also warned against officers under- or over- empathising with prisoners, with the former possibly resulting in neglect and the latter posing a risk of officers becoming too emotionally attached. This could, supposedly, result in unclear boundaries, lower resilience, and impaired ability to ‘switch off’ after work. Whilst these risks exist, I would argue that they are not the product of *over-empathising* but rather a lack of professionalism. I believe that it is possible to feel wholly empathetic towards prisoners without undermining officer integrity or the forging of positive officer-prisoner relationships, as returned to shortly.

### 2.6.1 Organisational Respect

A further quality that makes for a good prison officer is a willingness to ‘do things’ for prisoners, or “organizational respect” (Hulley et al 2011). The ability and most importantly *willingness* of prison staff to do things for prisoners, such as checking the amount of money a prisoner has available to spend<sup>11</sup> or following-up on the status of an applications<sup>12</sup>, is key to forging positive staff-prisoner

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<sup>11</sup> Explained in further detail in Appendix 14.

relationships (Hulley et al 2011; Doubleday 2013). Hulley et al (2011) have linked this to the concept of respect, noting that the efficiency with which officers help prisoners is both a way of demonstrating respect, and a way of communicating that the needs of prisoners are worthy of acknowledgement. This validation of prisoners' needs links well to the definition of respect-as-consideration (Butler and Drake 2007) outlined above, which is a humanising conceptualisation of respect as a human right. Thus, to show a willingness to support and help prisoners legitimises their requests and needs. Willingness to help is the most important aspect here, more so than *ability* to help. For example, Hulley et al (2011) found that an officer taking seriously a request and providing a fair and consistent response, even if that response was negative, was most important to prisoners: "they preferred to be told 'no' than to be 'fobbed off' or told yes only for their request not to materialise" (Hulley et al 2011: 12). To speak of officers 'doing things' for prisoners as a way of fostering a respectful prison environment is valuable, because it recognises that fairness, legitimacy and respect interact (Bottoms and Tankebe 2013). It has been established above that prisoners deserve to receive respect; however it is also important that they respect the organisation (Hulley et al 2011: 11). Certainly, organisational respect is important for encouraging prisoner compliance and therefore the preservation of prison order, but it is also important because an institution that is respected is more likely to be one which makes prisoners feel secure, as shown in the 'light/present' quadrant above. The view of prisoners in HMP Cardiff in terms of the importance attached to officers 'getting things done' is discussed in chapter six.

### 2.6.2 Empathy and Discretion

Empathy is particularly important in professions which demand honesty and fairness, and which involve complex and varied inter-personal interactions, such as with police work (Inzunza 2015). It is also a concept that has been variably defined (Gerdes 2011) and often confused with, or conflated with, sympathy (Inzunza 2015). Wispé (1986) has usefully defined empathy as a non-judgemental and self-aware attempt to understand the situation of another person. It is understanding *as if* you were standing in the other person's shoes. Sympathy, on the other hand, refers to an immediate recognition of, and a reactive desire to, alleviate another's suffering. It is knowing what it is to *be* in that person's shoes. Empathy, therefore, is particularly useful within the context of police work because police officers must routinely make emotionally complex decisions that necessitate understanding others emotionally and making judgements based upon information (Inzunza 2015: 61). Others have argued that empathy has a rightful place in the sphere of criminal justice, including during judges' sentencing decisions (Chin 2012) and within immigration removal centres (Hall 2010). Empathy and compassion have a powerful disruptive potential within environments that habitually

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<sup>12</sup> Applications for phone credit, for example – explained in further detail in Appendix 14.

draw a distinction between the 'dangerous other' and the 'law-abiding citizen' (Hall 2010: 894-895), such as within immigration removal centres or, of course, prisons. Conceived of in such a way, the ability of prison officers to fully empathise with prisoners is a vital skill with humanising potential, not something to be discouraged. Suggesting that it is possible for officers to over-empathise with prisoners could undermine efforts to forge a compassionate working culture by encouraging a risk-averse, distant prison environment.

Empathy is also an important consideration within the prison environment due to the level of discretion that officers can exercise during their daily working lives. Empathetic ability has received little attention within existing research into the decision-making processes of 'street-level bureaucrats' such as prison officers (Jensen and Pedersen 2017: 434). To further explore this relationship, Jensen and Pedersen (2017) undertook survey research amongst employees within correctional facilities in Denmark. Similar to the definition offered by Wispé (1986) above, Jensen and Pederson defined empathy as "the capacity to understand what others are feeling and to sympathise with their circumstances" (Jensen and Pedersen 2017: 435). They found a significant relationship between empathetic ability and discretionary decision-making, where employees with higher levels of empathy were more likely to consider inmates' well-being and social problems when enforcing rules. Specifically, employees with high empathetic ability were less likely to report a drug infraction if the inmate was perceived to have social problems compared to employees with low empathy. Empathy on behalf of prison employees was therefore particularly helpful for inmates most in need of help. However, high empathy should not be equated with overall lenience because where the offence was severe or the inmate was not perceived to suffer from social problems, the action taken was punitive, even amongst highly empathetic employees. Thus, where the infraction was minor, officers were more likely to exercise discretion and 'selectively enforce' the rules (Jensen and Pedersen 2017). This is highly significant, for the ability of officers to *under-use* the full range of powers that they have at their disposal is a marker that officers are using their discretion 'skilfully' and employing their 'peacekeeping' skills (Liebling 2011: 488). Again, using informal means of control to maintain order should not be interpreted as leniency or a neglect of duty, just as displaying empathy should not be interpreted as 'weak' or 'risky'. It is argued here that the selective enforcement of the rules should not be taken to signify that officer power is "defective", contra Skyes (1958: Loc 920), for this term suggests that when an officer employs their discretion, their power becomes less than total. On the contrary, the very fact that an officer can deign to overlook a petty infraction whilst retaining their ability to dispense an extremely severe punishment in another instance arguably strengthens their position of authority. The ability to use discretion judiciously is a valuable and sophisticated skill (Liebling 2011; Liebling et al 2011b), one that is linked to high



empathetic ability (Jensen and Pedersen 2017), and something that has the potential to contribute to the overall maintenance of order in an establishment as opposed to undermining the power that officers hold.

## 2.7 The IEP Scheme

The issue of prison officer discretion gained further prominence following the introduction of the Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) scheme, launched across prisons in England and Wales in July 1995. Formally, it aimed to:

- Deliver privileges that were generally earned through good behaviour and were removable if prisoners failed to maintain acceptable standards
- Encourage responsible behaviour, hard work and engagement with constructive activity
- Encourage sentenced prisoners to progress through the system
- Create a disciplined, controlled and safer environment for prisoners and staff.

(Liebling et al 1999: 1)

Fundamentally, the scheme was designed to 'incentivise' good behaviour (and punish poor behaviour) amongst the prisoner population. The scheme was devised shortly after the 1990 Strangeways prison riots and the resulting Woolf report (Woolf 1991), however whilst it was promoted as new means for maintaining order, in practice it oversimplified the relationship between incentives and compliance due to over-reliance on a simple rational choice model of behaviour (Khan 2016). Liebling et al's original evaluation of the IEP (1999) found that prisoners conceived of the *policy and principle* of IEP as fair, but that its implementation was unfair. This lack of fairness was exacerbated by uneven execution across the Estate, resulting in no improvement in prisoner behaviour. In consideration of the existing literature reviewed above regarding the importance of consistency of prisoner treatment (Bottoms 1999; Hulley et al 2011), it follows that the IEP did not result in 'improved behaviour' amongst the prisoner population precisely because they held these negative perceptions of its fairness, or legitimacy. Conversely, staff positively reported increased confidence and enhanced ability to motivate and communicate with prisoners. In their evaluation, Liebling et al (1999: 4) recommended that a more complex model of compliance was needed, one that recognised the interplay between incentives and staff-prisoner relationships, legitimacy, maintaining family ties, effective sentence planning, personal officer schemes, the prison's history, values and management styles, and the prison's context in terms of location, size and type. This recommendation is particularly interesting for the present research, which also considers prisoner compliance (chapter five) in relation to other aspects of prison life, including the way that officers impose their authority and HMP Cardiff's context (chapter four). A further outcome of the IEP was

that it increased the discretionary powers of wing officers to determine quality of life for individual prisoners (Bottoms 2003; Liebling 2008). Not only did officers need to make recommendations in terms of IEP placement based upon judgements of prisoner behaviour, they could also use IEP privilege removal as a form of punishment (Liebling 2000).

There were originally three IEP levels: Basic, Standard and Enhanced. The fourth, Entry level, was introduced within the 2013 national IEP Prison Service Instruction<sup>13</sup> (PSI 30/2013) for all new prisoners during the first two weeks of their sentences. Entry-level 'sits between' Basic and Standard, offering generally the same privileges as Standard, but with requirements to complete various induction-related screenings and processes prior to progression to Standard. This same PSI (30/2013) was in force at the time of my fieldwork, a policy change that represented a sea-change in the way that the IEP was conceptualised due to the tightening of behavioural requirements. Whilst it was previously possible to simply demonstrate 'good' behaviour to gain Enhanced IEP, PSI 30/2013 required prisoners to 'actively contribute to their own rehabilitation' (Anonymous Blogger, Prison UK 2014; Khan 2016) – an ideological change that was gaining momentum at least two years previously (Crewe 2011a, 2011b). The implications of the IEP for staff-prisoner relationships and prisoner quality of life in HMP Cardiff are revisited throughout this thesis. For now, existing literature concerning the quality, or painfulness, of prison life is explored.

## 2.8 The Pains of Imprisonment

In 2020 Kevin Haggerty and Sandra Bucerius published an article that criticised the 'overuse' of the pains of imprisonment as an in-vogue concept in the social sciences. Particularly interesting is their allegation that penal scholars have simply added to Sykes' original formulation of the pains of imprisonment (1958) in the intervening years, producing an "unranked mess" (Haggerty and Bucerius 2020: 10) of pains ranging from inconveniences to traumatic experiences. Resultantly, they argue, this may dilute attempts to alleviate any of the pain and suffering that persists in contemporary prisons. The present research is first and foremost concerned with better understanding the maintenance of order in the contemporary prison, however I repeatedly note throughout this thesis that to do so necessitates a consideration of the 'real world' experiences of prisoners, and the prison experience is, at its core, painful. In chapter six I provide a detailed account of the pains attested to by prisoners in HMP Cardiff, complemented not by a discussion of the way that prisoners themselves cope with their sentences<sup>14</sup>, but instead an account of the way that the

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<sup>13</sup> Although, writing in 2003, Anthony Bottoms noted that some prisons were incorporating locally-set versions of 'Entry level' soon after the IEP was introduced nationally (Bottoms 2003: 121).

<sup>14</sup> Including individual coping mechanisms (see Goffman 1961) and collective coping mechanisms (see Sykes and Messinger 1960).

prison and its staff could potentially alleviate some of suffering that prison inflicts. As such, I agree with Haggerty and Bucierius' (2020: 11) assessment that it is important to consider ways to potentially alleviate some of the suffering that prison inflicts, however I would argue that any empirical research that attempts to broaden our understanding of what it means to be incarcerated is of value. Even if this 'only' adds to a 'list' of pains this is a worthwhile endeavour, not least because gaining access to the interior of the prison can be difficult. It also enables critical engagement with key existing literature on the pains of imprisonment, including Sykes' (1958) *Society of Captives* and Goffman's (1961) *Asylums*. These shall now be considered, for it is felt that any discussion of the pains brought on by incarceration would be incomplete without consideration of these seminal texts in the field.

### 2.8.1 Historical Pains

Sykes' *Society of Captives* was based upon an empirical investigation within New Jersey State Prison (NJSP), formerly known as Trenton prison, in the state of New Jersey, USA during the 1950s. Sykes collected data using a variety of methods, including reviews of institutional documents and prisoner casefiles, formal recorded interviews with prisoners, a survey amongst prisoners, observation, and informal interviews with staff of all levels and some prisoners (Sykes 1958: 147). Sykes notes within his methodological appendix that these unstructured 'conversations' were his most valuable source of data. NJSP was, and still is, a maximum-security prison. It housed the most serious, older and 'difficult' male offenders, usually serving long sentences (Sykes 1958: xxxv).

It is not necessary here to recapitulate the finer details of Sykes' pains of imprisonment. Instead, I will list these pains and highlight the implications of greatest relevance to this thesis. For Sykes, prisoners in NJSP suffered from: involuntary loss of liberty, scarcity of material goods or recreational activities, the deprivation of heterosexual relationships, deprivation of autonomy and deprivation of security. On one occasion Sykes considers the extent to which these pains are a tacit feature of incarceration, noting that autonomy will naturally be curtailed through the imposition of strict rules in prison, but it is their totality and, sometimes, irrationality, which renders them intolerable (Sykes 1958: 73-76). Official rules may be in discord with the personal interests of the inmate or considered to be fickle, or incomprehensible. This lack of comprehension is intensified by the denial of information, perhaps due to "bureaucratic indifference" (Sykes 1958: 74) where the giving of reasons for decisions is considered too burdensome. Alternatively, the denial of information may be a calculated move, designed to prevent the empowerment of prisoners (Sykes 1958: 74-75). The prisoner is thus reduced to a child-like state, dependent upon the custodians, unworthy of information and justifications for decisions. This loss of autonomy represents a further threat to the

identity of the inmate as he loses the status of 'independent adult' which has been developed over time (Sykes 1958; also Goffman 1961). This is a persistent theme within Sykes' analysis, in that these pains threaten the inmates' self-identity and provoke feelings of self-doubt (Sykes 1958). Sykes also influentially drew a distinction between forms of punishment, stating that whilst bodily punishments were no longer inflicted upon the offender as in centuries past, the new and more psychological pains he documented within NJSP should be seen as no less severe (Sykes 1958: 64). This mirrors Foucault's interrogation of the transformation from corporal punishment to confinement from the 1700s within *Discipline and Punish* (1977), where he questioned whether this shift did in fact represent a more 'civilised' or 'humanistic' way of punishing offenders. For Foucault, punishment by imprisonment was "more subtle, more subdued" (Foucault 1977: 8) but nonetheless painful, and it still retained its ability to inflict some physical suffering (Foucault 1977: 16).

In 1961 Erving Goffman's *Asylums* was published, informed by fieldwork undertaken within various health institutions in North America between 1954 and 1957. Goffman strove to obtain ethnographic data on various aspects of patients' lives through extended immersion in the field, not as a committed patient however, but as a form of 'participant observer'; a method which analyses conversational exchanges and narratives to explore the mundane realities of social life (Atkinson and Housley 2003: 110). His objective and identity were unknown to those with whom he interacted daily, including the staff and inmates of these institutions, yet they were known to management (Goffman 1961: 7). Goffman has termed such establishments 'total institutions', defined as follows:

A place of residence and work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from the wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life (Goffman 1961: 11).

Within these total institutions such as hospitals, prisons and Army training camps, daily life is conducted within a set space alongside a large group of others. The regime is tightly regimented and bound by explicit rules, imposed upon inmates by the single body of officials - a regime that is rationally designed to fulfil the institutional aims (Goffman 1961: 17). The total institution also imposes barriers that inhibit communication with the outside world and admission into the total institution necessitates a transformation of the self (Goffman 1961). This will include a physical transformation, where inmates will be stripped of their personal possessions, endure a search, and be required to adopt institutional clothing (Goffman 1961: 28-31). Whilst this process may enable socialisation into the pre-existing prisoner community, the loss of personal possessions may negatively impact well-being and hinder the presentation of ones outside 'image' (Morris and Morris

1963: 34). Having to additionally submit to new arrangements of authority, for example by showing deference to officers by addressing them as 'sir', induces both a mental and a physical change in the new inmate of the total institution.

Alongside the adoption of a new role, the individual is likely also to suffer from a distinct lack of privacy. Not only must the inmate spend almost all his time in the company of other inmates and under the supervision of staff; they must also accept that their life histories will be known by those in authority. Secrets can no longer be kept, and the inmate is unable to conceal from others the humiliating aspects of his or her life (Goffman 1961: 32-33). Similarly, the inmate loses their ability to 'save face' following unsettling or embarrassing experiences as their behaviour in any one location in the total institution will influence their entire status and reputation elsewhere. This inability to exhibit the 'usual' behaviours during unsettling or embarrassing social situations is further exacerbated when the inmate loses the autonomy that has been earned through maturing into an adult (Goffman 1961: 42-43). Inside the prison the basic level of choice and discretion that one has in terms of eating, sleeping and socialising is lost. Similarly, the inmate can no longer undertake some basic personal tasks independently, such as personal grooming, shaving, and using the telephone. Each of these must be facilitated by a member of staff, from whom permission and equipment is commonly needed. Through this, the autonomy of being able to perform basic human acts gained at adulthood is denied.

The temporal, geographical and institutional contexts within which Sykes' and Goffman's studies took place are quite different to the present study undertaken within a modern-day Category B prison in South Wales. This prompts questions regarding the relevance of these seminal texts today, something that I will reflect upon throughout the ensuing analysis chapters and, primarily, within the conclusion to this thesis. Many other more recent studies have empirically analysed the applicability of Sykes' original formulation of the pains of imprisonment to contemporary prison life, one of which has been selected for discussion here: Ben Crewe's (2011a) article discussing the 'softening' of penal power in the contemporary prison.

### 2.8.2 Contemporary Pains

Crewe's (2011a) article has been selected because it considers the pains of imprisonment as experienced by different types of male prisoners within establishments as a whole. This may be contrasted with existing literature that focuses upon pains felt most acutely by specific groups of prisoners such as long-term prisoners (see, for example, Flanagan 1980), young prisoners (Gooch 2019), elderly prisoners (Crawley 2005; 2007) or female prisoners (Rowe 2011). In detail, Crewe's

(2011a) article was primarily informed by research undertaken in the early 2000s within a medium security training prison in England<sup>15</sup> as well as research undertaken with Liebling and colleagues in at least five British prisons, both private and public<sup>16</sup>. Informal observation and interviews were the primary methods of data collection, similar to the present study. Usefully also, within this article Crewe recognises that it is possible to conceptually distinguish between types of prisoner suffering that (i) is inherent to the incarceration experience, (ii) arises due to conscious neglect, and (iii) suffering that arises due to institutional policies and practice. In chapter six I similarly reflect upon whether the pains described by prisoners in HMP Cardiff are felt ubiquitously by all, whether they could potentially be reduced by system changes, and whether they are a tacit feature of confinement.

Crewe's article begins by documenting the continued existence of physical suffering inside British prisons, something that was well-documented by penal scholars throughout the latter half of the 20th Century (see, for example, McDermott and King 1988; Cohen and Taylor 1972). Crewe (2011a: 511-512) then cites McDermott and King's 1988 article which highlighted the increasing prominence of bureaucracy in managing the prisoner population. Within this article, entitled *Mind Games*, McDermott and King describe the power that officers can wield whilst completing sentence reports, particularly in terms of labelling individual offenders. For example, if a prisoner is labelled as dangerous or 'subversive', this can significantly impair his ability to progress through the system and can result in endless, unplanned transfers across the Estate (McDermott and King 1988: 373). The relevance of this for prisoners in HMP Cardiff is explored in chapter six. Crewe then builds upon McDermott and King's paper, stating that the 'power of the pen' adds a new dimension to the modern prison experience. It represents a 'softening' of penal power in that it is no longer brutish or corporal, but not a *lessening* of penal power. Prisoners remain subjected to pains including the deprivation of liberty, scarcity of material goods and services, insecurity at the hands of other prisoners and missing loved ones, yet now this is in addition to "additional layer[s] of frustrations, which are neither inherent in the prison experience nor the outcome of sub-official practices and managerial failings." (Crewe 2011a: 512). These include the pains of uncertainty, the pains of psychological assessment, and the pains of self-government – each of which are the product of modern prison practices and not necessarily inherent to incarceration. The prisoner suffers uncertainty in the present due to the unpredictability of interactions with officers and inconsistency in behavioural expectations and rule-enforcement, arising from increased officer discretion.

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<sup>15</sup> HMP Wellingborough (see Crewe 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Belmarsh, Holme House, Risley, Doncaster, Wandsworth (see Liebling and Arnold 2004); also Rye Hill, Lowdham Grange, Altcourse (see Liebling et al 2011c).

Uncertainty regarding the future particularly plagues prisoners on indeterminate sentences, exacerbated by the impenetrable nature of parole decisions which are taken at the highest level. Such decisions appeared to be arbitrarily linked to the attainment of fluctuating goals, such as the completion of offending behaviour courses which may or may not be available within an establishment. Some prisoners in Crewe's research accordingly described the institution as 'setting them up to fail'.

The pains of psychological assessment, according to Crewe (Crewe 2011a: 515), are also felt most acutely by prisoners on indeterminate sentences; yet they will affect all prisoners as they undergo various offender assessments. Such assessments occur within HMP Cardiff, for example, upon entry into the establishment during the 'Cell Sharing Risk Assessment' (CSRA – see Appendix 14), again when applying for education or work, again during movements decisions, and again prior to release. These assessment processes are not only incomprehensible to many prisoners, they also serve to 'pigeon-hole' individuals into pre-defined and institutionally recognised categories. These categories may be at odds with the prisoners' own self-image, for example instead of 'father' or 'husband' they are confronted with the new label of 'persistent offender', and these new labels stick. Prisoners in Crewe's studies commented upon the permanency of sentence reports and the ease with which an officer can damage a prisoners' chances of progression with just the stroke of a pen. A trivial incident that occurred at the beginning of a sentence could unexpectedly affect later sentence decisions, leaving prisoners in a state of perpetual uncertainty about what may be used against him, and when (Crewe 2011a: 518).

The final, distinctly contemporary pain of imprisonment is the need to exercise self-governance. The seemingly endless offender assessments listed above, schemes such as the IEP and Mandatory Drug Testing (MDT), and (I would add) on-body cameras, have made for a self-disciplining and (relatively) compliant prisoner population without the need for direct supervision and intervention from officers (Crewe 2011a: 519). As summarised by Crewe:

Now, the prisoner is given greater autonomy – in a limited and localized way – but is enlisted in the process of self-government and held responsible for an increasing range of decisions [...] Prisoners cannot simply submit to authority, for docility is insufficient to indicate a commitment to addressing one's offending behaviour (Crewe 2011a: 519).

Crewe notes that offering passivity and simply 'staying out of trouble' are not adequate for sentence progression, and his interviewees described a change in the way that penal power is experienced. Whilst clear lines were previously drawn by officers in terms of tolerated behaviour, now these lines are blurred, and behavioural expectations have become more ambiguous. Whilst prisoners may have more freedom to 'cross the line', this does not mean that the line does not exist – instead, it is in many ways more nefarious because it changes. Prisoners are therefore in a more precarious position, blindly striving to act appropriately and forced to take full responsibility for their own actions due to this increased 'freedom'. As also cited by Crewe (2011a: 519; 2011b: 460), Foucault's (1977) description of the self-governance incited by the panopticon prison is of use here. For Foucault, the power of the panoptical gaze resided in its ability to incite those subjected to it to assume responsibility for their own subjugation, whether directly observed or not (Foucault 1977: 202-203). The 'responsibilised' prisoner thus becomes his own enemy if he offers inappropriate behaviour (Crewe 2011a: 519), and 'appropriate' behaviour is so narrowly defined within the modern prison that prisoners feel trapped; encouraged to actively engage with their sentence plans but not necessarily knowing how or being able to do so. This change in terms of the way that officers impose their authority and the pain caused by needing to actively manage one's own sentence would suggest that this new form of penal power, 'soft power' (Crewe 2011a, 2011b), is not inherent to imprisonment.

In reviewing Crewe (2011a), questions have been raised regarding the 'transferability' of these contemporary pains of imprisonment to HMP Cardiff. Also of interest is whether the suffering described by prisoners in HMP Cardiff can be considered to be a product of institutional practices or an implicit feature of incarceration, or indeed a mixture of both. In linking this discussion of the pains of imprisonment with the foregoing consideration of what makes for a 'decent' and 'legitimate' prison experience, questions also arise regarding implications for the maintenance of prison order. Do the pains of imprisonment have any bearing on prison order? Are the pains of imprisonment felt equally by all prisoners? What do officers perceive to be painful about imprisonment? Are there ways in which officers can alleviate the pains of imprisonment?

## 2.9 The Research Questions

In reviewing relevant existing literature, these and several other questions have surfaced throughout this chapter concerning prison order, prisoner compliance, prison legitimacy, and the variability of the prison experience. These have been holistically combined and grounded in my initial observations of the prison environment to formulate the following primary research questions:



1. To what extent may HMP Cardiff be considered a 'well-ordered' prison?
2. What motivates prisoners to comply with prison rules?
3. What are the contemporary pains of imprisonment and are they experienced consistently across all prisoners?
4. Does the experience of imprisonment differ for prisoner wing workers? If so, how, and are there any implications for the maintenance of an ordered prison environment?

These questions have guided this qualitative case-study conducted in HMP Cardiff. They have been designed with two aims in mind: firstly, to enable an in-depth exploration of the social world that exists within Cardiff prison specifically and, secondly, to assist with the cumulative production of knowledge about prison life, thus adding to and extending the existing literature outlined above. Within the next chapter, the methods adopted during this study will be outlined.

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## Chapter Three: Methodological Considerations

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### 3.1 Introduction

Recently there has been a call for more ‘honesty’ and ‘openness’ in the writing up of prisons research accounts (see, for example, Liebling 1999; Jewkes 2011). This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive and ‘open’ account of the methodological choices which have shaped the present research. Whilst methodological considerations are explored through reference to specific research encounters where appropriate, I have endeavoured to avoid falling into a “reflexive spiral” of excessive self-examination (Crewe 2009: 488) but instead remain faithful to the ‘real issues’ at stake – the maintenance of order in prison as experienced by those that live and work in HMP Cardiff. To achieve this aim, the chapter firstly outlines the research design, over-arching strategy, and the specific fieldwork outcomes. Next, I consider the process of gaining access to the field. I then critically discuss the various data collection and sampling techniques that were employed during this research before outlining my approach to data analysis. Finally, I offer some reflections on the research process including ethics, the role of the researcher, building rapport with participants, and validity.

### 3.2 Research Design

Although the empirical data presented in this thesis has been collected within one establishment and therefore reflects a particular social, geographical and historical context, it is hoped that the resulting account is not only contextually-sensitive but will also aid the understanding of contemporary prison life more generally. For example, the findings presented here concerning prisoner compliance were certainly shaped by the nature of HMP Cardiff as a local Category B male prison in South Wales comprised of a relatively homogeneous population of prisoners and officers (see chapters four and five). However, much of these findings echo those found by other researchers, in other prisons, adopting different methods, and at different times. Throughout this thesis I ‘talk to’ these existing studies, considering congruencies and contradictions, and what they might mean for our understandings of prison life. This research therefore aims to go beyond producing a purely contextualised, idiographic account or a sweeping, nomothetic account (Edwards and Hughes 2005); to ‘bridge the gap’ between constructivist and positivist epistemological traditions (Moses and Knutsen 2012: 7). The research questions guiding this project focus thinking on the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of order and relationships in a particular prison at a particular point in time, and this has dictated the adoption of a case study research design: “case research allows the

researcher the opportunity to tease out and disentangle a complex set of factors and relationships, albeit in one or a small number of instances” (Easton 2010: 119). However, it aims to link these specific practices to wider policy and research as well as ‘grander’ theoretical narratives on the sociology of imprisonment.

### 3.3 Why HMP Cardiff?

HMP Cardiff was selected as the site for this research for several reasons. Firstly, having previously conducted research in the prison for my Undergraduate and Masters degrees, as outlined in chapter one, it was something of a ‘natural’ choice for me, particularly considering the difficulties many researchers experience in gaining permission to conduct research in prisons (see, for example, Reiter 2014; Watson and van der Meulen 2019). I had pre-existing contacts which I felt would enhance my chances of gaining approval from NOMS and from the institution itself. Secondly and relatedly, I felt that my prior knowledge of the geography of the prison would be a great strength in terms of facilitating data collection and allowing for rapid assimilation into the field. Thirdly, I was confident that the quality and quantity of my resulting data would be improved by living within walking distance of the site as I could easily access the prison at any time, on any day, and in all weather conditions without having to consider travel arrangements. Whilst the selection of HMP Cardiff as the site for this research was primarily driven by pragmatic and methodological concerns, it was also an appropriate choice due to the insights it could provide on the experiences of adult male prisoners – the largest prisoner cohort in England and Wales. Although not a primary aim of this case-study, resulting findings may therefore be applicable to other, similar establishments and have implications for our understandings of the experience of imprisonment more generally.

### 3.4 A multi-method approach to data collection

Social research is something much too serious and too difficult for us to allow ourselves to mistake scientific *rigidity*...for *scientific rigour* (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 227, italics in original).

The aim of this study was to explore, from the perspectives of staff and prisoners, how order is maintained in prison. To achieve this aim, I was not rigid but flexible in my approach, adopting a range of data collection methods, including: participant observation, informal ‘conversations’ with prisoners and officers, group interviews with prisoners, individual and small group semi-structured interviews with officers, individual and small group semi-structured interviews with prisoners, the collection of memoirs from prisoners, the collection of staff comments boards, as well as

documentary analysis of prison policy and establishment statistics. Below is a table detailing my fieldwork outcomes:

**Table 1 - Fieldwork Outcomes<sup>17</sup>**

Method	Month/Year	Outcome
Participant Observation and Conversation	Entered the field March 2015, following sporadic visits November 2014 onwards <sup>18</sup> .  March – April 2015 ‘official’ first days on each wing.  Observation, conversation and immersion in the field continued for 12 months.	Detailed fieldnotes produced pertaining to experiences in each area of the prison: Reception, Induction wing (C wing), F wing, F1, CSU, A wing, B wing, D and E wings.  Supplementary aims: Negotiating access, building rapport and establishing contacts inside.
Pilot group interview with prisoners	May 2015	Multiple aims: 1. To ascertain the necessity of recording future interviews 2. Inform future interview questions 3. Ascertain best location for future interviews 4. Check efficacy of group activity with prisoners 5. Gain an ‘in’ on the wings.  Detailed notes taken to inform future interviews. Pilot interview not recorded – prior to permission being sought.
Group interviews with prisoners	June – July 2015	Six recorded group interviews with group of prisoners from each wing: F, A, B, D, E, C.  Ranged from 45 minutes to 1hour45minutes. Produced interview recordings, fieldnotes, prisoner’s poster activity ‘design your perfect prison’.
Group interviews with staff	Not Applicable	Had intended to conduct group interviews with staff but this was not possible as unable to take staff away from their posts in groups. I therefore developed the Staff Comments Boards as an alternative method of collecting collaboratively-produced data.  I was also able to conduct some ‘ad hoc’ group interviews with staff in wing offices, yet these staff group discussions were not organised as formally as the group interviews with prisoners.

<sup>17</sup> Please see appendices 11, 12, 13 for full participant tables.

<sup>18</sup> November 2014 – March 2015 engaged in sporadic visits to the prison to supervise undergraduate students visiting the prison for degree module, undertake Breakaway (self-defence) training, and maintain relationships with key contacts.

Method (cont.)	Month/Year (cont.)	Outcome (cont.)
Staff comments boards	July 2015	Comments boards from staff on each wing. Total: 6
Individual Interviews with wing staff	May - Sep 2015	Total: 23 with 30 participants (inc. some ad hoc group interviews with staff)
Individual interviews with Senior Officers (SOs), Custodial Managers (CMs) and Governor-grades	Sep - Nov 2015	Total: 7 with 8 participants (inc. one ad hoc joint interview with Governor-grades)
Individual interviews with prisoners	Jul 2015 - Feb 2016	Total: 44 interviews with 50 participants (inc. some ad hoc joint interviews)
Poems, stories and memoirs from prisoners	Collected throughout 2015	Total: 10 sources <sup>19</sup> from 5 participants

This broadly ethnographic approach, involving interviews to complement observation, is an established method used in the field of prison studies (see, for example, Crewe 2009; Crewe et al 2011; levins and Crewe 2015; Gooch and Treadwell 2015; 2020). It is an approach that offers ‘depth, insight and humanity’ to exploring the inner workings of the prison in a way that can shed light on imprisonment practices at the macro-political and micro-organisational levels (Sloan 2015: 403). This approach therefore complements the research aim of understanding the ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of prison order maintenance and the prison experience. These methods of data collection each possess various merits and disadvantages and through the adoption of a multi-method approach it is hoped that a valid and reliable account has been produced. Each data collection method will be explored in greater detail shortly, following an account of how I gained access to the field.

### 3.5 Access

Negotiating access to a closed institution such as the prison can be a lengthy and difficult process. It is not just established at the outset, but instead a continual process of negotiation, re-negotiation and explanation (Rowe 2007; Drake and Harvey 2014). The process of gaining informal, ‘emotional’ access to staff and prisoners and building rapport with participants is discussed later in this chapter. Presently I outline how I secured formal ‘physical’ access to the institution.

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<sup>19</sup> See Appendix 10 for table summarising collected poems and memoirs.

To gain physical access to the field I firstly had to receive approval from NOMS, something that I fortunately received very rapidly. Then, after a short period of informal talks with the HMP Cardiff Senior Management Team (SMT) I had secured 'formal' access to the field, and at the same time ethical approval from Cardiff University. I retained access to draw keys and received permission to use a Dictaphone.

Next, entry into the social world of the prison had to be negotiated with the final gatekeepers of the institution – prison staff. The success of my research was very much hinged upon the acceptance of the staff in HMP Cardiff, for without their cooperation I would not only have been prevented from understanding their views, I would also have been barred from accessing the prisoner population. Officers still control access on a daily basis, even after formalities have been met (Waldram and Saskatchewan 2009) and this access can be revoked at any time. It has been suggested that the "process of negotiating and obtaining access can give a valuable insight into the social organisation of the group or setting" (Crow and Semmens 2008: 107). This applies well to my research, where I soon discovered that access was best negotiated in line with the hierarchy of the prison<sup>20</sup>. In March 2015 I was kindly offered a workspace in the Business Hub (administration department) by two staff members that I had met during my undergraduate research project. After prudently gaining approval from their line-manager, I had secured an office, a computer, access to the Prison Service database, an HMPS email account, the NOMS Intranet and C-NOMIS; each of which greatly reduced my reliance upon prison staff and enhanced my credibility in the field. Now my fieldwork could begin in earnest.

### 3.6 Observation

To begin this research, I spent time in each area of the prison to familiarise myself with the prison regime and those that occupy this space. I began by conducting observations on each wing in turn, aiming to journey through the establishment much as a prisoner might, starting in Prisoner Reception<sup>21</sup>, through to the Induction wing, and on to the Remand wing. I then moved on to the convicted unsentenced and convicted sentenced wings, and finally on to the enhanced/resettlement wings. Time was also spent on the drug treatment wing, the Care and Separation Unit (CSU), the vulnerable prisoners unit, the kitchens, the workshops, the laundry, the Offender Management Unit (OMU), the Healthcare Unit, the Resettlement unit, the gym, the security cabins, the Chapel,

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<sup>20</sup> During the first week of my fieldwork I was offered a workspace in the Offender Management Unit (OMU) by a basic grade officer, only to be rebuffed in no uncertain terms by a higher grade officer that did not wish me to take up space in that department.

<sup>21</sup> Area where all new receptions/new prisoners come into the prison.

observing an adjudication, the Video Link room<sup>22</sup>, the central command room, staff offices on wings, the Visits hall, staff toilets, Governors offices, the Administration unit, the sniffer-dog kennels, and the exercise yards. With the exception of prisoners' cells, the wing toilets and the gym changing rooms, I entered all areas of the prison.

In each area of the prison I engaged in informal conversations with staff and prisoners, asked questions, wrote detailed fieldnotes, and generally engaged in all aspects of prison life in my field of observation, as a form of 'reserved participation' (Liebling 1999: 160; Crewe 2009: 469). My earliest start on the wings was 9:30am after prisoners have gone to work, as requested by a Wing CM. On one occasion I stayed until 7.30pm in the evening<sup>23</sup>, however I would usually try to leave before the end of the 'main shift' at 6pm on weekdays and 5pm on weekends as my presence aroused more suspicion after prisoners had been locked up for the evening. This is perhaps because I was expected to be interviewing prisoners as opposed to officers, and also likely due to the sharp drop in staff numbers in the evenings. I was sure to remain on each wing during the 'quieter' and 'busier' parts of the day, the former being mornings when prisoners attend work or education or are locked in cells so that staff had the time to talk to me; and the latter being the afternoon so that I could witness association and staff-prisoner interactions.

Data was collected in an unstructured way and I recorded detailed descriptive fieldnotes. I decided that I would be wholly overt in my note-taking, only asking explicit permission to do so the first time I entered a new area. I had to be 'polite' in my note-taking, for example by putting my notepad away when witnessing an incident or when participants were discussing something private or distressing. A similar technique was described by McDermott and King (1988: 358) where they endeavoured to maintain a "tactful and decent distance" so as to not intrude 'too far' on the already infringed privacy of the members of the setting. Whilst the majority of my notes were written 'in the field' I also voice-recorded longer notes and reflections during my walk home from the establishment each day. Through these actions I felt that I could balance the need to 'preserve the moment' whilst also maintaining the trust that had been built. It was important that I did not risk participants feeling that I was exploiting them and simply recording their personal experiences for scientific scrutiny (Emerson et al 2011: 36).

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<sup>22</sup> Room equipped with monitors for prisoners to remotely attend court hearings.

<sup>23</sup> On one occasion I stayed in the establishment until after 7pm after calling the gate to inform them that I would be keeping my keys until late (a strictly imposed rule that I was very careful to follow). Darkness fell and I was unnerved by how quiet and deserted the prison was. The few officers I met were very suspicious of me being there at that time. As I went to leave, I was shocked to learn that I was no longer able to open the gates along my usual route back to my office to retrieve my belongings before going home. My keys would not work, I had to take a detour, and upon entering the administration department all the lights were off and I realised I was completely alone. I resolved not to make a habit of staying until such a late hour [Fieldnotes August 2015].

### 3.7 Pilot group interview with prisoners

Prior to conducting any interviews with either staff or prisoners I conducted a pilot group interview with five prisoners on D Wing as this was one of the wings on which I received the most open reception from officers. I recruited these prisoner participants informally by going to the wing during the morning of the day of the pilot and simply asking who might wish to have a chat with me. This pilot group interview was conducted at the end of the wing at a table in full view of all officers and prisoners prior to and during association. This interview was not recorded because at that time I did not have permission to bring a Dictaphone into the establishment – permission that was sought on the same day, following this pilot group interview. This pilot lasted two hours and I reflected heavily on the experience in order to learn lessons for future interviews. I noted that, positively, it was very easy to recruit participants and that spontaneous recruitment was effective in establishing an informal atmosphere. Similarly, conducting the pilot on the wing meant that prisoners could bring themselves cups of tea and chairs, or go to the toilet without needing to be escorted. However, officers were in ear-shot much of the time which could have discouraged openness from participants. In terms of lessons learned, the need to record interviews became extremely apparent and I endeavoured to conduct all future prisoner interviews in private rooms where possible. In addition, I developed my ethical pre-amble about the need for consent forms, anonymity, and data usage. Finally, it became clear that I would need to invest a small fortune in biscuits if I were to be able to ‘give something back’ to all participants, as explored further below.

### 3.8 Group interviews with prisoners

Group interviews were conducted with small groups of prisoners from each of the main wings in the prison. Participants were sampled as outlined in Section 3.13 below, and the aim of the group interviews was two-fold. Firstly, I wished to identify the issues of greatest importance to prisoners in relation to the prison experience, staff-prisoner relationships, and prison order. Whilst I have on occasion included prisoner group interview snippets within the empirical chapters in this thesis, this data was predominantly used to inform the individual interview schedules. Secondly, conducting these group interviews was an avenue through which I could gain a set of prisoner contacts which could be drawn upon when starting the individual interviews.

The prisoner group interviews were scheduled in much the same order as the observation stage, following the progression a prisoner would usually make through the prison from the remand wing (F Wing) through to the enhanced/resettlement wings (D Wing, E Wing). However, I conducted the Reception (C Wing) group interview last simply because the F Wing Custodial Manager (CM) provided their approval sooner, allowing data collection to move forward most rapidly.



Six group interviews with prisoners were conducted in total. Most were conducted in dedicated spaces, such as classrooms in the resettlement unit or on the wings, and two were conducted at the end of landings. The group interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour 45 minutes, and an average of 4 prisoners took part each time. During the group interviews, prisoners were asked questions regarding various aspects of prison life including expectations of prison versus the reality of prison life; coping mechanisms; staff-prisoner relationships; safety and order; and the aims of imprisonment. A group activity was also included where the group was asked to 'design their perfect prison'. Each group was provided with a large piece of paper and some marker pens in different colours and participants were asked to collectively note down ideas about what their perfect prison might look like. A handout was also provided, containing some prompt questions to facilitate the generation of ideas, such as 'who is there?', 'what does it look like?' and 'any rules?' (please see Appendix 1 for a copy of this handout, and Appendix 2 for exemplar populated prisoner posters). A prison-themed cartoon picture, taken from 'The Simpsons', was included on the sheet to increase its attractiveness and informality. On most instances one or two participants volunteered to write down the ideas of the group, and on some occasions, I acted as scribe. This group activity proved extremely useful in establishing rapport within the groups as well as provoking insightful ideas about the aforementioned themes of order and relationships which were then used to inform the individual interviews with prisoners.

The term 'group interview' has been used here to signify that the group discussions conducted during this research do not claim to have been 'focus groups'. It is recognised that a 'focus group' is a specific form of group interview which usually involves a 'facilitator' and, crucially, the interactions between individuals are an important source of data in their own right (Kitzinger 1994; Morgan 1996). In certain ways the group interview adopted here is similar to the 'focused interview' (Merton and Kendall 1946), for example all participants in each group were involved in the same "concrete situation" – they were all incarcerated in Cardiff on a particular wing. I also used an interview guide which outlined the key questions to be asked, influenced by prior knowledge of the environment. However, the aim of the group interviews was not to interrogate the interactions between participants, but rather to gather a large amount of 'exploratory' data (Frey and Fontana 1991) in an economical manner (Bloor et al 2001). The group interview was designed to elicit answers to a pre-determined set of questions, and responses were therefore treated as one 'unity' as in an individual interview (Bloor et al 2001: 42-43).

### 3.9 Staff comments boards

In response to my inability to conduct formal group interviews with staff, I designed an alternative form of collaborative data collection to gain initial ideas and views from officers in the form of 'comments boards'. These comments boards were put up in the main offices on each wing inviting staff to write down responses to the following five prompts:

1. Describe a 'perfect' officer
2. Describe a 'typical' officer
3. Describe a 'perfect' prisoner
4. Describe a 'typical' prisoner
5. What is prison for?'

Each A4 poster included a cartoon picture to increase appeal - please see Appendix 3 for a copy of each blank comments board. I advised staff that they could write any ideas on these boards that they wished and that they did not need to include their names. Of course, this form of data collection did not guarantee anonymity or privacy as writing could be identified and the posters were in public spaces. Due to the public nature of the boards I was advised by some senior members of staff not to take the comments 'seriously', yet the notion that these comments were written with the intention of amusing colleagues is quite revealing in itself. For example, the general theme of the comments highlighted the acceptability of being derogatory about prisoners and the prison system; and the unacceptability of being positive or showing sympathy towards prisoners, as explored in chapter six. I returned one week later to pick up the comments boards and discovered that they had caused quite a stir. On one wing the sheets were left intentionally blank and it was explained to me that officers did not want management to view their comments and tell them off. In the end their fears did appear justified, when some senior officers removed some of the populated comments boards in preparation for a visit from the Director of Public Sector Prisons. Thankfully, I was able to locate all of these sheets, including from out of the bin. One member of basic-grade wing staff contacted me via email to inform me that the sheets had been taken down and it was suggested that '[management] obviously did not want [the director] to know what officers thought of his prison service'. A full exploration of the comments elicited from these staff comments boards, including the implications of the public nature of these boards, is given in chapter six.

### 3.10 Individual interviews with prisoners and with staff

Individual interviews were conducted separately with both staff and prisoners on an impromptu basis, sampled based upon 'willingness', as outlined below in the section on sampling. Individual

semi-structured in-depth interviews were selected as an appropriate mode of data collection as they enabled the gathering of data about the problem in focus from those that have the experience and knowledge to provide such information. Through using this technique, I was able to explore the 'experiences, motives and opinions' of these individuals, and to 'learn to see the world from a perspective other than my own' (Rubin and Rubin 2012: 3). In particular, the use of interviews with *both* staff and prisoners allowed me to explore multiple perspectives, so that I could gain a holistic picture of the prison social world (Rubin and Rubin 2012: 4).

Interviews with prisoners would take place wherever two chairs were available - most commonly in officer tea rooms or old cells converted into small storerooms on each wing, or occasionally at the end of landings away from others. I usually arranged for one-to-one interviews to take place in the mornings when the wings were quieter. I tried to avoid conducting interviews during association as far as possible, to avoid impinging upon the very limited time that prisoners have to complete their ablutions, make phone calls, and submit applications (see Appendix 14). In addition, when interviews were conducted during association they suffered interruptions from other prisoners more often<sup>24</sup> and recordings were affected by a great deal of background noise such as talking, shouts, bangs and alarm bells. Prisoners that were engaged in off-wing education and workshops during mornings had to be interviewed during afternoon association, however.

Interviews with officers took place almost exclusively in staff offices on each wing, or simply standing on the landings, so as not to disrupt their duties as far as possible. As with the prisoner individual interviews, I endeavoured to conduct staff interviews during mornings when the wings were quieter. Oftentimes, I would begin officer interviews by simply posing a question and as we settled into the conversation I would then ask if I could turn on my Dictaphone and present a consent form (see section 3.17 below on establishing rapport with officers).

A separate and standardised interview schedule was compiled for interviews with prisoners and with staff and questions took a 'funnel-approach' to help establish trust and rapport (Jewkes 2002: 76), moving from general questions about prison life to the more specific questions about the individual's life in prison. However, it is important to note that interviews were highly unstructured and often meandered, made possible by the lack of time-restrictions during fieldwork. This unstructured approach was appropriate as I did not aim to compare responses given to a set of pre-defined questions. It is also important to note that although data collection methods have been presented here as occurring in distinct stages, in fact observation and conversation occurred

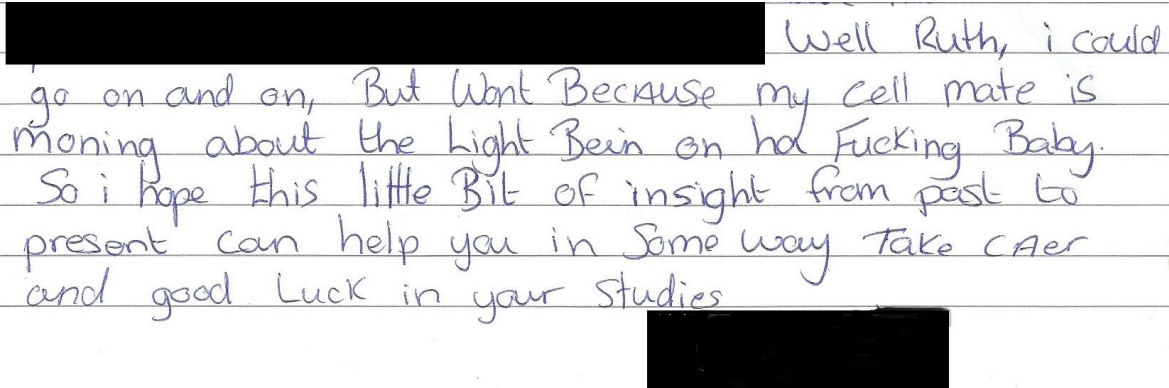
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<sup>24</sup> For example, friends of interviewees would often come up to say hello, stop for a quick chat, request a biscuit, and generally find out what was occurring.

concurrently. Throughout the entire fieldwork process, I was observing and talking as well as writing about significant events and experiences.

### 3.11 Prisoner memoirs, poems and stories

I also collected a small number of autobiographical narratives in the form of poems, stories and memoirs written by prisoners. I felt that it was important for prisoners to have an alternative means of communicating their views instead of interviews. I therefore made it quite clear on each wing that I would welcome any 'stories about prison life'. I offered little direction in terms of what these stories could be about, preferring to allow individuals to describe any events or feelings that they felt important. Most of these stories were written by hand and, as outlined below, I endeavoured to replace all paper used by participants. These stories and memoirs have been treated in much the same manner as the interview data in terms of thematic analysis, however it is acknowledged that these follow a different narrative form. They have been treated as autobiographical narratives in that through the writing of personal stories, the author has created their identity (Kennedy 2013) and constructed a particular way of viewing the world and their incarceration. Each story was written with a specific purpose in mind. For all except the poetry, the stories were written for the purposes of this research, and on occasions it is clear that the authors 'had me in mind' whilst writing, for example when addressing me by name:



Well Ruth, i could  
go on and on, But Wont Because my cell mate is  
Moning about the Light Bein on had Fucking Baby.  
So i hope this little Bit of insight from past to  
present can help you in Some way Take CAer  
and good Luck in your Studies

*Mr Glynn, adopting self-assigned pseudonym*

It is assumed within this thesis that the experiences shared by my participants are true, 'true' in terms of being true to the participant, and through interviews and other forms of qualitative data collection it is possible as a researcher to gain an insight into their world. Whether the data has been presented verbally or in writing, participants' accounts are a window through which the authors have interpreted their own selves, yet this does not render the stories 'false' or 'invalid'. It is accepted that the storyteller is the 'expert' and that they and only they have the 'authority on their

own life and the telling of that life; we must believe that they know the story and that we have been provided with a truthful representation' (Atkinson 1998: 59). Indeed, this belief has underpinned the entire research, where sole authority has been given to each speaker in determining the 'truth' of their accounts and all sources of data have been given equal credibility, with analysis undertaken in the same manner: "We should not, therefore, worry about whether 'the informant is telling the truth', if by that one understands the task of analyst to distinguish factual accuracy from distortion, bias or deception" (Atkinson 2015: 96). Instead, the 'authenticity' of accounts is assessed through their credibility, applicability and consistency (Lincoln and Guba 1985), as noted below.

### 3.12 Sampling Method

Throughout this study my field of observation was comprised of the entire institution. Every person, space, material artefact, incident, conversation, and interaction available within each area of the prison comprised my 'sample' whilst observing prison life. In terms of recruiting for the group and individual interviews with prisoners, the approach was slightly more structured, but became increasingly flexible as the research progressed.

To recruit participants for the group prisoner interviews I used probability sampling so that I could arrive in each area of the jail with a list of pre-selected prisoners for the group prisoner interviews. Using the C-NOMIS database, I generated a list of all cells on each wing and assigned each cell a number, forming my sampling frame (Thompson 2012). I then used an online random number generator<sup>25</sup> to select 5 cells from each wing which would provide me with a list of 10 prisoners (2 prisoners per cell). This number was chosen to enable 'over-recruitment' and secure between 5-7 participants per group interview on each wing, with an awareness that some prisoners would not be available or willing to participate in the group interview. As the research did not aim to isolate or compare the experiences of a certain 'type' of prisoner, every prisoner had a wholly equal chance of being selected. I adopted this structured sampling technique after observing that officers felt more comfortable when I conformed to their expectations of a researcher – someone carrying papers with an obvious purpose! It was initially easier to access prisoners when I could approach officers with a precise request – 'may I please speak to X, Y and Z this afternoon?' as opposed to 'can I just hang around here for a while and chat with people?'

During each of the group interviews with prisoners I asked participants if they would be willing to chat with me again on a one-to-one basis, and I began to compile a list of volunteers that could be drawn upon when I began the next stage of my data collection. As this next stage arrived, I began my individual interviews with prisoners using this list. By the time this list was exhausted I had become a

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.random.org/>

known entity in the prison and was fortunately able to recruit prisoners more flexibly. This was an extremely welcome development because I had encountered some prisoners becoming suspicious and alarmed when asked to speak to me, voicing concern that they had been chosen and were on my list for a reason. After putting in many 'man-hours' to establish trust with officers and prisoners and clearly stating that I intended to speak to as many people as possible on each wing, regardless of background or characteristics, it became much more acceptable for me to simply arrive on a wing and strike up conversations. This also allowed prisoners to approach me freely, as well as enabling me to spontaneously take prisoners to an interview room on my own. This form of 'unstructured sampling' allowed participants a greater degree of autonomy in deciding whether to partake in the research, a method that can be more 'humanising' (Bosworth et al 2005: 255). At times, these prisoner interviews with willing volunteers would take place immediately, and at other times I would return on a day and time suitable for the interviewee.

Sampling for the officer interviews was also undertaken in a spontaneous fashion based upon willingness. As outlined above, the conduct of recorded, 'formal' group interviews with officers proved to be impossible due to it not being viable to take officers away from their posts in groups. I therefore adopted a wholly flexible approach to recruitment for officer interviews, simply snatching any opportunity that arose to speak to officers individually or in small groups, in wing offices or on the landings.

### 3.13 Sampling Implications

When considering the way that sampling shapes your data, three 'dimensions' need to be considered: people, time and context (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Crow and Semmens 2008). In terms of the sampling of people, the use of 'willingness' as a sampling technique has a distinct drawback - it is likely that I spoke to the most confident prisoners and staff. To counter this, I tried to also approach staff and prisoners that seemed to be more reserved (see levins and Crewe 2015: 488), to simply chat about mundane topics<sup>26</sup> to build relationships before inviting them to a recorded interview. I had to rely on encouraging participation from a wide range of individuals by making myself available on the wings as much as possible, at different times of the day, and on different landings. Whilst I did not use purposive sampling, I consciously tried to speak to a range of officers, including different sexes, varied time in service and different socio-demographic backgrounds. I was similarly conscious of speaking to a range of prisoners, including those on all levels of the IEP scheme, prisoners serving a range of sentences, prisoners with various socio-demographic backgrounds, and employed and non-employed prisoners. Prisoners on Basic level of

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<sup>26</sup> Such as the weather, popular music and TV shows.

the IEP were the most hard-to-reach population as they spend most of their time locked in their cells (explored further in chapter five, section 5.7).

In terms of context and spatial sampling, I spent most time observing on D, E and C wings. Whilst I was able to conduct a similar number of recorded interviews with prisoners on all wings, I spent the most time observing in these areas of the prison. It is important to note that these wings can be characterised as noticeably 'quieter', with a greater ratio of staff to prisoners (see Table 14, Appendix 14). It is possible that staff on these wings perceived that I was in less danger, and correspondingly they afforded me greater freedom and autonomy. It is also highly possible that as my data collection on these wings occurred during the later stages of my fieldwork, my autonomy was enhanced due to being more well-known within the prison and due to my increased confidence. It was also on these smaller wings that I was informally provided with 'dedicated' interview rooms which were wholly fit-for-purpose – quiet, private, comfortable and with an alarm bell. Each of these factors greatly facilitated my data collection on these wings.

My fieldwork was also influenced by the enhanced access that I had to certain prisoners – namely, wing workers. During my fieldwork I enjoyed almost unbridled access to wing workers. I was able to freely speak to them at any point in the day and this is likely to have shaped my data collection and findings. Not only were wing workers more available to me due to spending more time unlocked out of their cells, staff members were also wholly unconcerned about me speaking to wing workers unannounced<sup>27</sup>, and they seemed to encourage me to speak to them as opposed to other inmates, particularly during the early stages of my fieldwork when I was less known in the field. It is unclear whether officers' preference for me to have contact with wing workers was because they expected these prisoners to say more favourable things about them or whether they suspected that cleaners posed less of a risk to my safety. Or, perhaps most likely, both factors played a role.

Interestingly, I felt most comfortable spending time alone with wing workers. Even knowing that the wing workers were in close proximity to me eased any anxiety that sometimes occurred whilst on the wings with all prisoners unlocked. On reflection, I felt that they must be 'the good guys' to be in that position, or at least the least likely to engage in any nefarious behaviour because they had more to lose by breaking the rules. Clearly, officers felt the same way, for an officer once asked one of the wing workers to 'protect me', and I ultimately developed closer relationships with these prisoners as shown in the following fieldnotes:

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<sup>27</sup> On most wings and at most times I did not need to seek approval from officers prior to speaking to prisoners, nor arrange interviews in advance. However, I would need to let them know that I was conducting an interview, with whom and in which location with all prisoners excepting wing workers.

*I felt completely comfortable with the wing workers and I could tell that officers were also happiest when I was with them. On one occasion the orderly in Reception was asked to look out for me...On C Wing I spent many days with this group [of wing workers] and if I was at a loose end, I would go back to C wing and hang out with this group of prisoners. They gave me prison food – spicy noodles and curried potatoes – and we chatted about life on the outside and social media...On F wing the wing workers shared their uniform of a white hat and apron with me and I helped them to serve food to all prisoners on the wing, something that everyone on the wing and, coincidentally a Governor, observed with amusement...On Christmas Day I spent much of my time with the servery workers down on the servery on D and E Wing. I was left completely alone with the workers on the servery underneath the wing...On all wings I went with the servery lads to go and pick up the food and bring it back to the wing and could smoke with them outside.*

- Amalgamated fieldnotes, Aug-Sep 2015

As a researcher I was clearly not immune to the ‘face fits’ culture (see chapter seven) that pervades prison and I made discretionary judgements about who I was ‘safe’ with and who I was not. The impact of fieldwork choices and unconscious (or conscious) biases is something that deserves further attention, especially because the access we have to various voices can have the power to shape knowledge production (Watson and van der Meulen 2019). I do however feel confident that I have afforded non-wing workers wholly adequate attention however, both during my fieldwork and within this thesis. The majority of participants that took part in my recorded interviews were not in fact cleaners (around<sup>28</sup> 11 of the 44 ‘formal’ recorded interviews conducted with prisoners were wing workers) and the bulk of my fieldwork time was spent on the wings during association to enable me the opportunity to speak to prisoners of all ‘types’. Yet, I acknowledge that I certainly developed the closest relationships with wing workers and spent the most time with them. Whilst this has allowed me to interrogate their experiences as an aspect of prison life that has hitherto not been given a great deal of attention (see chapter seven), it is important to acknowledge this as a feature of my data because wing workers most reliably benefit from the prison’s privilege system and most reliably offer their compliance – two themes running throughout the empirical chapters within this thesis.

### 3.14 Data analysis

We never enter research with a clear mind of theoretical ideas and assumptions...[s]ystematic recognition of one’s theoretical assumptions (and prejudices) and

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<sup>28</sup> Employment status was recorded in most instances, but not all.



the attempt to harness them to research purposes actually facilitates the production of more powerful and adequate explanations of empirical data (Layder 1998: 51).

As intimated in the above discussion of the research design and strategy, the approach to data analysis adopted here could not reliably be termed either 'inductive' or 'deductive'. Rather, it has been 'adaptive' - theory has been allowed to emerge from the data yet it is recognised that the theoretical insights presented in this thesis have been heavily influenced by prior knowledge and ideas about the sociology of imprisonment. It is important to note here that this research is based upon a variety of data sources including fieldnotes, reflections on informal conversations with participants, text written by participants, as well as group and individual interview transcripts. Layder (1998: 51) notes that this form of data-generation is applicable across data sources. Although 'adaptive theory' (see, for example, Layder 1998) encompasses elements of traditional grounded-theory style reasoning and hypothetico-deductive theorising, the term encapsulates a particular view of the theory-research relationship. Data and theory are considered mutually inter-dependent; they cannot be divorced from one another. Through grounding the empirical data collected in the present study within existing theoretical frameworks it is intended that this project will contribute to the *cumulative* growth and development of knowledge (Layder 1998: 2; Ackroyd 2003: 141).

To begin analysis, all data had to first be inputted into the chosen Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) package, NVivo. Whilst concerns have previously been raised regarding the possibility of losing proximity to the data when working within a computer programme (see, for example, Weitzman and Miles 1995; Lee and Esterhuizen 2000), the use of NVivo was deemed appropriate for several reasons. Firstly, it facilitated the process of coding and memo-writing, important aspects of theory generation based on new data (Layder 1998). Secondly, new CAQDAS programmes such as NVivo have become extremely responsive to the needs of users (Lewins and Silver 2007), allowing the formulation of hyperlinks between memos, codes and data extracts without removing extracts from their original context. Thirdly, using NVivo allowed me to easily store and manage large amounts of data from various sources in one discreet place (Lewins and Silver 2007). Finally, it is argued here that even with the utilisation of CAQDAS, the *interpretation* of data still remains firmly in the hands of the researcher (Brent 1984: 40).

All interview recordings and personal memo recordings were manually transcribed and then inputted into NVivo. Whilst I did, briefly, consider the option of hiring a professional transcription service I decided against this due to the sensitive nature of my recordings, as well as cost. This proved to be a good decision as it was during transcription that analytic codes and themes began to take shape. Prior to entering the field I had intended to transcribe concurrently to collecting data,

however this proved to be an impossibility due to the sheer amount of time I was spending in the prison and the exhaustion felt at the end of each day of fieldwork. Recordings were transcribed verbatim, and when inserted into this thesis quotations were edited for clarity. For example, I have reduced the amount of 'filler words' such as 'umms' and 'ahhs' and 'you know?'. This was deemed appropriate because I did not intend to undertake discourse analysis<sup>29</sup>. In addition, such filler words were more common in prisoner interview transcripts, and I was concerned that these could make them less intelligible compared to the officer transcripts. In selecting quotations for use in this thesis I chose excerpts that best encapsulated the themes in question, and therefore not every participant has been 'featured' in my empirical chapters. With well over one hundred participants, and thousands of hours' worth of interview data, choices were inevitable. Alongside my interview transcripts I also uploaded all other forms of data into my ever-growing NVivo project.

Following the completion of transcription, a more systematic approach to analysis was adopted, a process very similar to that outlined by Layder (1998: chapter 3). Firstly, all forms of data were subjected to provisional and pre-coding which involved the highlighting of passages of text which appeared to be pertinent to the general research questions or, at the very least, were deemed 'interesting'. I employed here a form of continual 'open' coding to allow for existing theories ('extant theory') and concepts emerging from the data ('emergent theory') to be continually linked (Layder 1998: 55). This enabled data to be categorised first using 'low-level' codes (such as 'missing family', 'boredom' and 'lack autonomy') which were then linked together to provide 'mid-level' codes (such as 'prisoner pains') and then linked into 'high-level' themes which formed the substantive chapters of this thesis (here, 'pains of imprisonment chapter'). My NVivo project was then comprised of a hierarchy of 'parent nodes' including high- and mid-level codes, and 'child nodes' including low-level codes. To avoid decontextualizing the data all transcripts remained whole in NVivo and where a quote has been used the original transcript was revisited to ensure that any important contextual data surrounding the specific quote was not omitted. As coding progressed it was then necessary to link these codes and concepts to further the generation of theory. Memos were written which began as personal 'theoretical memos' to record my own thoughts and ideas. These then developed into 'marginal memos' which contained thoughts relating to specific data extracts. These memos, reflections and notes were continually revisited and revised throughout the data analysis process and, indeed, data collection. They helped to provide a substantive analytic framework based upon both extant and emergent theory.

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<sup>29</sup> Defined as the study of patterns of language and how language is structured in different parts of social life, see Jørgenson and Phillips 2002.

### 3.15 Ethical considerations

Conducting research in the prison environment demands a particular sensitivity to issues of ethics. The prison can be a volatile and affective space where risk is pervasive, both physically and emotionally, for both researcher and researched. During my research, I had a responsibility towards my participants, the institution, and my research aims. These responsibilities at times caused conflict, for example when I became privy to illegalities or things were asked of me which were beyond the scope of my role as researcher. In the following sections I describe the ways in which I adhered to proper ethical practices by drawing on specific fieldwork encounters where appropriate.

As outlined by the British Society of Criminology (BSC 2006), researchers in the field of criminology have an ethical responsibility to the discipline, to colleagues, to research participants, and to sponsors. Responsibilities have been met by using clear citations, acknowledgements, and through reflecting upon the experiences of participants and organisations involved. Good relationships with the funding body of this research, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), have been maintained and their ethical principles have been adhered to including the minimisation of harm and the preservation of integrity and accountability (ESRC 2016). In ascribing to the above, it is felt that this research has met the formal requirements for high quality and ethical research practice, and that appropriate methods of data collection and analysis have been adopted so that a valid account has been produced. The principles of reliability, confidentiality, transparency, professionalism and honesty recommended by the Association for Qualitative Research (AQR 2016) have therefore been upheld. Ethical approval from the Ethics Board of Cardiff University's School of Social Sciences was secured at the outset of the project. Now follows a discussion of how responsibilities to research participants have been met.

#### 3.15.1 Responsibilities to research participants

As recognised by the BSC (2016: 3), researchers should be "sympathetic to the constraints on organisations participating in research and not inhibit their functioning by imposing any unnecessary burdens on them" (BSC 2016: 3). Although my presence on the wings aroused curiosity and caused prisoners to gravitate towards me, I endeavoured not to place any extra burdens upon the establishment by adopting a flexible approach to fieldwork. This was achieved by, for example, abandoning the use of officer group interviews in favour of ad hoc, spontaneous recorded conversations so that officers could remain at their stations. Similarly, I would follow the requests of officers when asked, for example, to remain in the prison and undergo questioning about my movements after a gate had been left open (not by me, I might add). I was ethically bound to respect officers' requests as part of my responsibility to the institution.

It was important that all those who wished to take part in the research were not excluded from doing so due to characteristics such as gender, age, race, religion, ethnicity, sexuality and offending history, as well as mental, learning and physical disability. This research aimed to understand imprisonment as experienced by prisoners of all backgrounds in Cardiff, and so research materials were presented in an accessible manner and all paper consent forms were also communicated verbally. At the request of Cardiff SMT, prisoners categorised as 'high risk to females' were however excluded from participating in individual interviews. In terms of staff, all officers that were willing to take part in the research were given the opportunity to do so.

### 3.15.2 Gaining informed consent

I gained fully informed consent from all prisoners that participated in a recorded interview through a consent form, a copy of which is included in Appendix 4. This form explained the nature and purpose of the research, how data would be used, and participants' rights. I also provided methods of further contact including the name and university-based contact details of my main supervisor (with her kind consent). I advised prisoner participants that they could contact me via wing staff or, preferably, via a note placed within the Complaints Boxes on each wing. This was deemed the most appropriate method of contact because all prisoners have equal access to these boxes and any notes would reach me confidentially<sup>30</sup>. On the second page of the prisoner consent form I requested personal information to contextualise my interview data<sup>31</sup>. I provided all participants with the opportunity to ask questions prior to signing the consent form and ended each interview by offering thanks. The Cardiff university logo was included on the prisoner consent form to demonstrate my affiliation with an external organisation. In terms of the consent form given to officers (please see Appendix 5), this differed slightly in that I requested alternative demographic information<sup>32</sup> and provided the name of my key contacts inside the prison, two governor-grade officers, to enhance my perceived authority and right to set foot inside the institution. Relatedly, the HM Prison Service logo was included alongside the Cardiff University logo on the staff consent forms to signify that my access had been officially approved. Through using consent forms one of the key ethical responsibilities to my research participants was met.

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<sup>30</sup> I was housed in an office with the Complaints Clerk in the prison and trusted that all notes would be passed directly to me.

<sup>31</sup> Information requested on prison consent form: age, ethnicity, length of time spent in Cardiff prison, length of time spent on current wing, whether been in Cardiff prison before, length of time spent in prison throughout life and how long expected to stay in Cardiff during present sentence. See Appendix 4.

<sup>32</sup> Information requested on staff consent form: length of time spent working in Cardiff prison, length of time spent working as a prison officer, which area/wing usually posted, whether provided with any training on the role that staff-prisoner relationships play in maintaining prison order. See Appendix 5.

Not all those that participated in this research were able to provide fully informed consent however, as it was very difficult to control who entered my 'field of observation' (Murphy and Dingwall 2001). This includes those that participated 'indirectly' during periods of observation and those that provided data during informal, non-recorded, conversations. It simply would not have been feasible to obtain the informed consent of every person in the establishment, particularly as both the staff and prisoner population changes daily. I am also highly confident that if I were to consistently brandish consent forms whilst on the wings engaged in informal conversations my access and perceived integrity would have suffered greatly. I had initially expected some prisoners to display discomfort about signing a consent form due to the obvious similarities with police interviews. Interestingly however, it was in fact officers that held the greatest reservations about signing a consent form, as well as being in the presence of my Dictaphone. I therefore spent a great deal of time explaining the purpose of my consent forms and reassuring officers that their anonymity would be assured, just as it would with prisoners. Extra precautions had to be taken to protect identities both during the research and when writing up this thesis, as outlined below.

### **3.15.3 Confidentiality, Anonymity and Protection from harm**

Within my consent forms all participants were informed that their identity would be anonymised, and that all information provided would remain confidential, unless harm to self or another person was mentioned in which case a relevant body (internal or external to the prison, as appropriate) would be informed. Decisions must sometimes be made about whether it is appropriate to break confidentiality and disclose information to others (Wiles et al 2008). Thankfully, this occurred on only one occasion and the individual at risk of harm was me. During an individual interview with a prisoner in an isolated location he strongly expressed an attraction to me, causing me to politely but abruptly end our interview. Afterwards, I felt compelled to inform a female member of staff about the encounter as I had felt genuinely concerned for my welfare in that moment. Fortunately, no harm occurred, and I was able to avoid being alone with this prisoner again. Additionally, I placed faith in this having been an isolated incident and therefore I confidently continued to conduct individual interviews with prisoners in various locations across the prison.

During qualitative studies conducted in a single setting it can be extremely difficult to ensure that data is wholly anonymised because interview transcripts, fieldnotes, and consent forms often record enough detail to render an individual identifiable (Murphy and Dingwall 2001: 341). Participants may be able to identify themselves or others in the resulting research account, especially if there are relatively few people sharing the characteristic given (Baez 2002). In the writing-up of this research I therefore had to make choices about which details to omit for the sake of protecting identity,

reputation or preventing harm; and which details to retain to remain 'faithful' to the data (Saunders et 2014). For example, there are relatively few female officers in Cardiff, especially amongst the higher ranks, and resultantly I have on occasion needed to omit or alter genders and/or job titles to avoid quotations being easily attributable to certain individuals. I also had to make choices during data collection. For example, I conducted a recorded interview with a prisoner and at the end of this interview he was extremely anxious about what had been discussed. I went with him back to the wing, continually trying to reassure him, and I promised to return the following day with the interview transcript so that we could read it together and he could see what had been said. Upon leaving the prison that evening I transcribed our interview throughout the night ready to present to him the following day (not an easy feat, considering that our interview had lasted two hours). We then together read the entire 15-page transcript so that he had the opportunity to request sections to be removed. Thus, consent was obtained to use the final data resulting from the interview. In addition, the interviewee watched me delete the recordings from my Dictaphone so that he could be assured that a record has not been kept. The process of going through the interview transcript together appeared to be extremely cathartic for this participant, not only in terms of allaying his fears about what had been disclosed but also in terms of allowing for unanticipated reflection on his own words and descriptions of people and events. Whilst allowing this participant to 'doctor' his own account may illicit criticism, I feel that this was the best course of action for my participant's well-being, and for maintaining personal anonymity.

A further step taken was to use pseudonyms for all participants – a common practice in protecting participant identities (Murphy and Dingwall 2001: 341). I was initially hesitant to adopt pseudonyms because of a belief that names 'mean something' – they are part of one's identity and our impressions of strangers can be shaped by our prior experiences of people that share that name (Brennen 2000). However, it transpired that with such a vast number of participants, assigning pseudonyms would significantly enable comprehension and allow readers to 'follow' individuals through the tale this thesis tells. Considering the relative homogeneity of my sample in terms of gender, age and nationality it was not feasible to attribute quotations using demographic characteristics such as 'Welsh male, aged 29'. The use of numbers instead of names was also rejected due to potentially dehumanising prisoner participants. I therefore adopted a pseudonymisation technique that I was most comfortable with and was as randomised as possible – I located a list of actors that had appeared in my mother's favourite film and randomly allocated names to my participants simply in chronological order. Although it is common practice to select pseudonyms which are 'fitting' to the individual according to a chosen characteristic, such as age or

ethnicity, this is not always straightforward (see Saunders et al 2014). I selected names that were as 'neutral' as possible in terms of culture, age and ethnicity, only considering gender during selection. This allowed me to remain faithful to my belief in the significance of names and avoid choosing a characteristic with which to align names which may have been unacceptable to my participants. Where *self-assigned* pseudonyms were chosen, for example with written stories and memoirs, these have been included in instances where identities would not be at risk. If the self-assigned pseudonyms could have revealed identities, I selected an alternative pseudonym. Where prisoner interviewees referred to officers by name, I have anonymised these within the text using 'X' in all instances. This is because I did not obtain officer names during my fieldwork, and therefore could not map references made by prisoners to my own interviewees.

It was decided that the fieldwork site would not be anonymised. To do so was deemed futile – with the research taking place over a long period of time in only one site, anonymity could not be guaranteed - a view shared by other prison scholars (for example, King and Elliot 1977: xii; Crewe 2009: 487-488). In addition, anonymisation was not a stipulation of NOMS, the establishment itself, nor the Cardiff University Ethics Board. It was also felt that institutional anonymisation could de-contextualise findings which reflect the geo-historical background of the establishment. All data collected during this research was stored securely whilst within the prison and, off-site, within approved university premises. In terms of electronic data, a sophisticated encryption programme has been used to avoid data leakage.

The rights, interests and privacy of all participants have been protected as far as possible during the present research, as stipulated by the BSC Ethical Guidelines (BSC 2016) for minimising risk of harm. For example, I was ready to provide the details of support groups available to prisoners and staff within the prison and externally, such as The Samaritans. This, in addition to the safeguarding actions outlined above, helped to reduce any risk of harm posed to my research participants. In employing the above techniques and through writing the present frank account of the "ethical molehills" (Rowe 2007) that I overcame, it is hoped that responsibilities towards the discipline of criminology, to colleagues, to sponsors, to the institution, to my research participants and to my research aims have been met.

#### 3.15.4 Risk to the researcher

In terms of mitigating risks to myself, I had previously completed personal safety and key-training during my undergraduate dissertation research in Cardiff, however prior to starting the present fieldwork I was requested by a new governor-grade officer to also complete self-defence training

within the prison. Whilst I did not leave this training feeling overly confident in my ability to physically defend myself – and I dearly hoped that my training would never be needed – completing the course was important for securing access. Managing the risk posed to yourself as researcher and negotiating access are intricately linked when conducting research in the prison environment. It is important to be mindful of risk but to not let anxiety affect the quality of the research (SRA 2016). This advice is particularly applicable to my fieldwork, for if I were to appear uncertain, anxious or overly cautious my access and experiences would have been marred. Similarly, it was important not to appear to be unprofessional, naïve, or frivolous. If staff had doubted by ability to work independently on the wings this would have certainly disrupted my access:

As in other situations where identities have to be created or established, much thought must be given...to 'impression management'. Impressions that pose an obstacle to access must be avoided or countered as far as possible, while those which facilitate it must be encouraged (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 65).

Thus, my own safety and my access were principally achieved through my clothing, my self-presentation, and my demeanour, as now explored.

### 3.16 Establishing Rapport with Officers

On initial arrival on each wing during the early stages of my observations I received a similar reception from members of staff, including, quite unsurprisingly, a level of suspicion about my purpose and agenda. During the first 15 minutes of my invasion of their territory I was often asked 'so what do you want to know?', being pushed to ask my questions and be gone; often witnessing a rolling of eyes which suggested 'I don't have time for this' as I produced my ominous-looking observation and interview 'schedule'. To facilitate these social interactions with officers and establish rapport, I employed a few techniques.

Upon arrival on each wing I would make my way directly to the staff office to make my presence known, greeting any prisoners and officers I met along the way. I would then proceed to remove my coat and take a seat - regardless if offered to me or not - so as to indicate that I was 'there for the long haul' so they must, quite simply, put up with me. I would then clearly state that my research was being undertaken for my university course and not for the prison management team or NOMS, about whom criticism was readily offered by many wing officers. I would empathetically listen to staff grievances about their working conditions, demonstrating my willingness to learn about the prison and my genuine interest in the experiences of staff. When explaining my research, I was sure to emphasise that I was *also* interested in the experiences of staff, not only prisoners. This was met



was satisfaction by staff, as much of their prior experience of research had been conducted solely with prisoners.

I also put up an information sheet for staff in all wing offices explaining my research, including a photograph and my contact details (please see Appendix 6). Within this notice I stated that I had NOMS approval and the support of the prison governors. I was hesitant about stating that my research had support from my 'friends in high places' (Sparks et al 1996: 349) as this may have led officers to believe that I was there simply to 'spy'. Indeed, one well-known officer affiliated with the Prison Officers Association (POA) suspected just that. This officer consulted the staff working alongside me in the administration department to check whether I was 'reporting everything back to the managers'. My trusted contact in the administration department confirmed that he did not believe this to be my intention and advised the officer to speak to me personally – a verification that proved to be highly valuable in terms of my access. Upon meeting this officer again, I spent time offering reassurances about my agenda. For example, after noticing me taking notes during our conversation he jokingly but nervously stated 'I hope you're not writing down our names'. In response, I was quick to state that I would not be recording any officer names, just as I would afford the same rights of anonymity to prisoners. This seemed to appease any further concerns and very soon this same officer became an ally and was extremely forthcoming in offering his experiences and opinions, encouraging his colleagues to do the same. The approval of this well-known officer, and my office-mate in the administration department, added a supporting layer to the credibility bestowed upon me from above by the prison's Senior Management Team.

A key aspect of building rapport with staff and establishing my credibility was through carrying keys. The decision whether to carry keys can bring with it quite significant implications, both positive and negative. On the one hand, carrying keys disbars you from experiencing one of the central aspects of confinement – the inability to move freely (Earle 2014). Furthermore, Sparks et al (1996: 348) suggested that carrying keys can lead prisoners to misidentify you and possibly inhibit differentiation from staff, something that I return to shortly. On the other hand, carrying keys affords innumerable benefits in terms of independence. For example, carrying keys significantly reduced the burden that my presence placed upon officers as I could move into and around the establishment at will, as well as taking prisoners to interview rooms as needed. As also noted by Jewkes (2002: 87), prisoners in Cardiff expressed no objections to my carrying keys, indeed, my credibility in their eyes also seemed

to increase<sup>33</sup>. I am confident that I would not have been able to collect such a large amount of rich data, particularly observation data, without carrying keys.

Finally, my credibility amongst officers was enhanced through my conduct and the adoption of an “institutionally permissible demeanour” (Martin et al 2014: 7). I was careful to respect the wishes of staff at all times (Whetter 2015), for example by following their instructions to ‘always keep a white shirt in sight’, or their requests to leave an area or switch off my Dictaphone if required. Respecting the authority of officers and actively responding to the changing prison environment assisted in cultivating trust in my ability to work independently. Interestingly, this building of trust was further enhanced when officers observed me interacting closely with prisoners.

Prior to entering the field, I was concerned that I would not be able to build rapport with both staff *and* prisoners - that building relationships with one group would bar me from the other group, as noted by Miller (1952: 98). In terms of building rapport with officers, this was not an issue as staff appreciated my willingness to spend time exclusively with prisoners without direct supervision. However, the time I necessarily spent with officers initially to gain access to the entire institution may have caused some prisoners to be wary of me, to alter their behaviour or to avoid speaking candidly. During my first week of prisoner individual interviews on F Wing a prisoner commented as such:

*Jared: [I]f you were just sort of brought in to another jail, [in jail] clothes, and you went to that jail, and sort of like not undercover, but sort of similar to everyone else then you would see the real behaviour...[b]ut coming in obviously in your own clothes and being next to the officers, and introducing yourself as, telling everyone what you're doing, everyone is sort of tip-toeing around you so you won't see the real, you won't see them at face value you just see what they want you to see.*

- Jared (Jim, Jeremy and Jared, ad hoc joint interview)

Jared, Jim, Jeremy and I then went on to discuss undertaking undercover research in prisons, and the difficulties I would face attempting to do so in a male institution. Whilst my rapport with prisoners gradually increased over time, as discussed further below, it is important to acknowledge Jared's thoughts and the implications for my role as researcher.

It is always difficult to move from ‘outsider’ to ‘insider’ when conducting research in an alien setting, and the nature of the prison can render this process even more difficult. The prison is an extremely

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<sup>33</sup> For example, as I was making my way to an interview room off the wing into an area not usually available to prisoners, the prisoner interviewee with me commented: “Wow, you have a lot of sway here miss!” and appeared pleased that we had both been trusted to move off the wing together unsupervised by wing staff.

opaque and almost impenetrable space (Wacquant 2002) and all those entering the environment not classed as a prisoner or member of staff will be automatically awarded 'outsider' status (Rowe 2014). This is especially so as a female in civilian clothing within a male prison. Although I was unable to become a complete 'insider' as I was not incarcerated or employed within the setting, I was not always on the peripheral. Sometimes I traversed into becoming an 'active member researcher' (Adler and Adler 1987), or to adopt the typology of Gold (1958), I moved from 'observer-as-participant' towards 'participant-as-observer'. I was able to move into and around the prison at will and I developed relationships with members of the setting over a prolonged period of time through regular contact, yet I did not generally assume a "functional role" (Adler and Adler 1987: 37). There were however several occasions when I did actively participate in the setting; for example when closing a cell door<sup>34</sup>, escorting a new officer to the wings<sup>35</sup>, unlocking and locking gates when escorting prisoners to interview rooms, helping a prisoner with a housing application, joining the servery workers in distributing food including wearing their uniform, being an 'extra pair of keys' when a large group of prisoners were moving across the establishment, assembling wing workers for work via the wing loudspeaker, being locked and left in a cell, or contributing to the cleaning of an area of the prison in preparation for a visit from a NOMS official. At times and for short periods, I became privy to 'inside' secrets amongst staff, something which can mark you out as an insider in the group, even if these secrets are not particularly 'dark'<sup>36</sup> (Goffman 1956: 88). As previously noted, I also attended the prison on 'special occasions' such as over Easter and on Christmas Day, as well as arriving early in the morning at the start of staff shifts and staying into the evenings where permitted, including on weekends. It was at these moments that I felt I had succeeded in 'subjecting myself, my own body and my own personality...to the set of contingencies that played upon this set of individuals' (Goffman 1989: 125), at least for a time and to the degree possible in the tightly-controlled environment. However, I could never 'take the same crap that they'd been taking'

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<sup>34</sup> After being given permission to give a prisoner some writing paper to replace the paper he had used to write me a story I went to the prisoner's cell and an officer unlocked it for me. I gave the prisoner the paper and thanked him again for his time. All officers were busy completing evening 'bang-up' and I had to close the cell door. I felt extremely awkward doing this and the prisoners themselves could see my discomfort. I apologised for having to close the cell door. After closing it I then asked an officer to check that it had been closed correctly.

<sup>35</sup> This new officer was completing his initial week of training prior to going to Newbold officer training college, and therefore did not yet have keys or know his way around the establishment. I was one of the first people he met in the prison and we developed a novel relationship where I was the party with the most experience of the prison. After coming to 'my' office in the administration department to collect his uniform, the officer needed someone to take him to the wings and I was happy to oblige. For most of his first week he would come and have lunch with me in the admin hub – providing an incredible opportunity for data collection, albeit a baffling situation for me as a researcher.

<sup>36</sup> This most commonly occurred when associating with staff where I learnt about inter-personal relationships in the prison or 'rumours' of changes happening in the establishment. Although extraneous to my research, they served to make me feel that I was gaining the trust and acceptance of my participants.

(Goffman 1989: 125); and I do not wish to suggest that my experiences are comparable to those of officers and certainly not of prisoners. Indeed, as suggested by Jared above, doing so would only be possible by masquerading as a prisoner, and the majority of activities that I was able to *actively* participate in were usually reserved for officers. So how did I establish rapport with prisoners?

### 3.17 Establishing Rapport with Prisoners

As expected prior to entering the field, my presence on the wings attracted a great deal of attention from prisoners on all wings. In much the same manner as outlined by Sparks et al (1996) I was often mistaken for someone with a known purpose, such as a CARATS (substance misuse support) worker or, more commonly, a psychologist. On mention of my being a 'student' a prisoner approached me to engage in a conversation about applying for university. At the end of this conversation he enthusiastically asked me to 'sign him up' to a university course, to which I responded that I wasn't an advisor or education liaison worker. Upon discovering that I was in fact only a lowly PhD student his disappointment was palpable. Mentioning that I was a 'student' also led many prisoners to believe that I was training to be a prison officer. At this I would quickly stress that I was not a prison officer nor was I training to be one and that my research was being carried out for my university course, so I was there to learn about prison life. In response some prisoners would ask 'why would you want to know about us?' and others took it as an opportunity to tell me interesting tales about prison life. Being open about my reasons for being in the prison generally allowed me to distinguish myself from the prison authorities, facilitating connections with prisoners, although unfortunately confusion still arose on one occasion regarding my capacity in the environment<sup>37</sup>. I was further able to distinguish myself as independent and gain an 'in' with the prisoner community through my personal appearance and behaviours, as follows.

During my fieldwork my personal appearance was a salient consideration (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 66), and something that prisoners commented upon and seemed to be more attuned to in comparison to officers. A great deal of time was invested in maintaining a suitable appearance which was acceptably non-revealing, an explicit prison rules for all staff and civilians, but which allowed me to feel comfortable and to 'be myself'. Maintaining this balance has been discussed by other prison researchers such as Abigail Rowe (2014). Yet it is difficult to know the exact manner in which our

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<sup>37</sup> After participating in a recorded interview an IPP prisoner requested that I become a character witness in his upcoming court hearing. Unfortunately, this was neither possible nor appropriate due to legal and ethical constraints and I therefore visited the prisoner in person to inform him and offered to return his consent form and all data. The participant became extremely distressed, verbally and physically showing his agitation. All I could do was apologise profusely which felt entirely inadequate. The encounter was extremely upsetting for me on a personal level as well as in my capacity of researcher. Participant data omitted from this thesis at his request.

personal characteristics shape our research encounters, especially as a lone researcher (Crewe 2014: 393). We have no concrete point of comparison regarding how our age, gender, ethnicity, looks or manner may have defined our field relationships and the nature of the disclosures from our participants. However, it is important to acknowledge and interrogate the role that our 'personal front' (Goffman 1956) may have played, especially in terms of the specific research context. So who am I? I am a young<sup>38</sup>, white female with an English accent. I have minimal yet visible tattoos and piercings, I indulged in smoking at the time, and I have a preference for adorning Adidas trainers. With whom was I interacting during my research? In terms of prisoners, these were predominantly white, young, economically disadvantaged males from Wales. How did my 'outsider' profile interact with those on the inside?

I noticed that my bright, Adidas branded trainers soon became a talking point amongst prisoners. This is interesting because clothing can have significant implications for one's social identity (Davis 1992) and certain brands may have cultural or class affiliations<sup>39</sup>. In addition, footwear is the only item of non-prison-issue clothing that non-remand prisoners are typically allowed to wear, making it one of the few means through which prisoners can retain a link to their outside identities after being 'stripped of their civilian selves' (Goffman 1961: 51) upon incarceration. Wearing branded trainers was a status symbol amongst prisoners, and something that only a few could afford to purchase through the prison catalogue (see Appendix 14). My tattoos and piercings also became a talking point, and I often engaged in an 'I'll show you mine if you show me yours' exchange with prisoners, discussing the various merits of local tattoo artists with whom I was also familiar. Many prisoners also noted with pleasure that I was smoking 'burn' (hand-rolled cigarette tobacco). At this time, the smoking ban had not yet been enforced in HMP Cardiff and the vast majority of prisoners smoked, and almost exclusively self-rolled cigarettes, whereas staff that I had seen smoking generally smoked tailor-made cigarettes. In addition, officers were firmly discouraged from smoking anywhere in the grounds whereas I was able to. Several prisoners seemed quite shocked when they saw me smoking outside of the wings and this was an opportunity for me to reiterate that 'I can, because I am not a member of staff'<sup>40</sup>. As noted by Waldram and Saskatchewan (2009: 4), engaging in 'unorthodox activities' helped to establish my relative independence. It also appeared to assist in making me more approachable and gave the impression that I was likely to overlook misconduct, for example some prisoners began smoking in front me in no-smoking areas (something also experienced by Lucy Carr during her research in a female prison, see Carr 2015). As discussed in much greater detail in

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<sup>38</sup> As perceived by my participants.

<sup>39</sup> For a stark example see the following article: Sunday People. 2004. 'How to spot a Chav'.

<sup>40</sup> Fieldnotes, April 2015. Prior to the smoking ban, officers were allowed to smoke within the grounds of the prison in certain areas but only during designated smoking breaks.

chapter four, the majority of prisoners in Cardiff originate from the local area and we therefore had shared experiences of the local nightlife, allowing us to reminisce about nights out in various clubs and pubs around the city. During my fieldwork I also consciously kept up to date with popular TV shows and (even) rugby so as to enable opportunities to talk about things that were very much 'neutral' and unrelated to prison life. It was at these times that prisoners talked most animatedly and could simply be 'guys' as opposed to 'prisoners'.

### 3.18 Gender or Humanity

Based upon comments from prisoners, it would appear that my being female and young in age shaped my research experience in quite significant ways, especially in terms of increasing my levels of access amongst the prisoner group. Some participants appeared to have been motivated to join me for an interview so that they could experience the company of a female, especially a female that is not an officer:

*But one thing, where, if you look around now, it's the attention of a female. You know, there's more, there's men everywhere, you've got one female officer or two female officers, and then, for some sort of communication with some sort of female. Where, where they feel as though, that, it's for them...when I was walking down the stairs, and I got asked, I just thought of some sort of communication with some sort of female which you'd normally have on the outside but you haven't had in fucking ages.*

- Roger

Towards the end of an interview one prisoner reflected on my age and my manner, suggesting that if I were an officer I would be 'fair':

***I find it weird when people call me miss, really weird!***

*Yeah! Because you're the same age as us. Some of the guys, I bet they're all coming up 'excuse me miss, excuse me miss'*

***Yep***

*But they'll love that because everyone will want to talk to you, know what I'm saying, because you're young and you're just like, you're nice man yeah, do you know what I'm saying, if you were a prison officer you'd be landed. You'd be fair like, do you know what I mean, but you have some of them out there who are on just a little power rush.*

- Johnny

Whilst discussing prisoner perceptions of male and female officers, a further prisoner interviewee suggested that my being a non-officer female and my demeanour increased levels of engagement from prisoners during fieldwork:

*Oh it's made a big difference for you, yeah. Yeah you wouldn't have got half the conversations you would have had if you was a male. But that's just because, obviously you're in a prison full of, you're a young woman, you're in a jail full of men and it's just that female contact, isn't it. Female contact...[i]t's just the fact you are female and, like, I don't know you just speak to people tidy, you're not an officer, so people can relate to you a bit more than they can with the officers. They will tell you ten times more than they would speak to them about.*

- Orlando

Other prisoners similarly commented on it being 'nice' to have "a conversation with a lady" (Tobias) and that I treated them "as normal, like normal human beings" (Thorsten). As a researcher I was clearly unable to escape the implications of my gender or achieve "genderless neutrality" (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 73). The quotations above suggest that being female was an asset in many ways in terms of encouraging engagement from prisoners. It is possible that offering me 'protection' (something that many prisoners did, not only those cited above) may have been a rare avenue through which these males could act chivalrously. In a similar manner to Gurney (1985: 47), "my youthful appearance and the fact that I was a graduate student and a woman [may have] helped create the impression that I was nonthreatening and naïve". It is possible that male prisoners felt able to speak candidly about emotional experiences with me because I was perceived as less intimidating as has been noted elsewhere. For example, Komarovsky (1974, cited in Rubin 1976: 225-225) found that men were more likely to confide in female acquaintances. Similarly, Scully (1994: 12) has asserted that female researchers are more likely to receive responses than male researchers, especially when the topic is of an intimate nature, as during her study with male perpetrators of sexual violence. Although on occasion I was the recipient of sexual comments I did not feel that I was assigned a status of purely 'sexual object' excepting on the one occasion described above when I had to halt an individual prisoner interview as he strongly offered sexual advances.

My adoption of casual clothing, my smoking habit, my willingness to engage in unorthodox activities, my tattoos and piercings, and my being a local young female similar in age to most prisoners served to distinguish me from staff and, perhaps, alleviate anxieties about my motives for being on the wings. In fact, I believe these same personal characteristics also assisted in distinguishing myself as

an 'independent academic' in the eyes of officers, as opposed to being a professional-looking NOMS official there to 'spy' for prison management. Yet, it is important to reiterate that it is difficult to determine how our demographic profile shapes our research (Crewe 2014: 393), and perhaps our demeanour is of greater importance. The quotations above from Johnny, Orlando and Thorsten demonstrate the importance of approaching prison research with empathy and compassion (Jewkes 2011) - something that can help prisoners to feel like 'normal human beings' and officers to feel heard – and something that is independent of researcher demographics:

*The thing is what you don't realise is, yeah, right. You know when you come in and talk to people like me, you actually make a difference to us. Because we know now someone is listening. You've made an impact on our lives, through talking to us like you are.*

***That's wonderful to hear!***

*You have made an impact now...[i]t's not about bringing biscuits, it's not about bringing tea!  
It's about listening.*

- Dominic

### 3.19 Giving something back

As researchers, we ask a lot of our respondents. Despite reassurance in terms of ethics and confidentiality, our participants never really know what we are *really* going to do with the data. We are in a position of power – we take, evaluate, analyse and decide on data importance. Yet our participants are also in a position of relative power – they choose which knowledge they would like to give and how much of it to give (Gilmour 2009: 127). In much of the literature on gaining access, especially within the field of feminist research, reciprocity and egalitarianism are stressed (please see, for example, Harrison et al 2001). Certainly, when conducting research with vulnerable and marginalised individuals such as prisoners it is a laudable aim to try and achieve “mutual give and take” (Harrison et al 2001: 326). However, within the prison this is not an easy feat (Bosworth et al 2005: 255). For example, I could not 'do favours' for prisoners or become 'friends' with neither prisoners nor officers, where friendship is used to signify a conventional relationship between individuals that can socialise freely and mutually exchange information. All I was able to offer was pre-approved items during interviews. A key aspect of 'giving something back' to my participants was providing biscuits during interviews with prisoners and staff, something which I received permission to do from the prison SMT. Providing biscuits during interviews proved to be quite pivotal in encouraging participation as well as helping to increase the informality of interviews. With



prisoners in particular the opportunity to eat quality *chocolate*<sup>41</sup> biscuits and to be given something for free with 'no strings attached' appeared to mean a great deal to prisoners. For example, word seemed to spread quite rapidly that I supplied these biscuits, and many prisoners would ask if there would be biscuits when considering whether to take part in an interview. On other occasions prisoners would ask if they could take some biscuits to share with their friends as a treat. To some prisoners, being able to take these free tokens was a significant luxury, which is perhaps quite telling of the level of deprivation that the prison imposes.

At the end of my time on each wing I also offered a gesture of thanks to all prisoners and staff in the area. For staff on each wing, I offered a thank you card and some boxes of chocolates, which were always very gratefully received. For prisoners, I put up a large poster saying thank you to everyone for their time as well as handing out sweets and A4 lined paper to every prisoner on the wing. Once again, the novelty of this became apparent when, on one wing, I left the sweets for prisoners to help themselves and within seconds all of the sweets had disappeared, with many prisoners being left without. Subsequently I handed out sweets and paper to prisoners individually as they received their evening meals. Many prisoners offered profuse thanks at being given a sweet and a piece of writing paper. Even small gestures such as this were closely monitored by prison staff<sup>42</sup>. Writing paper for example is a commodity in prison and officers control its distribution. I had to go to great lengths to obtain permission to distribute writing paper brought in from the outside, as this was technically trafficking. On some wings I had to ask staff for the privilege of providing prisoners with prison-issue paper, a process that was often quite lengthy if staff did not understand why I needed the writing paper or if they did not agree with me giving it to a prisoner. This was a quite frustrating, as it exacerbated my feelings of exploiting prisoners. I persevered however, and my commitment to replacing writing paper was noticed and appreciated by prisoners:

*It's like the same when you went back to the cell to speak to that [name] boy. I don't know what it was, but you know when you was, the amount of, the respect I had for you just for that...you didn't have to do that but you went out of your way to do that.*

- Roger

A final way that I could 'give something back' to my participants, both prisoners and staff alike, was to offer a 'sympathetic ear' and the opportunity to talk to someone outside of the immediate

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<sup>41</sup> I usually shared Cadbury chocolate fingers and prisoners would often remark that they were not just any biscuits, but *real chocolate* biscuits.

<sup>42</sup> I was asked by a high-ranking officer to ensure that an officer on each wing checked that all bags of sweets were sealed and did not contain any prohibited items prior to sharing them with prisoners.

context in a confidential environment. In this sense, individual interviews did at times become opportunities for individuals to 'testify'. As outlined by Bourdieu:

Certain respondents, especially the most disadvantaged, seem to grasp this situation as an exceptional opportunity offered to them to testify, to make themselves heard, to carry their experience over from the private to the public sphere; an opportunity also to *explain themselves* in the fullest sense of the term, that is, to construct their own point of view both about themselves and about the world and to bring into the open the point within this world from which they see themselves and the world, become comprehensible, and justified, not least for themselves (Bourdieu 1999: 615, italics in original).

For example, many prisoners during our conversations opted to tell me about their offences and the circumstances leading up to them, despite this not being an area of research interest. On other occasions, prisoners looked upon the interview as a chance to break up the monotony of prison life, to gain extra time out of their cells, or to engage in an out-of-the-ordinary conversation with someone they perceived to be sympathetic to their plight. Some prisoner interviewees admitted that they had greatly looked forward to our talks. I was therefore extremely diligent in adhering to arranged interview times and some prisoners expressed surprise when I arrived to speak to them as promised, something which is perhaps quite telling of the mistrust that the prison environment can breed when officers 'fob prisoners off' (Hulley et al 2011: 12). There was certainly an inequality in the level of enthusiasm with which staff and prisoners approached interviews with me. Many prisoners offered their time and opinions readily whilst it was often a struggle to encourage staff to participate, particularly when I produced my Dictaphone.

### 3.20 Disclosure

Harrison et al (2001: 323) have noted that it is possible to transform interviews into conversations through 'judicious self-disclosure' and at times this was possible when discussing the more mundane aspects of life such as popular culture. However, it is not possible for an interview in prison to become a fully egalitarian encounter when you as a researcher are bound by both ethical requirements and the rules of the institution to keep much personal information private. On several occasions I experienced dilemmas in terms of the details I would disclose about my personal life and background with prisoners and with staff. During my first research project in HMP Cardiff I was advised not to disclose my surname to prisoners, and I have maintained this 'policy' throughout all subsequent research. I have always urged prisoners and staff to refer to me by my first name, however many prisoners persisted in calling me 'miss'. This was a wholly new experience for me, and

it appeared to be an avenue through which prisoners could demonstrate politeness and respect towards me, as instilled by the prison. I also decided not to give my precise age or details of the area in which I live, and to only provide minimal information about my living situation and relationship status. Similarly, I did not share my social media information or my contact details. I was however open about my upbringing and my hometown, my parents' occupations and all details of my University course.

Whilst some prisoners were naturally quite curious about aspects of my personal life and adopted quite sophisticated techniques to learn more about me<sup>43</sup>, I was in general able to remain relatively vague when questioned about such details. Interestingly one prisoner did appear to know where I lived<sup>44</sup>, and I have met some ex-prisoners during random encounters on the street in the local area or on my way into or out of the prison. On such occasions, pleasantries have always been exchanged or we would engage in informal conversations<sup>45</sup>. In terms of disclosure with staff members, it was unavoidable that they would learn my full name as this was included in my HMPS email account which I provided as an avenue for staff to contact me.

The dilemma surrounding disclosure was two-fold during my fieldwork. On the one hand it was necessary in terms of personal protection to reduce the amount of information that I shared. On the other hand, I felt that exchanges with prisoners were unequal and it is difficult to expect honesty from participants when you cannot afford the same in return (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007: 72). Not only did many prisoners freely share intimate details about their lives and families, including proudly showing me photos of children; I could also access their records which included highly personal information. Therefore, I aimed to strike an acceptable balance between full-disclosure and non-disclosure which allowed prisoners to feel that I was being honest with them, but which did not transgress ethical guidelines.

### 3.21 Validity and reliability in qualitative research

The clear and stated aim of this research was to understand *from the perspectives of staff and prisoners* how order is maintained in prison. It was only through listening to and *accepting* the

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<sup>43</sup> For example, by asking me how long it took me to walk to the prison, whether I knew certain streets in Cardiff, or asking me indirectly about my relationship status.

<sup>44</sup> This prisoner stated that he had seen me often on a particular street very near to my house. This did unnerve me, and I tried to brush the comment off saying that it was a busy street where lots of people went.

<sup>45</sup> It has been and will continue to be extremely surreal to meet prisoners in this wholly alien environment, completely removed from the bars, gates and keys of the prison, out in the open air having a chat as 'free people'. Such encounters were quite powerful in terms of reinforcing the notion that all prisoners are simply normal men and members of communities. If fortunate, prisoners will be able to return to their lives and engage in mundane activities on release. Yet whilst the prison experience is transitory, it involves a great deal of suffering and deprivation.

stories of those that know this reality could I hope to achieve this aim. To ensure ‘credibility, applicability, consistency and trustworthiness’ (Lincoln and Guba 1985), I adopted a multi-methods ‘quasi-ethnographic’ (Rowe 2014; Crewe 2009) approach and have produced an open, reflexive account which allows for critical engagement with the findings presented here. The extent to which researchers can claim to have *truly experienced* what it is to be in prison is questionable (Mathiesen 1965; Rowe 2014). However, through the use of this ethnographic-style participant observation and prolonged immersion in the field I hope that I was able to gain a glimpse of the mundane reality within which the lives of prisoners and staff are situated. It is hoped that my observations of the ‘front-stage performances’ of prisoners and staff in public spaces were further strengthened by interviews about the more private or ‘back-stage’ domains of life (Goffman 1956), as well as through embedding my findings within existing literature in the field.

### 3.22 Concluding comments: Situating the self in research and leaving the field

To end, I wish to once again stress that the ‘emotional labour’ (Hochschild 1983) that I invested during my fieldwork is in no way comparable to the daily sufferings of prisoners or the consistent strain that staff experience, however I feel that it is important to again acknowledge that conducting research in the prison can be physically and emotionally demanding (Sparks et al 1996; Liebling 1999; Bosworth et al 2005; Jewkes 2011). The level of importance placed in objects which would ordinarily have very little value is highly amplified in prison, which highlights the sheer deprivation prisoners are subjected to every day. From material objects such as coffee and cigarette papers; physical contact with another human being; to the feeling of sunshine on a bright summer morning or grass underfoot, the craving for these basic lifelines was palpable. I was acutely aware that I was not able to share these gifts that I had free access to, something that caused daily guilt and turmoil. As fieldwork progressed, I became further and further absorbed in the prison world and thought of little else. When not in the prison and trying to engage in ‘normal life’, my mind would wander, and I would be able to imagine what would be happening on any given wing at any given time. Clearly my captivation did not go unnoticed, as a prisoner commented that he thought I was ‘emotionally vulnerable’ and becoming ‘emotionally attached’.

My fieldwork came to a close around a year after it began. I was starting to become a ‘fieldwork junkie’ (Back 2002, cited in Noaks and Wincup 2004: 71) and I had to remove myself from the field to continue the process of writing up my findings. I was able to physically remove myself quite easily (albeit gradually), yet psychological removal was much more difficult (Shaffir and Stebbings 1991: 210). The prison was still at the fore-front of my mind and I was constantly plagued by anxieties that I was ‘missing things’ and I was reluctant to ‘close the door’ on that experience. Upon leaving the

field I was immediately consumed by analysis and writing which prevented me from 'letting go' as I was consistently reminded of the people that I encountered (Noaks and Wincup 2004: 70). I am not sure that I will ever be able to fully 'let go', especially after having conducted research in Cardiff prison for several years, however this is not necessarily a negative thing and I hope that my deep attachment to the prison may add a richness to this thesis which would not otherwise be achievable.

The difficulties inherent in all social research may be particularly acute within the prison where the social setting is unpredictable and potentially volatile, and when we are interacting with disadvantaged and sometimes broken individuals. So why, then, do we bother? This is best articulated by the words of Roy King and Alison Liebling, a quotation that resonates deeply with me:

[P]risons research can sometimes be a confusing experience, as the voices and problems of staff and prisoners continue to echo in our heads...So why then do we continue with this line of research?...[Because prisons] are places where the best and worst aspects of human nature can appear in a moment. They pose complex problems of power, justice, authority, and care...their uses, flaws [and] possibilities, are politically important, and criminologically, they have much to teach us (King and Liebling 2008: 447).

Following this account of my data collection and analysis process it is now pertinent to move on to exploring and interrogating this data, beginning with a consideration of HMP Cardiff in relation to the wider prison estate in England and Wales.

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## Chapter Four: HMP Cardiff and the Wider Prison Estate

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### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter considers HMP Cardiff in relation to the wider prison estate. During my fieldwork it was suggested to me by officers and prisoners that HMP Cardiff is unique in terms of safety on the wings and the rapport that exists between prisoners and officers. As noted early on in this thesis, my intellectual curiosity was piqued when I reflected on the general lack of disorder that I observed on the wings and landings in Cardiff. Of course, incidents did occur, some of which I witnessed and will describe in this thesis, and others occurred that I was unaware of. However, the overall impression of the prison was one of relative peace. Taken together, these observations inspired this chapter. I consider whether HMP Cardiff is, indeed, comparatively safe and well-ordered. I did not venture inside other prisons during my research therefore several sources are drawn upon to explore where Cardiff 'sits' in terms of prisons in England and Wales. I present primary quantitative data collected within Cardiff prison as well as secondary, freely-available statistics to explore levels of order and safety as measured by self-harm and assaults statistics. I then briefly detail the characteristics of the prisoner population and the officer workforce, followed by a close examination of the narratives of the people that make up HMP Cardiff, exploring how Cardiff has fared following the cost-cutting measures introduced under New Ways of Working (NWOW) in 2013. Drawing again upon the narratives of my participants I then examine the cultural and geographical context of HMP Cardiff and, to end, I contribute to existing understandings of what it means to be a 'good' officer, and return to the question of whether Cardiff is, in fact, unique.

### 4.2 A Point of Comparison

While the regime in HMP Cardiff is tightly regimented and every area of the prison follows the same regime or 'Core Day' (see Appendix 14), variation exists across HMP Cardiff in terms of the prison experience. Specifically, differences exist between wings, between prisoner wealth, between IEP levels and between employment positions. This chapter takes a broader focus, looking at the prison estate in England and Wales which is comprised of an array of establishments containing very different prisoners – males and females, high security and low security, private and public, and others. The size of establishments also varies greatly. To provide an adequate point of comparison I have selected a handful of prisons that are most comparable with HMP Cardiff in terms of size - as measured by average population, as well as function - male local prisons (NOMS 2015). Prisons in England and Wales that have been identified as most comparable with HMP Cardiff are as follows:

HMP Belmarsh, HMP Brixton, HMP Norwich, HMP Thameside, HMP Woodhill. Each of these prisons functioned as male locals in 2015 and had a similar prisoner population to Cardiff of between 700-900 prisoners. Data concerning the populations of these establishments is given below in Table 5.

Despite being of a similar size and function, there were some notable differences between these establishments in 2015: Belmarsh and Woodhill were each part of the High Security Estate and therefore had a higher number of staff in post compared to Cardiff, and therefore a higher ratio of officers to prisoners. Each of the prisons are geographically spread across the UK, and Thameside was managed by the private company Serco. Cardiff had a lower rate of Enhanced prisoners on IEP compared to these other prisons<sup>46</sup>, but also the lowest number of prisoners on Basic level (NOMS 2015). It would have been entirely possible to select comparable prisons based upon, for example, geographical area or staff headcount, however I have chosen to select comparable sites based upon population size and prison type. I have chosen to do so intuitively, because in what follows I compare indicators of safety and disorder in terms of frequency of incidents, and frequency data cannot be divorced from prison size. It is important to note here that these comparisons and the figures upon which they are based are from 2015, the year in which this fieldwork took place.

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<sup>46</sup> In 2015/16, the proportion of prisoners with Enhanced IEP status was also lower in Cardiff compared to national levels (6% in Cardiff versus 19% nationally, please see Appendix 9 for data tables). Perceived by prisoners in the establishment to be due, in part, to the relative lack of positions available that would enable them to demonstrate the behavioural requirements needed to progress to Enhanced IEP status, such as Listener positions.

### 4.2.1 Levels of Self-harm and Assaults Incidents

Table 2 - Self-harm and assaults data 2015 for HMP Cardiff and comparator prisons

2015	HMP Cardiff	HMP Belmarsh	HMP Brixton	HMP Norwich	HMP Thameside	HMP Woodhill	Unweighted National Average (all prisons)
Average Prisoner Population *	796	876	727	748	886	757	N/A
Incidents of self-harm**	116	182	50	248	361	406	256
Assaults incidents (all)**	146	275	141	202	461	240	149
Assaults on staff**	33	80	37	30	126	96	36
Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults**	112	194	107	168	325	145	113

\*Data obtained from NOMS *Management Information (MI) Addendum dataset*, published 2015

\*\* Data obtained from Ministry of Justice *Safety in Custody Statistics*, published 2016

Data concerning self-harm and assaults incidents in 2015 has been used as a measure of prison safety. As shown in the above table, HMP Cardiff's levels of self-harm (Ministry of Justice 2016a) were significantly lower than the national average across all prisons including male, female and young offender institutions. In comparing self-harm amongst the five other local male prisons of a similar size to Cardiff, HMP Cardiff had the lowest reported levels of self-harm amongst prisoners excepting HMP Brixton<sup>47</sup>.

In 2015 HMP Cardiff suffered from 146 assaults incidents (Ministry of Justice 2016b). This is in line with the *national* average in terms of assaults incidents, including prisoner-on-prisoner assaults and assaults on staff. Yet looking at our comparator prisons, HMP Cardiff is faring comparatively better than other male locals of a similar size in terms of assaults.

<sup>47</sup> HMP Brixton's strikingly low levels of self-harm in comparison to these other prisons is intriguing. It is not possible here to explore this further, beyond noting that during the November 2014 HMCIP Inspection of HMP Brixton it was noted that "Incidents of self-harm had increased over the last year but remained lower than comparable prisons." (HMCIP 2015: 5).



These total assaults incidents can be further broken down into assaults on staff and prisoner-on-prisoner assaults. There were almost 5000 assaults on staff nationally, with an unweighted national average of 36 assaults on staff per establishment. Cardiff experienced slightly fewer assaults on staff compared to national averages, and significantly fewer compared to Belmarsh, Thameside and Woodhill. In terms of prisoner-on-prisoner assaults, Cardiff again compared favourably to all comparator prisons except HMP Brixton. Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults in Cardiff are in line with the national unweighted average for 2015.

In considering the above self-harm and assaults data it is reasonable to suggest that HMP Cardiff was, at the time this research took place, faring the same, or better, than some similar prisons in England and Wales in terms of order and safety. It is acknowledged that other measures could be used to capture the general 'order' within a prison, such as Prison Inspectorate (HMCIP) reports and the Measuring the Quality of Prison Life (MQPL) survey. However, the closest HMCIP inspection and the closest MQPL survey undertaken within HMP Cardiff occurred in 2013 and 2014, respectively. Whilst these were undertaken temporally close to my fieldwork, a key change occurred at the start of 2015 with the commencement of my fieldwork – the imposition of a new regime. The significant implications of this are discussed in greater detail below, in section 4.4 of this chapter. In brief, it is important to acknowledge that the 2014 MQPL results and the 2013 HMCIP inspection report for HMP Cardiff were quite poor, however due to these being carried out after the introduction of austerity measures in 2013 and prior to the imposition of the new (and seemingly improved) regime in 2015, they have not been drawn upon as the primary measure of safety and order in the prison. Instead, statistical data for the year 2015 has been utilised as this most accurately reflects the period in which my fieldwork took place. The principal source of data used within this chapter, however, is the voices of officers and prisoners in HMP Cardiff. Correspondingly, it is now important to explore who is held in prison, and who works in prison.

### 4.3 Who lives and works in prison?

It is important to briefly compare HMP Cardiff to the wider prison estate if any suggestions are to be made about how typical, or atypical, Cardiff is. This is particularly important for contextualising inferences made about Cardiff's levels of order and safety, and staff-prisoner relationships. Full data tables are provided in Appendices 8 and 9.

HMP Cardiff's prisoner population and officer workforce<sup>48</sup> were in line with national trends in terms of age in 2015. An estimated mean age for officers working in Cardiff would be 45 years old, which is

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<sup>48</sup> When I requested anonymised, establishment-level statistics regarding the workforce at HMP Cardiff my request was politely declined. This is particularly interesting considering that I was granted access to highly

on par with other establishments (NOMS 2016d). The mean age of my prisoner interviewees was 30 years. The proportion of female staff in Cardiff would sit at around 35%, and this was also in line with national employment trends. In terms of ethnicity and religion, both the prisoner population and officer workforce were less diverse compared to national levels (Ministry of Justice 2015; NOMS 2015). Whilst it was not possible to obtain data on the precise proportion of prisoners in Cardiff that are white *Welsh* because this is not a listed category, I would offer an informed estimate that around 80% of prisoners in Cardiff were from Wales at the time of my fieldwork, and specifically South Wales including Cardiff, Newport and the South Wales Valleys<sup>49</sup> - the latter two of which have historically suffered from high deprivation (National Assembly for Wales Research Service 2014). A small proportion of prisoners that I met originated from Bristol, and an even smaller number from London and Birmingham. An informed estimate, based upon my observational data collected over a full year, is that a similarly high proportion of officers (80%) working in HMP Cardiff were from Wales.

#### 4.4 Officer Experience

Within my consent forms I asked officers in HMP Cardiff to indicate how long they had been a prison officer (see Appendix 5). The average length of service was 15.9 years amongst officers of all levels. All CMs, SOs and Governors had been in the service for at least nine years, with most having over 20 years under their belts. Of the staff that did not provide their exact time in service it can be surmised, based upon their ages and their narratives, that at least 70% of officers in Cardiff have been employed by HMPPS for at least 15 years, with some having worked in prisons for much longer than this. The majority of officers in Cardiff not only have a significant number of years of experience, they have also spent much of their time working in HMP Cardiff specifically.

In comparing this to national figures, HMP Cardiff's workforce is significantly more experienced:

While prison officer numbers are nearly at the same level as they were seven years ago, the workforce is now much less experienced. In March 2019, 50% of prison officers had less than five years' experience, compared with 22% in March 2010 and just 6% in March 2014.

This change in staff composition is due to a large number of prison officers leaving each year, many of whom had been with the service for more than five years. More than 1,500 prison officers left through voluntary early departure schemes (VEDS) between March 2013

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personal data about prisoners across the entire prison estate via C-NOMIS! Fortunately, however, I have been able to draw upon high-level, anonymised, freely-available data about the NOMS workforce alongside my own informed estimates about the demographic composition of Cardiff's staff group.

<sup>49</sup> Estimate verified by Ministry of Justice data obtained for HMP Cardiff's prisoner population in December 2020 from a source within the Wales Governance Centre.

and March 2014, with 720 leaving in September 2013 alone. The average length of service of staff who left through these schemes ranged from 17.2 years to 24.5 years in each month over this period (Institute for Government 2020).

The sudden, substantial loss of experienced officers in 2013 that followed the introduction of NWOW in 2013 has been linked to a decrease in safety in prisons. For example, Her Majesty's Prison Inspectorate (HMIP) have on numerous occasions and for many years attributed poor prison performance to the inexperience of new staff. In their 2018-19 annual report they noted that inexperienced staff were often overcautious about risk, and that this was directly affecting prisons' abilities to provide the right care for high-risk men in crisis (HMCIP 2019a: 25-26). These changes to the officer workforce are not coincidental, they are bound tightly to the restructuring of the national prison and probation services that occurred with NWOW in 2013, described to me by a high-ranking NOMS representative during an informal conversation as the "single greatest change in a generation".

NWOW officially aimed to make prisons work more 'efficiently', both in terms of saving money across the prison estate, as well as boosting prisoner rehabilitation. It intended to focus on 'constructive' activities, work and education under its benchmarked<sup>50</sup> regime (see House of Commons Justice Committee 2015: 27-28). On paper, the prioritisation of 'constructive' activity held promise in terms of NWOW's stated aim of improving prisoner rehabilitation. However, in the view of officers in Cardiff prison, in practice these changes resulted in extremely high staff turnover, the loss of experienced staff through high up-take of voluntary early departure (VEDS), an influx of new officers paid at a lower rate compared to their predecessors, low staff retention, low staff morale, and lower ratios of staff to prisoners. For example, the typical staff:prisoner ratio on F Wing changed from 1:13 to 1:32 overnight.

When NWOW was initially introduced in 2013, Cardiff adopted a 'split regime' where each entire wing was unlocked all day, Monday to Friday, in a bid to increase prisoner engagement with purposeful activity. During the morning, half of all prisoners would remain on their wing, unlocked, for completing domestic tasks whilst the other half engaged in off-wing work and education. During the afternoon the groups would then swap. For many months during 2013-2014 HMP Cardiff operated under this 'split regime', however it was found to cause a significant decrease in safety and an increase in tension on the wings. Resultantly, at the end of 2014 the Senior Management Team (SMT) in Cardiff consulted both staff and prisoners in the establishment and endeavoured to make a

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<sup>50</sup> Benchmarking is the process of measuring the performance of a company, or here a prison, against other companies/prisons considered to be the best in the sector, to identify 'best practice'.

change. In January 2015 the prison moved to the Core Day that was in force at the time of my fieldwork, with only prisoners attending court, work<sup>51</sup> or education being unlocked during mornings and after lunch. Unemployed prisoners would remain in their cells. Afternoon association was the only time that all<sup>52</sup> prisoners were unlocked on each wing (please see Appendix 14, specifically Table 13 for the prison regime).

It is not possible to determine precisely how many other prisons in England and Wales moved away from the split regime because this information is not freely available, however a CM in HMP Cardiff mentioned to me that only a handful of other prisons had done so. This is important, because the abandonment of the split regime would appear to have been instrumental in restoring order to the level that I experienced during my fieldwork, 2015 onwards. Whilst Cardiff certainly felt the effects of NWOW, it appears to have been somewhat insulated from the continually rising disorder and lack of safety affecting many prisons in England and Wales – or at least it was able to recover from the devastating effects of NWOW relatively quickly due to changing the regime and in spite of enduring low staff:prisoner ratios. It was also able to retain a great deal of experience amongst officers on the wings in comparison to national averages and this may explain why, at the time of data collection, HMP Cardiff could reasonably be cited as a comparatively well-ordered and safe establishment. Yet what do those working in Cardiff prison think? In their eyes, is Cardiff prison unique? If so, how and why? These questions will now be addressed.

#### 4.5 HMP Cardiff: The Geo-Cultural Context

A theme that ran throughout my interviews with officers was that they perceived HMP Cardiff to boast particularly congenial prisoner-officer relationships due to the influence of Welsh culture. Patrick, a high-ranking officer, comments as follows:

***So what does Cardiff do really well?***

*The best thing that Cardiff does is having the ability to talk to prisoners. I've worked in a number of establishments now and the relationship between staff and prisoners has never been as good as you get in Cardiff. And that's not to say other establishments are bad [but] we do have...a special relationship<sup>53</sup> whereby staff...get a lot out of the prisoners in Cardiff, you know, because...staff are far more sociable.*

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<sup>51</sup> Including prisoner wing workers

<sup>52</sup> Excepting prisoners on Basic level of the IEP

<sup>53</sup> Although published after I had withdrawn from the field, the most recent HMCIP report for HMP Cardiff provided a similar view of relationships in the prison, as given at the end of this chapter.

*I think one of the big things in staff's favour is, and I think this, not just in prison staff but in society in Wales as a generalisation, it's a big sweeping generalisation, but the Welsh are nosey! ...[W]e want to know what's going on, you know...and prison officers that's what we thrive on really and because of that...it makes us good at interacting with prisoners...*

***Welshness!***

*That's right! You can't bottle it! But it's definitely there, it's definitely a culture. Erm, and having worked, you know, I've always lived in Wales, but I've worked outside of Wales for ten years you know, and you certainly, you can't see it but the best staff that I've always worked with, that have the best relationship with prisoners, have been the Welsh ones! Because, you know, we have the ability to engage and have conversations and just chat.*

***And do you think that's what makes Cardiff unique?***

*I think so because staff de-escalate a lot of situations just by having those chats, knowing your prisoners...it helps as well...when you're a busy local and we tend to see the same prisoners coming through...and their brothers and their uncles and their fathers...[y]ou see the families. It's a shame that that's how it goes but you get used to it and they get used to you. Definitely, it's definitely a culture, I think.*

- Officer Patrick

Officer Patrick strongly believed that Welsh officers are particularly adept at engaging with prisoners and de-escalating tension due to their cultural proclivity for being 'nosey' about what is going on in prisoners' lives, as well as their ability to simply 'chat' with prisoners – characteristics that some officers may also ascribe to Welsh prisoners, as discussed in chapter seven (section 7.6). It is important to emphasise that these were the perceptions held by participants, therefore no definitive claim is being made regarding Welsh culture shaping relationships at HMP Cardiff. This section is designed to report what staff attested to. Many other officers shared this view, and not only those that were Welsh themselves, as this conversation with two English officers demonstrates:

*Anthony: I would say that [in] Cardiff prison I've felt a lot more safe than other prisons I've worked in before...but that's because of, it is Wales, it's a Welsh prison, and everyone is known. The prisoners know the staff, it's a lot more closer community than living in a transient prison like London or somewhere where the turnover is a lot quicker.*

*Charlie: Not all jails are like this*

*Anthony: Not all jails are like this. When I was in London I never knew the prisoners like I know them now because it was transient...you just wouldn't build the relationships that you would here*

*Charlie: You wouldn't speak to them, staff wouldn't speak to prisoners*

*Anthony: They wouldn't speak to prisoners, no, not like that.*

*- Officer Anthony and Officer Charlie*

The application of Rod Earle's concept of 'postcode pride' (Earle 2011) may be useful here. Following research in HMYOI Rochester, Earle found that the young prisoners in his study communicated a strong sense of local belonging which provided them with a sense of 'ownership' (Earle 2011: 139). The way in which these officers speak of HMP Cardiff similarly communicates a sense of pride in the 'their' prison – a place which they describe as being 'better' than others. It is interesting that parallels can be drawn between the findings from research undertaken in Rochester and Cardiff, the former being a town in the English county of Kent with a population of approximately 34,000 (Kent County Council 2018), and the latter being a large urban area, the capital city of Wales, with around 350,000 residents – as stated in chapter one. The applicability of the concept of 'postcode pride' to prisons in two different areas of the UK suggests two things. Firstly, that concepts that appear to be wholly context-dependent may be transferable across local and international borders; and, secondly, that it can be very difficult to formulate definitive conclusions about the influence of 'macro-level' geography and politics upon 'micro-level' sociologies of everyday life. However, inferences can be made using appropriate research.

For example, Rob Jones (2016) found that some of the problems faced by Welsh people held in prison, such as being housed far from home, are attributable to the structure of the prison estate. Constitutional arrangements are highly complicated in Wales in that both the UK and Welsh Government are involved in governing the country, despite criminal justice not being a devolved responsibility. The Secretary of State of the UK Government has the power to close or build prisons across both England and Wales, and this coupled with overcrowding and poor positioning of prisons means that Welsh prisoners are disproportionately housed far from home. Jones' research would certainly suggest that there are some distinctive aspects of the Welsh context that could impact upon the lives of offenders. Research in other policy fields has found peculiarities to Wales, such as Stewart Field who suggested that youth justice in Wales emphasises a welfare and rights-based approach, whereas youth justice in England has been influenced by neo-liberalist discourses that encourage risk-management policies (Field 2015). Similarly, Adam Edwards and Gordon Hughes

(2009) tentatively suggested there may be some evidence of a more social justice orientation in some of the Welsh community safety initiatives. Yet, a caveat must be noted in that Edwards and Hughes found differences across the regions of Wales, suggesting again that caution should be exercised when making assumptions about nation states. The value of conducting case-studies with a comparative element is explored in greater depth in chapter eight. For now, it is important to note that while this research is not a study of the *Welsh* prison system but rather a case-study of HMP Cardiff, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the institutional culture and level of order found in HMP Cardiff may be influenced by ‘Welshness’. However, further research is certainly needed for any assumptions to be drawn.

In Cardiff prison, countless other officers reiterated the view that the prison boasts excellent staff-prisoner relationships, although they did not always attribute this to Welsh culture:

***So, what do you think Cardiff prison does really well?***

*Communicate. We talk to them. Without a shadow of a doubt...I know we're in a local prison and the majority of our prisoners are regulars, but I do think that the staff in Cardiff, most certainly...we have good communication skills that we are able to relate to the prisoners, we are able to speak to the prisoners, you know, we're not here to be arseholes we're here to do a job, we didn't put them here, whatever reason a prisoner is here for is neither here nor there for me, I actually don't care.*

- Officer Gemma

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***What does Cardiff prison do really well?***

*Relationships between staff and prisoners are phenomenal. Absolutely phenomenal. We get that mainly from the prisoners...because obviously we get a few prisoners who go to [Category B/C public prison in Wales] or [Category B public prison in South West England] or [private Category B prison in Wales] or whatever and here they say the staff actually give a damn, if you like, it's really good I think it helps.*

- Officer Winston

As the above quotations demonstrate, many officers in HMP Cardiff were quick to offer zealous accounts of how positive their relationships are with prisoners. This view was widespread amongst the officer group – these are only a handful of the quotations from officers that state that this is what Cardiff prison does best. In a similar vein to Officers Anthony and Charlie, both Gemma and

Winston believe that the proclivity of Cardiff staff to talk to prisoners makes for more positive relationships compared to other prisons. However, Gemma and Winston did not link the sociability of Cardiff officers to 'Welsh culture' or nationality.

It is difficult to confirm whether 'the Welsh' are *more* talkative or *more* sociable compared to people of other cultures. The fact that this belief was voiced to me by so many officers in Cardiff is significant and note-worthy however, for it is clearly something that they believe to have an impact on their daily working lives and their dealings with prisoners. A belief in one's ability to effectively communicate with others could certainly encourage conversation with prisoners.

There is a further aspect to culture and geography that must be explored: the high level of familiarity between prisoners and officers in Cardiff, as intimated by Patrick above. Not only will many of the prisoners entering Cardiff have been there many times before, their family members may also already be known to staff. It is common for officers in Cardiff to have locked up several generations of men from the same families over a period of many years: *I think the prisoners in Cardiff are from the locality, a lot of them have been brought up and have come here as young offenders...a lot of the prisoners will know the staff from, from the last 10, 15 years, or longer* (Officer Andy). Consequently, a level of familiarity is somewhat inevitable. This is particular interesting considering that HMP Cardiff is a local prison with a high 'churn' [frequency of prisoners leaving and entering the prison daily] and a high proportion of prisoners serving short sentences compared to other male prisons in England and Wales (Ministry of Justice 2015, see Appendix 9). One may imagine this to be a barrier to the forging of 'close' relationships over time in comparison to, for example, within the long-term estate where prisoners are held for many years. The frequency with which prisoners re-enter HMP Cardiff is therefore of significance here.

There is a further characteristic of HMP Cardiff that could increase the level of familiarity between officers and prisoners in Cardiff: they originate from the same localities on the outside. Patrick, a high-grade and experienced officer, explains:

***What do you think Cardiff does really well?***

*Ermm we've got, I feel myself personally, we've got a good staff-prisoner relationship...with a lot of prisoners, I get a lot of respect from them, and I think that respect, you can only mark that by when I go up shopping, be it in Cardiff, [local town] where I'm from, and you'll see a prisoner, an ex-prisoner, and they'll go 'Alright Mr X, how are you?' Thumbs up type, and they introduce me to their families,*



*and you think if you were doing a bad job they wouldn't wanna introduce you to their families, they'd be abusing you...it's just the way we are.*

- Officer Patrick

Patrick suggests that officers and prisoners in Cardiff share something highly unique – they're from the same localities, they frequent the same places, and they will likely see one another outside of the prison. Other officers echoed this view:

*Thirty odd years in the job, you meet ex-cons all the time, on the out. You're bound to. Mostly because it's a Welsh population. 99% will say 'aright guv' or they'll offer to buy you a drink. That says it all really. They don't hold it against me...[t]hey don't go outside and threaten you or douse your car, it's 'alright guv' and buy you a pint*

***It can keep you safe in here and on the outside?***

*Yeah! I've never ever had any animosity from ex-prisoners anywhere. They usually come over and say hello, and let's be honest you're usually out with your family. Odds are. Never anything else. And I say: 'oh that was an ex-con, an ex-prisoner' and you see them everywhere! Let's be honest. Everywhere! Restaurants, you know, holidays.*

- Officer Sebastian

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*Obviously [we have] the same people in and out continually so you get to know them quite well...it's their home for most of them...well invariably we...have people come in to the jail that we know because it's a local jail...[I]nvariably, you do come across people that you were, either in school with or grew up around or family members for a lot of people as well, so.*

- Officer Kaya

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*How many times you hear a member of staff saying 'I know a prisoner who is an ex-neighbour, I used to go to school with them' and everything else, you find that more in the local estate than you do in the training estate, because the training estate prisons are coming from further afield so less likely to know the people who come from the local community in that prison...staff here tell me all the time, you know, so and so lives in the next street.*

- Officer Nicholas

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*Thing is I've been here a long time, me personally, I've locked up people that have been in my class in school, I've locked up their children, I've locked up two of them together father and son on more than one occasion, more than one instance not just the same people.*

- Officer Alex

The above quotations demonstrate that it is quite common for prisoners and officers in HMP Cardiff to know one another from the outside, either directly or through mutual acquaintances. I became privy to countless such tales. For example, a female officer described an occasion when she walked into a prisoners' cell to see a mildly indecent photograph of her own niece on the cell wall, for the niece was dating the prisoner in question. It is difficult to ascertain whether a similar situation exists in other local prisons, however of my participants that provided their opinions, they perceived this to be something that is unique to HMP Cardiff. The similarities in the geographical background of officers and prisoners may influence relationships inside the prison walls. Firstly, officers may be mindful of not making an enemy of prisoners for they could consequently be victimised outside of work. Secondly, it is possible that the forging of more amiable and trusting relationships are expedited by the perception of shared heritage and culture. It is important to remember here that this is a discussion of a relationship that involves a clear power differential and there are experiences that will never truly be 'shared' by officers and prisoners alike. Yet, the relationships that have evolved over time with the mainstream of prisoners in Cardiff is clearly believed to have an impact upon the culture on the wings, at least in the eyes of staff. It is also vital to note that this is, of course, a double-edged sword: a prisoner entering Cardiff could be preceded by a negative reputation surrounding him or his family, leading to less preferential treatment. Furthermore, those prisoners that do not 'fit the mould' could face difficulties in building relationships with officers, as explored further in chapter five. Conversely, these close relationships could result in more favourable treatment for certain prisoners, particularly in the selection of jobs as explored in chapter seven.

It would certainly appear that, at least in the eyes of staff, relationships between officers and prisoners in Cardiff are particularly positive, leading officers to feel safer at work (and seemingly outside of work) in comparison to other establishments. Whether this is directly influenced by Welsh culture is difficult to ascertain, however this does not dilute the other consistencies in their narratives – namely the importance of 'conversation' in building rapport with prisoners.

## 4.6 The Importance of Talk

Whilst simply talking may not seem like much, it is in fact crucial to the forging of positive staff-prisoner relationships. Prisoners in HMP Cardiff suggested that simply being engaged in conversation by officers helped to make them feel more 'human'. A similar finding was noted by Liebling et al during their follow-up research in HMP Whitemoor (2011a: 18-19), where prisoners valued being able to engage in informal conversations with officers about neutral topics. Some officers in Cardiff clearly recognised the importance of this aspect of their role:

*Being talked to by officers can reduce some of the dehumanising effects of prison...people generally will have a bit of a laugh and a joke with prisoners, they'll talk about all sorts of different things, and you do see it quite a lot. [Some] staff are not always that comfortable in having a conversation with a prisoner because they think 'oh' it kind of puts you on the same, that's that power thing again, as soon as you start talking about Coronation Street or you feel like you're talking to one of your friends and then it kind of, it's a weird feeling because they're not one of your friends, but actually there is no reason why you can't be OK with that, as long as you know where the boundaries are, because it makes them feel more human and then it kind of eliminates that us and them thing I suppose.*

- Officer Kiera

The suggestion that some officers may be hesitant to engage in conversations with prisoners because it 'puts them on the same level' demonstrates quite how significant this act can be. Another officer spoke passionately about the importance of speaking to prisoners and the associated humanising effects:

### ***What is a good relationship?***

*I think treating someone as a human being. I'm not religious, but I think the vast majority of people, sometimes, there but for the grace of god go I. You know? People make mistakes. And I was told something 25 years ago in training that has stayed in my head ever since, and it's as a prison officer, it's not your job to punish people, it's your job to look after them. The punishment is the deprivation of liberty. And I can still see the instructor I had at the time who told me that, in my mind's eye, and I've tried to apply that. I will always, always talk to people with respect. Whether that's staff or prisoners...they've committed an offence it's not my place to judge them*

*A lot of it...is about how you actually speak to people. And the fact that they're in a grey tracksuit or a blue and white striped shirt makes no difference to me! I'll speak to prisoners as I speak to staff because I don't think we should necessarily differentiate between the two, because at the end of the day we're all human beings.*

- Officer Clive

There are undeniably many officers in HMP Cardiff, and indeed other prisons, that will refuse to speak to prisoners for fear of appearing to relinquish some of their power in the eyes of prisoners, as suggested by Officer Kiera. Officers did not tend to expressly state this to me during our interviews, perhaps due to wishing to present themselves in a manner that they perceived I would find more acceptable. Some of these negative counter-narratives about prisoners are presented throughout this thesis though, predominantly in chapters six and seven. Here however, it is important to acknowledge that Officers Kiera and Clive are presenting a highly positive characterisation of the prison officer and their words suggest that there are officers in HMP Cardiff that can offer the “emotional intelligence” (Arnold 2016) that is necessary for ‘good’ officer work, as outlined in chapter two. If this empathetic style of working is widespread amongst the officer workforce in HMP Cardiff, it could contribute to the enhanced order and safety that HMP Cardiff seemingly experiences in comparison to other establishments of a similar size and function. Yet what do prisoners in HMP Cardiff think? Thus far in this discussion the views of officers have been the focus, and it is now important to consider prisoner views. Do prisoners in HMP Cardiff perceive the establishment to be different to other prisons? What makes for a ‘good’ officer in their eyes? What officer qualities do they value, and is Cardiff in a uniquely strong position to offer these qualities?

#### **4.7 HMP Cardiff: Black and White**

When asked if HMP Cardiff is different to other prisons the responses from prisoners were less one-dimensional than those offered by staff. On the one hand, some prisoners criticised the material conditions in Cardiff as well as the tardiness of officers in dealing with requests. On the other hand, they perceived Cardiff to be safer than other establishments. Each of these themes will now be explored in turn.

Some prisoners felt that the facilities and bureaucratic processes within Cardiff are archaic – particularly in comparison to privately run prisons:

*It's a bad jail, this jail is. You know, a dirty jail, this Cardiff jail. It's not an organised jail, there's no coordination in this jail know what I mean, it's a bit back to front if you like. I've been to [private prison in The Midlands], a private jail ... which [has] more variety of things in*

*jail. More work, more options, you know. In [named private prison] it's a bit better, I'll tell you more about that now...[t]his jail is just original, this is just a Victorian, you know, they still have thin blankets you know like hospital blankets in here and in the winter you get cold, sometimes they turn the pipes on a bit late, you know and you get cold...[it is]...the dirtiest jail I've been to. Like, greasy, bogging [dirty, smelly], you know, these tea bag [stains] all over the walls [laughs]. Not just that, but, about the showers, there's people smoking in there...[i]t's a hell of a mess in the showers, and some people haven't got no flip flops so they're standing on it, it's dirty, it's not fair man. ...it's just horrible [and] too old, very old.*

- Keith

Keith strongly criticised cleanliness within HMP Cardiff, and he was not the only prisoner to do so. The dilapidated conditions found with Victorian British jails has for many years been denounced by HMCIP.

Other prisoners drew comparisons between private prisons and HMP Cardiff, not only in terms of facilities but also officer working practices:

***From what you said [private prison in Wales] sounds really different to here?***

*The officers are different. Some of the officers on here, mind, are tidy [good]. The rest of them just treat you like shit, in here. In [private prison in Wales] the officers are better, the gym is better, the wings are better...like with visits are better, you book visits yourself, again people on here aren't booking them, you don't know who is booking them, it's just, everything about it, it's just better like*

***The officers are better there, as well?***

*Yeah, I find...like a couple of people who've been to like other black and white jails, that are not privately run, they say the screws are the same [as here]. But in private jails they reckon the officers are much better, like...in every private jail all the officers are the same, just a bit like 'oh, go on'...they're more laid back. Just let people, not so much get on with it, I dunno, bit more laid back like. But in [named private prison]...they're most strict [with cell checks]. Like in here...you don't get officers coming in your cell...you don't have them coming in your cell and check your cell every day. In [private prison in Wales] every day, going in your cell, check your cell, every day without fail...you get more cell spins in [named prison]...ripped apart.*

[...]

***Do you think they are scared to say no to prisoners here?***

*The officers here? No. No they're definitely not! No chance! \*laughs\* If the answer is no, the answer is no...[y]ou ask them a question and they are straight up to you. But in [private Category B prison in Wales], I dunno, I find in [private prison in Wales]...if you want something done, they'll have it done for you straight away. You know, like [here], you're waiting.*

- William

William speaks very highly of [private prison in Wales] in terms of its facilities and procedures, the 'laid back' working practices of officers, and the speed with which they fulfil prisoners' requests. It is particularly interesting that William describes the officers in [private prison in Wales], a private prison, to be lax in their direct dealings with prisoners but forceful in their use of formal order-maintenance techniques and rule-enforcement. This is something that is explored again later in this chapter, but for now it is important to acknowledge that the prisons that Keith and William explicitly compare Cardiff with are both privately run prisons. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether the different material conditions and officer working styles that they attest to are linked to the culture of HMP Cardiff, or due to it being a public prison. In addition, one of the comparator prisons mentioned by these prisoners was also in Wales, which problematises the suggestion by officers above that HMP Cardiff boasts better prisoner-officer relationships due to the influence of Welsh 'culture'. If this were so, it would follow that all prisons in Wales that boast high numbers of local Welsh officers and local Welsh prisoners would possess similar staff-prisoner relationships. However, not all prisoners used privately-run establishments nor prisons in Wales as their point of comparison, therefore it may be cautiously surmised that there are some seemingly unique aspects to Cardiff prison, both positive and negative, as follows:

*They're 10 years behind here! It's, I dunno...they don't seem to want to do nothing. Or they tell you they're gonna do something and then you're waiting all day and they don't do it. No communication with the staff. Like, they try their best, but everything seems upside down in this jail, like I've been ordering stuff out of Argos for three months now...they don't even give us a reply, saying they're not in stock! You just leave us waiting so we don't know!*

[...]

***Do you feel like order here is on a knife edge? Like it could?***

*Oh no, no it's not like that, no. It's not really. This jail is quite calm*

***This wing?***

*All the jail I think! ...[I]like a London jail, there where it's constantly, it's always going, there's a bad atmosphere in the whole jail and it's just, there's that many gangs, in here it's not really like that*

***It's more relaxed?***

*Yeah. [T]hey're a bit more friendly in here...they're quite nice and all that. But they're, nothing gets done in here on time*

*- Jerry*

Jerry, like William, similarly criticises officers in Cardiff for not promptly responding to prisoners' requests. This is something that prisoners value highly, as outlined in chapter two and explored below. This lack of responsiveness would appear to be undermining the otherwise positive aspect of Cardiff as a prison that is 'calm' in the eyes of Jerry. This is the second theme that arose when asking prisoners about what makes Cardiff unique – namely, that prisoners feel less at risk of victimisation from other prisoners in Cardiff:

*This ain't a proper jail, like. Well, it obviously is, but it's. When you go up England and all that like, do you know what I mean? Proper jails they are, like, do you know what I mean. Where you're like that, walking around \*mimes looking over your shoulder\*. This is nothing, this ain't*

***What, so in other places you're like looking over your shoulder, like shit is gonna happen from other prisoners?***

*Yeah, yeah, people getting stabbed, cut up and fucking all sorts, regular like. But you don't hear of it here do you? It does happen, do you know what I mean, but not, not like there like, you know?*

*- Michael*

Just as the officers above, Michael clearly views Cardiff to be comparatively safer than other prisons. Other prisoners attested to this, such as Gerald, a prisoner originating from London:

***I've heard that other jails are rougher?***

*Oh yeah!*

***Like more fighting?***

*Oh yeah!*

***People getting slashed up [stabbed]?***

*Yeah, yeah, yeah yeah. 100%. Every single prison that I've been in on this sentence, because I've been to [public prison in Oxfordshire], [public prison in Dorset], [public prison in Hampshire], [other public prison in Oxfordshire], and over here and to be honest with you, this place, in terms of you know fights and things like that, it doesn't really happen over here. Well, on this wing anyway, I don't know what it's like on the other wings. Nothing really happens, and if it does happen, it's usually nothing too serious. But in other prisons I've been in, yeah, it's survival of the fittest.*

*[...]*

*In contrast with this place and [private prison in The Midlands], I would say in this prison...the prison officers, they run the prison. Large [private prison in The Midlands], when I was there, it was the other way round. The prisoners run the prison, not the staff.*

***Does that make for a better prison here like with the staff?***

*Well, to be honest with you, if it's your first time in prison, coming to this place it would be, you know, a good way for you to kind of understand how prison runs like. But in the other way, it's also a bad thing because if you come here and you've not been to any other prison prior to coming in here, you'd think that the rest of the prisons out there are like this! Which they really aren't.*

- Gerald

Gerald has been in prison for four years, eight months of which has been spent in Cardiff. He has been to many jails across England and Wales, and from his experience HMP Cardiff suffers to a lesser extent from prisoner fights, particularly serious ones. He notes that the 'survival of the fittest' mentality that pervades other prisons does not exist in Cardiff, and even goes so far as to say that Cardiff would provide a new prisoner with a false pretence in terms of how safe prison is. Gerald also compares Cardiff to [private prison in The Midlands], a privately-run prison, suggesting that in HMP Cardiff it is the officers that dictate what happens inside. Tobias, an IPP prisoner in Cardiff, also comments on how 'quiet' Cardiff is:



*Miss, can I just say, this jail. If you were in another jail the bell would be going off every fucking 20 minutes. Shit don't happen in here, does it, compared to other jails, it's quieter*

- Tobias (Ted, Tobias and Thorsten ad hoc joint interview)

Jerry, Michael, Gerald and Tobias put forward a highly convincing case regarding the relative safety and order within HMP Cardiff compared to other prisons. However, it is important to bear in mind the two aforementioned caveats when making comparisons between Cardiff and other prisons, including recognising contextual public/private and geographical factors. Nevertheless, in the eyes of both prisoners and officers, HMP Cardiff would therefore appear to be relatively well-ordered, and it is their perceptions of the prison that takes precedence here.

#### 4.8 HMP Cardiff: Visits and The Valleys

There are a handful of other aspects of life in HMP Cardiff that have been perceived to be unique by prisoners and officers, as follows:

Firstly, it was suggested that the threat of being shipped out [moved to another prison] provides a strong incentive for prisoner compliance due to the convenience of HMP Cardiff for family visits. Being transferred to another prison is a legitimate concern for all prisoners, with thousands of transfers occurring each year due to overcrowding, operational needs or changes in a prisoners' security category. For example, there was a total of 95,631 transfers across the Estate in 2015 (Ministry of Justice 2016: 12). The financial, emotional and physical toll experienced by families and friends when loved ones are housed far from home is an established theme in prison research (see, for example, Codd 2013; Jones 2017):

*A lot of them wanna stay because it's good for visits. Other jails are probably worse than this, but we've touched on this before where the Welsh prisoners wanna stay in the Welsh jails.*

- Officer Oscar

-

*Another thing [with] this place, there's less trouble than in any other jails of a similar, being a local prison, the other locals have a lot more trouble than Cardiff and I think it's because...again...ownership, I think prisoners here take ownership of their jail in Wales, and I think well now if they make a mess of it there's a good chance they'll end up in Bristol or farther afield, they don't wanna be in England. It's just my opinion. You know. It's in the middle of a city, easy to visit whether you're coming from the Valleys, West Wales, the train*

*drops you off round the corner...[t]hey know if they mess it up here Mrs Jones ain't gonna come from Merthyr [town in the Valleys] on the train and get off on the corner, she's got to go on the tube, [or go to] Bristol.*

- Officer Luke

--

*prisoners [don't] wanna go to Birmingham, they certainly wouldn't go to London, they probably wouldn't wanna go to Bristol, because here, I guess they've grown up, a lot of them will have grown up in Cardiff.*

- Officer Kiera

A prisoner concurred with this view:

*[We] all know at the end of the day...you [hurt] an officer, you get shipped out of this jail, and as jails go, if you're from Wales, here, [other public prison in Wales] and [private prison in Wales] is the only jails you go to, for your family to go and visit you the other side of the country is quite hard, so we're quite privileged really to be here. I know that sounds really stupid really, it's a pit innit...but from your family point of view.*

- Donnie

In the view of these participants, being housed in HMP Cardiff is a 'privilege' (Donnie) when it comes to enabling visits from loved ones; and Officer Luke explicitly refers to the sense of 'ownership' (Earle 2011) mentioned above.

A second feature of HMP Cardiff is that prisoners originate from the same localities on the outside, just as prisoners and officers do. For example, in September 2019, of all prisoners in Cardiff just under a quarter originated from the same discreet postcode area within the city prior to entering custody<sup>54</sup> (data obtained from a source within the Wales Governance Centre, 2020). Prisoners noted that this can help with settling in and enhance feelings of security:

*I've been in for so long I've [got] people I know from out there come up to me and they haven't got nothing. Obviously because I've been in so long I've got a [hifi] system now, dvd player, my own bedding, my own clothes, you know, different toiletries...so if my mate comes in or whatever...or they are half alright and they're from my area I'll be like ...give them toiletries [and] look after them like.*

- Stephen

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<sup>54</sup> Incidentally the same postcode area as my own, again highlighting the shared local knowledge that assisted in establishing rapport, as discussed in chapter three.

The prisoner group in Cardiff is highly homogenous, and I witnessed many prisoners entering the Induction wing and greeting other prisoners and even officers like old friends. As well as sharing time in custody, many prisoners will move in the same circles on the outside, for example a prisoner told me of a time when he was twoed-up with [in a cell with] another prisoner and it transpired that they were both dating the same girl. Other prisoners shared stories with me about being inside with their fathers, brothers and cousins.

A third observation concerning the prisoner population in Cardiff is that there is a perception that 'gangs'<sup>55</sup> do not exist in HMP Cardiff:

*They're all in gangs aren't they over there, so they're carrying shanks...[e]very prison I've been to up England, they're like...[o]ut there using guns and shit.*

- Thorsten

--

*There's more like gangs in Liverpool than here. Liverpool and Manchester, all the big cities have got more gangs. They're happy for anyone to come here!*

- Jerry

It is highly interesting that Thorsten and Jerry say that 'gangs' do not exist in 'their' prison, as this has been found by researchers in other prisons (for example Phillips 2012; Gooch and Treadwell 2015). Yet Thorsten and Jerry intimate that gangs *do* exist in prisons in England, which is somewhat at odds with these existing conceptualisations of gangs being absent from prisoner social life in the UK (Skarbek 2020).

Within Cardiff, some prisoners and officers suggested that there were instead loose geographical groupings amongst prisoners:

*What you do find here is, it's more...geographical. Like all the Newport boys will stick together, all the Cardiff boys will stick together, and the Valley boys will stick together, yeah, it's more like that rather than a proper gang, sort of thing*

- Officer Stella

Again, the extent to which this is unique to HMP Cardiff is contestable because the formation of prisoner groupings along geographical lines has been identified elsewhere within the British prison

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<sup>55</sup> As per Footnote 4: Gangs are defined as a "self-perpetuating and criminally-oriented organization which controls the prison environment through intimidation and violence against non-members, operating within a chain of command and code of conduct" (Lyman 1989, cited in Maitra 2020: 130).

context (Earle 2011; Gooch 2019). Yet, for Officer Stella at least, this was perceived to be a distinctive feature of life in Cardiff prison.

Conversely, some prisoners such as Sam and Lee suggested that even groupings along the lines of locality appear to have become less pronounced in recent years:

*Back in the day you used to have divides, you say you'd have your Cardiff boys, your Swansea boys, your Valley boys...[y]ou've still got your groups but...you'd [be able to] have your mingle now but back then they wouldn't, know what I'm sayin'?*

- Sam

--

*Back before there was tellys and things like...there used to be like gangs of Welsh valley boys and then Cardiff boys, Newport boys, Barry boys.*

- Lee (Lee and Lenny, ad hoc joint interview)

The following officers agreed with this assessment of prisoner groupings in Cardiff, similarly stating a perceived absence of 'gangs':

*Finley: And I dunno if it's just the Welsh mentality, more than anything else...there's not so many gangs, is there...they say [boys from] Cardiff, Swansea, Newport, The Valleys [clash], no, it's never that bad...*

*Hector: That's it, and a lot of it has to do with our culture in Wales, it's just where we are, you don't get the gang culture like you do up country [in England], we're quite lucky with that, you get one individual rather than gangs*

*Flynn: Years ago when we used to have youngsters on this wing...you'd have Rhondda, Cardiff. You'd have the skinheads on one side versus the Valleys*

*Finley: Don't get that now.*

- Officer Finley, Officer Hector, Officer Flynn, ad hoc joint interview

The fourth and final observation regarding HMP Cardiff's context is that, in congruence with the officer narratives above, some prisoners also spoke positively about running into officers on the outside:

*[I was going to] the pub...walking past, one day [I] seen him, fucking 'what's happening guv?' Do you know what I mean?! \*laughing\* He's good as gold though, normally the old school screws, they understand when you can't see your family.*

- Bryan

The suggestion from prisoners that they would be happy to meet officers on the out, and even 'buy them a pint' (Sam) is, I believe, indicative of a modicum of closeness and amiability between prisoners and officers in Cardiff. This is not to suggest that all officers are viewed positively by prisoners, nor that relationships between staff and prisoners are wholly positive throughout the entire institution. There is vast disparity between the attitudes and working practices of individual officers in Cardiff, as shall now be seen.

#### 4.9 Back to the Old-School

It was established in section 4.4 that HMP Cardiff was able to retain a relatively high number of experienced officers at a time when many officers left the service across England and Wales as part of NWO. This finding is particularly interesting when we consider prisoner perceptions of newer versus more experienced officers, as follows:

***Do you think there's any difference between newer staff and more experienced staff, officers that have been in the job for ages?***

*1 million percent. 1 million percent. The officer that was on yesterday, proper, if every member of staff was like him this place would run smooth, like no problems. There'd be less fights...everyone would just get along fine. Staff and prisoner relationships would be perfect. Mr X his name is - old, quite seasoned \*laughs\* you know what I mean, been through it all, probably ex-military or something. But he's calm with it. Like I think it's all about their approach...I don't know whether he's like a grandfather or something, he might see us all as like, like potentially we could be his grandkids, you know, like we're just in a bit of bother...he treats all of the prisoners, all of us down here, treats us all the same and for that reason all of the prisoners respect him. He's one of the officers, if I see someone like get in an altercation with him, I'd soon...put that guy in his place.*

- Kevin

In Kevin's opinion, a 'good officer' is someone that is calm, someone that does not judge prisoners, and someone that treats all prisoners the same. Kevin also firmly relates this working style to the officers' age and experience, using terms like 'seasoned' and 'grandfather figure'. Kevin also provides

an important reminder that despite HMP Cardiff being perceived as 'calm' and 'safe', fights and altercations do still occur.

Another prisoner described experienced, or 'old-school' officers more favourably:

***Do you think there's any difference between new and more experienced officers?***

*Yes. The old ones are used to it...my boss from [workshop], what a guy, brilliant, can't fault him...if you ask my boss, he'll tell you straight.*

- Dominic

Dominic adds 'telling it straight' to the list of valued officer attributes, and once again this working style is linked to the officer's length of time in the job by Dominic. Other positive phrases used by prisoners to describe experienced officers included: "you know where you stand", "they know the score" and "they know [what] we're facing...I think they can understand" (Ted, Tobias and Thorsten). A perception is beginning to emerge here, in that old-school officers are seen by some prisoners as better able to understand the plight of prisoners. This perceived enhanced empathy could encourage prisoners to place more trust in these officers. Another prisoner, Johnny, refers to Mr X, an experienced male officer as:

*Fucking banging [great]...he's probably been a screw all his life...he's just the best screw in the whole jail. If you piss him off, you know, whoa...you'll know about it. You've fucked it up forever then. He is, he's one of the best officers on the wing, but speak to him with respect man...otherwise you will get shit. It's not just that, a lot of the prisoners will look out for him...he's good to them, so then they look out for him*

- Johnny

Johnny speaks very highly indeed of this officer, also commenting upon how firm the officer is in terms of what he expects from prisoners. Whilst this may seem counter-intuitive, it echoes the findings of Crewe et al (2014a) in that prisoners were found to be less anxious in an environment that is perceived to be well-supervised, with a clear line in terms of behaviours that are expected and tolerated. William and Gerald above each also described Cardiff prison in these terms. Relating this back to Figure 1 presented in chapter two concerning forms of order and control in prisons, this would suggest that officer authority is felt to be "present" in Cardiff in that it was not oppressive, but rather 'firm but fair'.

Ted, Tobias and Thorsten continued to compare more and less experienced officers, stating that newer officers “undermine” prisoners, that ‘they think they’re Superman because they’ve got the shirt on’, and ‘they come in here with their little bullshit rules’. At least 80% of prisoners in HMP Cardiff told me that they favoured the working styles of more experienced officers compared to new officers. There was a widespread view that new officers are ‘petty’, that they over-use their power, and are quicker to resort to formal means of punishment, something that has been found to undermine the forging of positive interpersonal relationships between staff and prisoners (Liebling 2000). A compelling account of this is offered by Mr Glynn, a prisoner that has served decades at Her Majesty’s pleasure.

Mr Glynn, adopting a self-assigned pseudonym, presented me with a 9-page hand-written account of his time in prison, from 1986 to the present day, entitled “How the Prison System has changed over the years”. Within this memoir, Mr Glynn writes:

yes i Find the Type of Screw now  
From Say, 15 yers ago, to now a lot  
Difrent, a lot of Them are petty, ~~but~~  
Some are lazy, Some go out of Thayer way  
to make your Day as shit as thayers Some  
are verry good a help full, Some just pass the  
Buck, and Some are pure Dogs,  
(Right Example for you.) Screw walks past  
your cell Door, Smells Canabiss or Spice. the old  
School Screw would Step in to the cell on his  
own, and Say fuck Boys open the windoors for Fuck  
Sake or you going to get the wing Stoned Just on the  
fumes have a gige and walk off no more Said  
every ones happy people stoned pece full and happy. a  
quiet Shift for him. or the Sly Dog could go get more Screws  
come Strip every one in the cell nick every one put some  
on Basic piss Test every one, and as you can see it goes on  
+ on + on, and for What, to be known By every on as  
a dog Sly Fucker, So as he can have a pat on The  
Back and Told hes a good Boy.

Mr Glynn's depiction of newer officers is quite negative. In his eyes they can be 'very good and helpful', whilst many are 'petty', and some are 'lazy', and 'sly'. Usefully, Mr Glynn provides an example to demonstrate the use of discretion practiced by more experienced officers that is so valued by prisoners: an old-school officer, upon identifying drug use, may reprimand the wrongdoers, putting an end to the rule-breaking with his words. In contrast, a 'newbie' [new officer] would immediately resort to formal order-maintenance techniques which have significant consequences for those involved in terms of the quality of their lives inside and their privileges. Like Mr Glynn, many prisoners in Cardiff expressed a clear preference for officers that used informal means and 'talk tactics' to maintain control, rather than those that resorted immediately to the institutional punishment system. Exclusive dependence upon formal punishments was perceived by prisoners as an attempt by officers to 'get ahead' in their jobs or to intentionally inflict suffering. As summed up by Tobias: "*[T]he old school ones like X, Mr Y, Mr Z, all them are safe [good]. They come in, do what they've got to do and go home, whereas these [new officers] go out of their way to try and hurt us in some way.*" A common term used to describe inexperienced officers was 'jobsworths', an informal British term for an official that upholds petty rules even at the expense of common sense or humanity.

Whilst it may seem intuitive that these prisoners state a preference for the use of informal means for dealing with issues, in fact this is not so clear-cut. The work of Crewe et al (2014a: 403) is again highly useful here. They found that in 'light/absent' prisons, characterised by enhanced prisoner freedom and perceived lack of officer control, prisoners interpreted the underuse of officer power as an avoidance of duty. Conversely, in prisons where officer authority was felt to be 'present', the under-use of power signified that officers were using their discretion 'skilfully' (Liebling et al 2011b: 131). Therefore, it is only within 'present' prisons that prisoners prefer the judicious use of discretion because it does not undermine their feelings of security. William, above, interestingly drew similar comparisons between Cardiff as a public prison and [named private prison in Wales] as a private prison, noting that officers in [private prison in Wales] would appease prisoners in their everyday interactions and 'let prisoners get on with it' (William) – something that Crewe et al (2014a) also found within the private prisons in their study. The preference that prisoners in HMP Cardiff expressed for officers prioritising 'talk-tactics' provides a further indication that HMP Cardiff may be characterised as 'present' on the prison officer authority continuum given in Figure 1 in chapter two. The extent to which HMP Cardiff could be best described as a '*light/present*' or '*heavy/present*' institution will be reflected upon later in this thesis.



It is interesting that the quotations presented here suggest that more experienced officers are seen by prisoners to provide a 'calmer' and 'more empathetic' approach to their work. This goes against popular, albeit dated, depictions of 'old-school' and particularly ex-military officers as having an authoritarian leaning. More recent studies however have painted experienced officers in quite a more positive light, which aligns more closely with the findings presented here (for example, Tait 2011; Moran et al 2019). Tait (2011), following her empirical research in two prisons composed a typology of officer approaches to care, within which she also isolated the approaches taken by 'old school' officers. She described them in similar terms to here in this discussion: "prisoners identified them as caring and enjoyed their sociability and humour. They provided a reliable and trustworthy presence on the wing, and prisoners could count on their responsiveness and straightforward approach." (Tait 2011: 446).

It appears that prisoners in Cardiff are more likely to offer respect and trust to experienced officers in comparison to their less experienced counterparts. This increased trust and respect suggests that such officers are, in the eyes of prisoners, deploying their authority 'well', or in other words, legitimately. Indeed, a prison's internal legitimacy increases as officers become more 'present' (see Figure 1, chapter two) – a characterisation that this chapter has shown to be applicable to Cardiff prison. In the context of this thesis as a whole, this finding can be applied to look again at the previous suggestions that (i.) HMP Cardiff is a relatively well-ordered and safe establishment and (ii.) that it has been able to retain experienced staff. If the working style of more experienced officers is considered to be more legitimate by prisoners, and strong perceptions of legitimacy can increase the likelihood of prisoner compliance (see chapter two), it would follow that a prison that has more highly-experienced staff could reasonably boast enhanced safety, more positive staff-prisoner relationships, and good order.

#### 4.10 Concluding Comments: Is HMP Cardiff Unique?

This chapter has demonstrated that, in the eyes of those living and working in HMP Cardiff, the establishment has some unique qualities. Analyses of order and safety data have also shown that HMP Cardiff is relatively well-ordered compared to prisons of a similar size and function. Following the evidence presented in this chapter, it can be argued that this is due to three things: Firstly, the perception amongst officers that they are particularly adept at interacting with prisoners may encourage them to converse with prisoners and be more 'present' on the wings. This helps to build more positive relationships and reduces the dehumanising effects of imprisonment. Secondly, it is clear that prisoners and officers in Cardiff are a relatively homogenous group – they originate from the same locations and are likely to have contact with one another outside the prison

walls. This lack of cultural distance may encourage the building of trust. Thirdly, most prisoners in Cardiff informed me that they prefer the working styles of more experienced officers, particularly their ability to use their authority and discretion wisely without needing to immediately resort to formal means of control. This is something that other researchers have found in other prisons – it is not unique to Cardiff. However, what does appear to be exceptional in Cardiff is that, at the time of data collection, the prison boasted a high number of highly experienced officers compared to national averages, and they were seemingly able to recover from the devastating effects of NWOW due to both their officer retention and by imposing an informed regime change. Indeed, HMP Cardiff has since been praised by HMCIP:

It is my judgement that much of the improvement can be ascribed to the excellent relationships that existed between staff and prisoners, and the obviously energetic and well-focused leadership of the senior team. These positive relationships had, in turn, contributed to the ability of the prison to address some of the basics that shaped the character of a jail, such as levels of violence, the prevalence or otherwise of drugs, and the living conditions experienced by prisoners. Importantly, the prison was relatively safe. Fewer prisoners than in similar establishments told us they felt unsafe...[i]t is much to Cardiff's credit that while violence figures across the prison estate have generally been rising at an alarming rate in recent years, they had managed to buck the trend...HMP Cardiff disproves the clichés about inner-city Victorian prisons inevitably being places of squalor, violence and despair (HMCIP 2019b: 5-6).

This report was written at the end of 2019 and therefore cannot be used as an indicator of the quality of life inside for prisoners at the time of my fieldwork in 2015, or the interim. However, taken together, it appears that Cardiff is 'doing something right'. I have not ventured inside other prisons therefore I cannot comment on the extent to which the above findings are wholly unique to HMP Cardiff. My participants have however, and in their eyes the establishment possessed several characteristics which may be conducive to the forming of positive staff-prisoner relationships, and a safe and well-ordered prison environment.

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## Chapter Five: Coercion or Consent? Maintaining an uneasy peace in prison

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### 5.1 Introduction

As shown in the preceding chapter, prisoners and officers in HMP Cardiff most commonly characterised their institution as existing in a well-ordered state. During my time spent conducting research in the prison I was struck by the level of order that characterises daily prison life, as well as the level of compliance demonstrated by *most* prisoners, *most* of the time. This chapter considers why this might be so. It presents primary qualitative data concerning prisoner compliance and considers whether there are circumstances in which prisoners might be more inclined to abide by the regulations of the institution. To begin, I outline the three primary reasons given by prisoners when asked why they follow the rules, including: the pursuit of rewards, the avoidance of punishment, and resigned acceptance. I then explore two aspects of the prison regime and disciplinary structure that serve to align the interests of prisoners with those of the institution, ultimately encouraging prisoners to become ‘responsibilised’ beings. I also discuss non-conformity, at both the individual level and the institutional level. I then revisit the arguments surrounding legitimacy in prisons presented in chapter two, applying these specifically to prisoner compliance. I explore whether a belief in the legitimacy of prison officers’ authority influences prisoners’ likelihood of offering acquiescence. The final section of this chapter brings together these findings to contribute to understandings of the maintenance of mundane order in the contemporary prison.

Within this chapter, and indeed in this thesis more generally, I adopt the term ‘uneasy peace’ to describe the state in which Cardiff prison exists. The phrase was first used by Eamonn Carrabine in his 2005 article concerning prison social order, as discussed in more detail in chapter two. Although Carrabine only uses the term ‘uneasy peace’ within the article abstract, I apply this phrase here for it encapsulates the general order that pervades the wings and landings of Cardiff prison, but importantly acts as a reminder that order is highly fragile. To use the term ‘peace’ during a discussion of the prison – a place that causes tangible suffering daily – requires some qualification. It could be taken to undermine the real pains caused by imprisonment, or interpreted as naïve, or taken to suggest that I was unable to observe ‘real’ prison life. I present my arguments against these claims at the outset: I am not alone in describing the contemporary prison as well-ordered, as demonstrated by my references to other penal scholars’ work within this chapter and elsewhere in this thesis (for example, Cressey 1961; Bottoms 1999; Crewe 2007a). Furthermore, I recognise and

dedicate time to discussing the pain and anguish inflicted by imprisonment within the ensuing chapters. It is accepted and indeed argued within this thesis that the controls that prisoners are subjected to within the modern prison are highly psychologically intrusive – they do not induce feelings of ‘peace’ on an individual level. Importantly, within this chapter I show that whilst the prison exists in a state of uneasy peace, prisoners can and do demonstrate low-level resistance in certain circumstances. Having spent a year in HMP Cardiff for the present research, along with time during previous research studies, the empirical validity of my arguments is increased. Finally, and arguably most importantly, the arguments presented here are based upon the words of prisoners and officers themselves. Whilst they have been interpreted through my own analytical and theoretical lens as a social scientific criminologist, I have endeavoured to remain faithful to their accounts of the lived experience of imprisonment.

## 5.2 Why do prisoners follow the rules?

To understand some of the motivating factors that encourage compliance, the following question was posed to prisoners in HMP Cardiff: “why do you follow the rules?” The responses given to this question can be broadly grouped into three distinct categories: ‘the carrot’, ‘the stick’, and ‘resistance is futile’. Prisoners falling into the first category, around a quarter of inmates in Cardiff that participated in a recorded interview, focused upon the rewards that can be gained from actively demonstrating good behaviour, particularly in terms of cultivating positive relationships with officers. Their reasons for compliance were predominantly ‘instrumental’ (Bottoms 1999). The second category – ‘the stick’ – was comprised of a further quarter of prisoner participants, and here prisoners offered their compliance to avoid extra punishments such as removal of privileges or extra time added on to their sentence. Instrumental reasoning was again adopted here. The third motivating factor, as voiced by around half of my prisoner interviewees in HMP Cardiff, appears to be the most potent factor in ensuring compliance amongst prisoners. Here, there was a distinct feeling of resigned acceptance of the power of the institution which encouraged a fatalistic view amongst prisoners that ‘resistance is futile’. Bottoms’ (1999) notion of ‘structural-constraint’ is applicable here, alongside Carrabine’s (2005) concept of ‘fatalistic compliance’.

Whilst the reasons for compliance voiced by prisoners in Cardiff have been loosely grouped, it is important to note that the production of a ‘neat typology’ of prisoner compliance has not been possible to achieve. The application of any one theory of compliance does not, and should not, preclude the application of others. Instead, all theories may be amalgamated or variably applicable in different social situations (Wrong 1994) or in prisons of different security categories (Ricciardelli and Sit 2016). As Carrabine (2005: 906) helpfully observes:

The problem of order is multi-faceted and...any account that relies on a singular solution to the neglect of others will neglect the ways in which force, manipulation, ritual and legitimation combine to give rise to distinctive patterns of domination, compliance and resistance.

The following excerpt from a conversation with William, a prisoner on F Wing, demonstrates the 'messiness' of conceptualising prisoner compliance:

**Officers, do they have the right to tell you what to do, and do you think they have power over you?**

*Erm. I dunno \*Extended pause\* Yeah they do. Well that's their job innit, you know they have got the right to tell you what to do. Whether some people abide by them or not is something [else] isn't it, but, yeah, that's their job. It's whether somebody listens or not. There's only so much, so much they can, like obviously they've gotta tell you like strictly over on the wing, like bang up or something like that, that's their right to tell you what to do innit, but*

**You think it is their right?**

*Yeah. But, I dunno, yeah it is because that's how the jail runs, they're just doing their jobs, bang up before now they've gotta tell you haven't they, behind your door..[T]here was a stand-off the other day, no-one banged up. Because they told us we weren't going to gym. There was a single file queue, but there was a few people coming out...and they said if you don't get into a queue single file, banned everyone from the fucking gym! After queuing 3 quarters of an hour to get to the front of the queue, and banned us all from the gym, so everyone refused to bang up. I didn't though, I thought, I can't be having written warnings*

**So did you just go in?**

*I just went behind my door I did. Couple of people didn't, it was just all the fucking [INDISTINCT]...and I just, I can't because I didn't wanna get nicked or written warnings or whatever*

**It's not worth it?**

*Just like, you wanna make your life easier and if you're tidy [good, polite] to a screw they'll be tidy back to you...I'm tidy with all of them and they're tidy with me, but the ones [prisoners] who are chopsy [cocky, talkative] to the screws...what's the point, you're just making your life harder. None of us wanna be here, most of us don't wanna be here, so you might as well just make it as easy as possible.*

William initially offers a normative judgement concerning the power that officers can wield over prisoners. In his eyes, officers are in a position of power and this is 'right' because it is their job – they have been put in a position of power, and by virtue of that position their authority is legitimate: 'that's their job...they have the right to tell you what to do'. William then refers to the institutional regime, mentioning that officers have the right to instruct prisoners 'because that's how the jail runs'. William then goes on to describe a recent incident of disorder, where some prisoners refused to return to their cells because their gym session was cancelled. William suggests that the prisoners that rebelled against the officers' instructions to lock up did so because they were denied something that they were entitled to – gym access. William then goes on to note that he chose not to dissent for fear of receiving punishment: 'I just went behind my door...I can't because I didn't wanna get nicked<sup>56</sup> or written warnings.' When asked to elaborate on the reasons for his decision to return to his cell, William referred to a desire to 'make life easier' for himself and, crucially, he suggests that the best way to do so is to be polite to officers. William suggests that he was motivated to comply to both avoid punishment, and to gain a better life inside through gaining the favour of officers. He ends by saying that prisoners 'who are cocky to the screws...what's the point, they're just making their lives harder.' William intimates that misconduct, or 'acting up' around officers is pointless and self-defeating, and any prisoner that chooses to do so is making life more difficult for themselves. William's perspective may have been influenced by his sentence status: he was awaiting trial for a serious offence<sup>57</sup>, for which he would likely have to serve many years if found guilty. It is possible that this increased William's inclination to follow the rules so as not to jeopardise his court hearing. The remainder of this chapter will explore further the themes that have emerged from this conversation with William, drawing upon the voices of many different prisoners. William's narrative suggests that prisoner motivations for compliance are indeed multi-faceted (Carrabine 2005), complex, and often intersect. In what follows I explore the three discrete reasons for compliance that emerged from my data.

### 5.3 The Carrot

Prisoners that complied for benefits and rewards often spoke about having 'an easy life' inside. When I asked prisoners what it meant to have 'an easy life' inside they said that it was signified by improved material conditions such as greater access to the gym, more visits and an in-cell TV; as well as more favourable sentence reports (and, correspondingly, better prospects for release). Aside

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<sup>56</sup> Informal term for a reprimand – either a warning, an IEP review or sent to the Segregation Unit.

<sup>57</sup> Although interviews were not designed to discuss prisoner offences, William voluntarily told me about his upcoming trial.

from material gain, an 'easy life' meant better treatment by officers in terms of their readiness to help. Isaac, a life-sentenced prisoner, suggests that he made a conscious decision upon incarceration to follow the rules to better his life inside as well as his chances of parole:

*I don't misbehave. I've never had a nicking in 9 years, not ever an adjudication, not even a verbal warning. And everything I've ever asked to get done for me, when there's been a problem, has been done! So, you can work out for yourself can't you.*

***Why did you decide you were gonna follow the rules?***

*I have to sit a parole board and, this was a conscious decision, that when I went to my parole there would have been nothing on that side of the table to stop me progressing. I didn't want that day to come when I look back and think 'what if I hadn't have done that, what if I hadn't have done this?!'*

- Isaac

Isaac appears to be proud of actively making the decision to offer his compliance – a decision that he states has been beneficial in terms of his time inside, and something that he firmly sees as within his own interests. For Isaac, the attentive treatment he receives from officers is purely a product of his decision to comply: 'I don't misbehave...and everything I've ever asked for has been done.' He also remarks that if he were to be denied parole, he would not want this to be due to his own past decisions and actions.

Donnie offers a similar viewpoint, stating early on in our interview that he aimed to make his life inside as 'comfortable as possible for himself'. When asked how he does this, he responded:

*I suggest take it day by day...I always be tidy [good, respectful] to the staff and I do have a laugh and a joke with them...I come in and I could be in here a week and I'd get one of the best jobs in the jail because I'm always respectful, I always say please and thank you, always speak to people with manners.*

- Donnie

Much as Isaac drew links between his responsive treatment from officers and his own good behaviour, Donnie notes that treating officers with respect and politeness can also help in securing good employment in the prison. Donnie continues:

*And I just think if people come in and they play up over stupid little things they make it worse for themselves. You can make it what you wanna be. I come in here, like the courses and that*

*don't really make a difference but I will go on all the courses, I'll do everything I will, I'll make the most of it whilst I'm in here and I'll try not to come back.*

- Donnie

Within Donnie's second quotation he suggests that prisoners can 'make what they want of prison' and if they decide to rebel, or 'play up', they are only making it worse for themselves. The reference to individual responsibility and self-blame detectable in Donnie's words is explored further below. Donnie then goes on to note that despite being sceptical about the usefulness of some of courses available to him, he will engage with them regardless. It is quite possible that prisoners offer their compliance for purely pragmatic reasons, with no reference to a normative alignment with institutional values. Around 50% of the prisoners in Crewe's (2007a: 267-268) study in HMP Wellingborough displayed such "fatalistic or instrumental compliance", many of whom, like Donnie, expressed a view that the most important tool at their disposal was to offer officers politeness.

'Mr Phillips', a prisoner adopting a self-assigned pseudonym, offered me the below hand-written note after approaching me to ask what I was doing in the prison. I informed him that I was looking at how the prison 'works' on a daily basis and the role of staff. Mr Phillips used his own writing paper to independently write this note and hand-deliver it to me:

Relationships between Staff + Prisoners

the relationship between the staff and a prisoner all depend on how well mannered you are, if you are disrespectful then ~~they~~ they will make your stay here uncomfortable such as: banging you up early, take your telly, stay behind your door and much more. If you are polite then you will earn more privileges such as: more association and gym time, put your cell more, and things that can benefit your stay here.

How things stay safe and quiet on the wings

things are normally quiet on the wings unless someone has had a bad day or in debt then tension starts to flare up and ends up in fighting on the landing with more than 2 people involved when your in jail people tend to look after the boys from the same area as them, its just a <sup>some</sup> thing you have to do! In general the <sup>the</sup> boys on the wing are ~~well~~ well behaved and are more concerned in playing football ~~and~~ keeping their heads down and riding their ~~sentance~~ sentence



In the view of Mr Philips, he and his fellow prisoners can improve their lives inside by offering good behaviour and being 'polite' to officers. Crucially, he suggests that relationships between prisoners and officers are very much dependent on how 'well-mannered' prisoners are. This view was highly prevalent amongst the prisoner population in HMP Cardiff, as shown in the previous and forthcoming quotations. Mr Philips also notes that the prison is usually 'quiet' and well-ordered, but that order can break down when someone 'has a bad day' or starts fighting with other prisoners over debts. As discussed in the previous chapter, Mr Phillips also posits that prisoners tend to form ties based upon geographical area. Finally, he notes that most prisoners on his wing (F Wing) in HMP Cardiff are 'well-behaved' and chiefly concerned with doing their time with as little controversy as possible, including avoiding punishments.

In the above quotations it is difficult to detect a normative alignment with institutional aims. Rather, compliance is considered by these prisoners to be the best course of action if they wish to secure better relationships with staff and, accordingly, a more comfortable life inside. They appear to show awareness, yet not resentment, of the power that is exercised over them. They also appear to place a great deal of weight in the rewards that are on offer to them, available through legitimate or 'institutionally-approved' channels:

*Some people sit there without a telly and without a radio, I couldn't do it, I'd be like \*mimes going crazy\*. That's another reason to behave as well, just get your head down like...just get on with them, just treat them with a bit of respect...like when they're first speaking to you just speak to them tidy and then they'll speak to you tidy*

*[T]here's always going to be awkward people that just don't like the officers and stuff, but people refusing to move and that...refusing to lock up and stuff, and it's like you're only making it worse for yourself. You're on basic and you just lose everything...it's just easier to get on with it like...if you're gonna make their lives hard they're gonna make your lives hard back in return, so I think it's just in the interests of everyone just to get on with it, get your head down and get on with it.*

- Earl

Earl's narrative demonstrates the powerful draw of the institutional privilege system for some prisoners. Earl proposes that his life inside would be significantly worsened if he did not have access to material privileges such as a TV, something that is unavailable to prisoners on Basic level of the IEP scheme – a movement to which would be, for Earl, like 'losing everything'. Another reason to

behave, in Earl's view, is to nurture mutually respectful relationships with officers: 'speak to them politely and they'll speak to you politely'. He describes prisoners that do not abide by the rules as being 'awkward' and that to offer compliance is 'in the interests of everyone'. It is important to interrogate Earl's reference to *reciprocal* respect when describing positive relationships with staff.

During my interactions with prisoners, the phrase "treat people how you would like to be treated" was often voiced. This reference to reciprocity is particularly interesting when we recognise that the officer-prisoner relationship is far from egalitarian. Another prisoner, Angus, astutely stated to me that "*if you fuck about they're just gonna treat you like shit innit, basically*". It is narratives such as this that bring the power differential between prisoners and officers into sharp focus, for whilst prisoners such as Earl expect respectful treatment from officers in response to offering good manners, if they do not receive it the consequences are much less stringent compared to if a prisoner were to offer anything but politeness. A prisoner would face significant consequences if he were to insult an officer, yet officers are unlikely to face such a severe penalty if they were less than polite to a prisoner. As so aptly summarised by Thorsten: "*[They say] 'oh just ignore him [an officer in a bad mood], they're having a bad day' but what, if I have a bad day I'll get nicked! Innit!*" Despite this, prisoners that align with this 'pursuit of rewards' model of compliance appear to place faith in this narrative of reciprocity. Again, this mirrors the findings of Crewe (2007a: 267), where the prisoners in his study that displayed 'instrumental compliance' exhibited "faith in a shared discourse of fairness and decency." The confidence that these prisoners in Cardiff place in receiving reciprocal respect from officers suggests that it is important that officers offer prisoners the rewards and privileges that they expect, in return for their compliance. Should they not do so, this would undermine the potency of 'the carrot' as a factor in maintaining prison order.

There are however other reasons that prisoners may follow the rules, such as to avoid punishment. Whilst this may seem intuitive and simply the 'other side of the coin' – indeed, these two motivations for compliance have been amalgamated within many of the quotations presented above - the avoidance of punishment reason for compliance is subtly different. Within the above 'pursuit of rewards' quotations officer behaviour features heavily – officers are seen to mediate the relationship between good behaviour and the attainment of rewards. However, in the following quotations the role of officers in the giving of punishment is curiously absent.

#### 5.4 The Stick

##### ***Why doesn't it [kick off all the time]?***

*Lee: Well, why don't riots start and things like that? I dunno. Well, people just tend to follow the rules in here, don't they. More than what they do outside*

### **Why?**

*Lee: Maybe loss of privileges, things like the loss of your TV, loss of canteen, being down seg [segregation], loss of visits*

### **Yeah, so, because of the consequences of not?**

*Lee: Yeah. It's more ordered in here than it is out there innit?!*

*Lenny: It's crazy innit, it is weird yeah, it is weird*

### **That yeah, people are just following the rules**

*Lee: Nobody follows the rules [on the] out. Nobody in here follows the rules outside, but as soon as they come in here everybody tends to follow the rules because they know they're gonna lose certain privileges, which is i.e. visits, canteen, loss of TV, association, gym...[w]hich is not a lot to lose anyway [but] one of them things to lose for two weeks is a big thing in here, loss of privileges*

### **Yeah, this is it, it seems like things which on the outside, like TV, which you don't need**

*Lee: Which we wouldn't even watch on the out! When I'm outside I don't watch telly at all, not one programme, I don't even switch the thing on but in here then you'd be devastated if you lost the TV.*

– Lee (Lee and Lenny joint interview)

During the above joint interview with Lee and Lenny, Lee offers several observations concerning prison order. Firstly, he notes that people 'tend to follow the rules' in prison, interestingly drawing a comparison with rule-following – or lack thereof – on the outside. He then attributes this compliance to the avoidance of punishment, suggesting that the threat of loss of privileges is so powerful because things 'mean more' in prison: 'one of those things to lose for two weeks is a big thing in here'. For Lee, the material deprivation that imprisonment imposes upon individuals strengthens the order-maintenance capacity of the prison's punishment and rewards system<sup>58</sup>. It is suggested in chapter six of this thesis that the pains of imprisonment cannot be divorced from any discussion of prison order, for the level of deprivation that a prisoner experiences is innately tied to the privileges he receives.

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<sup>58</sup> Just as in the outside world, any discussion of offending cannot be divorced from the material deprivation that many offenders experience prior to and after incarceration.

Adrian, in the quotation below, also cites the threat of a loss of TV, loss of association and a move to Basic IEP level as reasons for following the rules:

***Why do people follow the rules here?***

*Because we'd just get banged up all the time, everyone would go on basic, everyone would have their tellys gone...if you think there's like 30 boys on this landing they'd take 'em on easy [but] as soon as that alarm goes, from every wing every screw would come here, and they've got bats and everything, what have we got like?*

- Adrian

Adrian also refers to the more abstract, but extremely potent, threat of force that can be applied by officers in the event of collective disturbance: 'they've got bats and everything, what have we got?' Drawing upon Adrian's words, a distinction can be drawn here between the maintenance of *everyday* order and the way that large-scale disorder is dealt with. The former rests upon the removal or awarding of privileges that have a great bearing on the quality of a prisoners' life, whilst the latter relies upon recourse to the prison's almighty and state-sanctioned power to punish, detain and use force against citizens in the name of the law<sup>59</sup>. Together, the consequences of misbehaviour are highly formidable for prisoners. For Peter, a high-ranking officer, it is the 'carrot and the stick' that ultimately and effectively maintains prison-wide order:

*If they break prison rules then they get a form of punishment and they lose some form of right to the regime, they get a more restricted regime, but then that's because basically how are you supposed to control 820 people if you can't give them any carrot and stick type of principle? Carrot being you can have more visits, you can spend more on your canteen, the stick being you're going to lose family contact because you can only see them twice a month instead of four times a month or six times a month.*

- Officer Peter

Officer Peter recognises the potency of the punishments and rewards system for maintaining mundane order in prison and is seemingly unable to imagine an alternative arrangement: 'how else are you supposed to control 820 people?'. The punishments and rewards outlined by Officer Peter, including frequency of visits and canteen access, speak directly to the contemporary pains of imprisonment outlined in the next chapter of this thesis. Bottoms (1999: 259-260) has noted that incentives and disincentives schemes are often strengthened when the rewards and punishments on

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<sup>59</sup> See Appendix 14, dealing with disturbances, for further detail on use of force.

offer are related to an individual's "normative commitments". He offered the following example: an individual with strong family ties is likely to be more motivated to comply when parole decisions could be adversely affected by rule-breaking. In the contemporary prison the punishments available certainly appeal directly to an individual's priorities because they can greatly aggravate the pains of imprisonment. The suffering caused by missing loved ones, for example, is heightened when visits are reduced due to loss of privileges. Alternatively, the pain of boredom, another pain identified by prisoners in HMP Cardiff, is also aggravated by a move to Basic level of the IEP.

Sykes made a similar observation in relation to the punishments and rewards system in New Jersey State Prison over half a century ago. He noted that the system was ineffective in maintaining order precisely because the extra punishments available to custodians would "not represent a profound difference from the prisoner's usual status." (Sykes 1958: 50) There are strong continuities across time and space in terms of incarceration regimes and the normative commitments of individual prisoners, albeit with important contrasts between New Jersey State Prison and HMP Cardiff. For example, Sykes suggested that the loss of a 'monotonous' job would not have represented a great loss to prisoners in New Jersey jail, however in HMP Cardiff employment is highly prized as chapter seven demonstrates. Sykes then goes on to note that the rewards available to custodians in his study were ineffective because they were viewed as rights to prisoners, as opposed to earnable privileges: "these benefits have belonged to the prisoner from the time when he first came to the institution" (Sykes 1958: 52). Again, this is no longer applicable within the contemporary British jail as prisoners begin their sentences on Entry level of the IEP with the opportunity for progression. Additionally, a vast array of prisoner rights are currently framed as earnable privileges – both formally as with family visits, or informally as with preferential treatment from officers. Presently, most prisoners can significantly enhance their lives inside through legitimate means<sup>60</sup> by deciding to offer their compliance, and conduct is heavily shaped by the tangible carrot and the stick. This adds further weight to the caution given in chapter two regarding the framing of officer power as "defective" (Sykes 1958). Indeed, there exists a further reason offered by prisoners in HMP Cardiff when asked why they tend to follow the rules: a feeling that resistance is futile.

## 5.5 Resistance is Futile

### ***Why do you follow the rules?***

*Coz you're never gonna win are you. You're never gonna get out of them gates are you. You could kick off but then when the riot team comes in, when there's the takeover, you're in*

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<sup>60</sup> As shown in section 5.7, not all prisoners will decide to comply, nor will all prisoners be equally eligible for rewards even if they choose to do so.

*trouble, you ain't gonna get nothing. I think the best way to be when you come into prison is just to get your time done the best way you can without getting yourself in trouble...that's all you can do now. You know, they are authority at the end of the day...I'm just doing my jail the best way I can and the easiest way.*

- Jason

At the time of our meeting, Jason had been in and out of prison a number of times and had spent a cumulative period of three years incarcerated. He had been in HMP Cardiff for three months and was employed as a wing cleaner. Early on in our interview I chatted with Jason about his job as a cleaner, and he volunteered the observation that he was able to secure a cleaning job soon after incarceration because of his 'manners'. Later in our conversation I asked Jason about order maintenance, and he reiterated that the best way to do your time is to 'stay out of trouble'. Jason's quotation above begins with a suggestion that prisoners tend to follow the rules because they 'can't win'. If they were to rebel, they would only get in trouble and there would be no gain – they would 'get nothing'. Jason then mentions that 'they [officers] are in the authority'. For Jason, the prison and its staff ultimately have the upper-hand and this appears to induce feelings of resignation. An associated sense of powerlessness was communicated by other prisoners, such as Dominic: *"If something goes wrong what can we really do about it? What can we do? You can't do nothing! You're in prison!"*

During an ad hoc joint interview with a small group of cleaners on F Wing they also agreed that 'resistance is futile' and self-defeating:

*Jeremy: You've got to accept that you're in here and it's no good kicking the door, that door is locked*

*Jim: That's not gonna get you out is it*

*Jeremy: Got boys kicking the door now, hitting the buzzer, what, it's all in there for you, but they think by doing that they're gonna get released*

*Jared: If anything that's making your time harder because you're over thinking everything. Your time will go slower if you keep doing things like that. And they'll put you in things like segregation and that, where you don't have a TV, and you'll have more time to think, and it just makes it a lot harder for yourself.*

- Jim, Jeremy and Jared ad hoc joint interview

Jeremy, Jim and Jared concur with the view that rebelling against the rules through means such as kicking the cell door or repeatedly pressing the cell buzzer holds no promise for prisoners. Jeremy begins by suggesting that prisoners should 'accept that they're in jail', and Jared ends by suggesting that not following the rules will only make prison life even harder to endure.

Another prisoner, Jerry, also used the phrase, 'you can't win' during our interview. Jerry had spent over 10 years in prison throughout the life course and I asked him a series of questions concerning the advice he would give to a new prisoner starting his first sentence, an excerpt from which is presented here:

***What's the best way to handle staff?***

*Oh there is no way! You've just got to ignore it. Just got to ignore them. You can't, you can't argue with them because they can, like, you can lose privileges and stuff so you've just got to bite your tongue and deal with it. And they know that! They know that you, like, I'm not gonna go and, I'm gonna behave, so they know, you can't, we can't win*

***You can't beat the system?***

*No, not at all.*

- Jerry

Jerry emphatically states that he and his fellow prisoners should unquestioningly follow officers' instructions to mitigate against a loss of privileges. He also notes that officers are aware that prisoners have little choice but to follow the rules because they 'can't win' and will never be able to 'beat the system' if they do not behave. I then posed the following scenario to Jerry: 'what would happen if all prisoners were unlocked during association and all the staff left?', to which Jerry responded by suggesting that prisoners would still comply with the rules:

*There's nothing you can do. If there was a chainsaw, I think people would probably cut the fence \*laughing\* but, you know, it's pointless, you're not going anywhere. That, there's never no fights on this wing really. I've been on here for a while now haven't seen none...every jail I've been in there has hardly been enough staff though...[b]ut people still stick to the rules!*

***You see why I'm really interested in it***

*Yeah*

***Just why!***

*I know, but they know it would be hard to get out of here. I think if you could have them, the officers, they only have to press a buzzer and 40 screws would come off from everywhere! And then, oh I dunno, maybe one day everyone might go mad and try and get out! I won't be joining them though. It's pointless because if you get caught you'll get longer, and they'll put you in those stripes [E-Man prisoner uniform], won't they!*

- Jerry

As with Jason above, a feeling of resignation or “dulled acceptance” (Cohen and Taylor 1972: 131) is detectable within Jerry’s narrative. In terms of wide-scale disorder, Jerry refers to attempting to escape as ‘pointless’. He then goes on to comment on the lack of fights and disorder that he has experienced or witnessed in HMP Cardiff during normal life on the wings, noting this is despite there being very few officers in comparison to prisoners. Jerry appears to believe that even if prisoners were left unsupervised and unlocked, they would still stick to the rules because only negative consequences await usurpers, such as extra time. Another prisoner, Stephen, also stated that he would offer his compliance even in the absence of officers: “[N]ah nothing would happen it would just be, everyone would be...in and out of each [others’] cells. I’d have an hour or two out like, but I’d bang the door and get my head down.” When asked why he would do so, Stephen simply responded with “You have to, don’t you.” Upon probing Stephen further about why he tends to follow the rules, he then reiterated the oft-repeated refrain about behaving to mitigate against a loss of privileges: “[y]ou’d just be back to square one”.

I posed this same scenario to several interviewees, curious to understand their views on what might happen should all officers leave the wings whilst all prisoners are unlocked from their cells. Officers themselves struggled to even comprehend such a scenario and would often avoid or try to avoid answering the question, which is in itself interesting, for the question could have been interpreted as questioning their authority or the role that they play on the wings. Of the nine officers that answered this question, three were undecided, one felt that disorder would erupt, and five felt that there would not be a great deal of difference compared to normal prison life. Of the 12 prisoners that answered this question, five felt that there would be fighting and partying, whilst seven prisoners felt that prisoners would continue with the normal regime. It can be cautiously surmised, therefore, that in the view of my participants in HMP Cardiff, even if officers were to withdraw, prisoners would still be inclined to follow the prison regime and rules.

Across all wings and sentence lengths, prisoners expressed acute awareness of the exact punishments that they could receive should they not comply with the rules:



*Well everyone knows the rules, do you know what I mean? If you break them you know the consequences. You always get the ones who think they can bend the rules and that. I was one of them back in the day.*

- Thorsten

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***Why doesn't it kick off all the time? Why do people follow the rules?***

*You get 10 years for kicking off...I don't wanna. Like you get done for mutiny, I think it's called, you get 10 years! Yeah, I'm not getting involved in that! I'm happy just to do my time and go home.*

- Jerry

Both Thorsten and Jerry have spent many years in prison and they each express the view that prison life is easier if you follow the rules<sup>61</sup>, with Thorsten suggesting that this is something that he has learned over time: 'you get the ones who think they can bend the rules...I was one of them back in the day.'

However, it is not just older or more experienced prisoners that expressed the view that 'resistance is futile'. For example, when asked why prisoners tend to follow the rules, 18-year-old Roger said:

***Why don't things kick off then?***

*Reason for that, I'd say, is that once they get put in cells, standard and enhanced, as soon as one little fight happens or if they get in trouble one day they're gonna go back on to Basic and, they're, because, I say more people respect each other here*

***On this wing?***

*No, in the prison, like you have to learn to respect. That's when you don't kick off.*

- Roger

Despite being a 'first-timer' and with only three months served, Roger reiterates the sway that the threat of punishment holds over prisoners: 'as soon as one fight happens or if they get in trouble they're gonna go back to Basic'. In a similar manner to Thorsten, a life-sentenced prisoner, first-timer Roger then restates the view that following the rules is the best way to serve your time: 'in

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<sup>61</sup> Above, Lee and Lenny observed that incarcerated individuals are more likely to comply with the rules within prison than they are with laws on the outside. This may be due to the tangible severity, certainty, and celerity of punishment on the inside, something that I return to within the conclusion to this thesis.

prison, you have to learn to respect. That's when you don't kick off'. Across all wings and sentence lengths, the view that resistance was 'pointless' was pervasive amongst the prisoner population in HMP Cardiff. This narrative sat alongside other, more instrumental (Bottoms 1999) and pragmatic (Crewe 2007a) motivations for compliance, where prisoners expressed a desire to seek the rewards and avoid the punishments available under the prison's formal disciplinary system. The adoption of such instrumental reasoning would lend weight to a rational-choice model of behaviour, something that the prison's punishment system is arguably predicated upon, as presently discussed.

## 5.6 Prisoner Responsibilisation

From the moment an individual enters prison, their behaviour is shaped by the rules, routines and norms of the institution. Drawing upon the words of Jerry and Thorsten above, prisoners quickly learn that the 'best' way to do your time is to offer compliance. Official prison rules, incentives and punishments are communicated to prisoners as soon as they enter prisoner Reception and are continually reinforced throughout their sentences. The present section of this chapter provides an analysis of two aspects of the prison regime that serve to encourage prisoner compliance through official means: The Custody Compact and IEP scheme. Several of the quotations within this chapter have mentioned the tangible impact that the IEP scheme has upon prisoners' lives, therefore this section analyses how the scheme operates at an institutional level as opposed to focusing upon first-hand accounts from prisoners. During my fieldwork I was able to observe several prisoner Inductions, and whilst the Custody Compact has not featured within the quotations presented here, I felt that the language adopted within this document deserves further exploration.

For prisoners such as Donnie that aligned themselves with the 'pursuit of rewards' viewpoint, the attainment of a better life inside was considered to be achievable for all, if only they make the 'right' choice and offer the 'right' conduct: *"if people come in and they play up over stupid little things they make it worse for themselves. You can make it what you wanna be"*. The seemingly entrenched belief in individual responsibility may have consequences in terms of the way that officers view and legitimate their own position of power, as discussed in chapter six. For now, however, it is important to acknowledge the congruencies between this mode of governing prisoners and the 'responsibilisation agenda'. Drawing upon Rose's (1996) definition of responsibilisation, Kemshall (2002: 43) has noted that:

Self-regulation is the key principle of government in advanced liberal societies. The well-educated citizen will make the required choice. Those who do not are recast as the blameworthy agents of their own misfortune. Disadvantage and exclusion are re-framed as matters of choice and not of structural processes.

The above quotations would certainly suggest that this way of governing – of harnessing self-regulation and framing disadvantage as a matter of choice – is applicable in HMP Cardiff. If this is indeed a mode of governance functioning in the contemporary prison it is important to consider the potential consequences for prisoners. In *Punishing the Poor*, Wacquant (2009) suggested that within advanced neo-liberal societies<sup>62</sup> a behaviourist ideology has been promoted, one which places the causes of delinquency firmly at the feet of the offender, and ‘deflects attention away from the economic, social and welfare abdications of the state’ (Wacquant 2009: 8). A further outcome of the adoption of this political economy and its associated ideologies has been a rise in social inequality and the proliferation of punitive policies in the UK, particularly since the 1970s and 1980s as a backlash against the pessimistic ‘nothing works’ era (Barry 2013). At this time, a rational-choice (see section 5.6.2 below) model of offending gained popularity, allowing politicians to frame criminality as the product of individual agency as opposed to structural inequalities (Hayward 2007). It is now pertinent to apply these observations to the prison floor. Firstly, the aforementioned ‘culture of individual blame’ would appear to be prolific within HMP Cardiff. Secondly, the re-framing of prisoner rights and privileges that accompanied the introduction of the IEP may be symptomatic of a side-lining of the prison’s responsibility for providing equal treatment to all prisoners. Thirdly, the application of a rational-choice model of prisoner behaviour could encourage punitive policies in an effort to increase the ‘costs’ of misbehaving and deflect attention away from system failures (Cullen et al 2002). As shall be discussed within the next chapter, the promotion of individual responsibility may also diminish officers’ culpability in the giving of punishment. Finally, as evidenced at length in the two subsequent chapters – even in prison, there are ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ – and those that have little are seen to have been victims of “personal inadequacy” (Sykes 1958: 70), not victims of the prison’s disciplinary system.

### 5.6.1 The Custody Compact

Behavioural requirements are made very clear to new prisoners through official channels such as the officer-led Induction session and the Custody Compact – a document which sets out behavioural expectations for prisoners and what prisoners can expect of the institution. It is pressed upon inmates that they must behave and conform to the behavioural standards set out for them. If they do so, they could earn rewards. If they fail to do so, they are faced with only negative consequences:

This Compact is a voluntary agreement between you and the prison/YOI. You do not have to sign it to gain access to the benefits it offers. However, if you fail to comply with the terms of the Compact you may be subject to the action outlined above (PSI 28/2010: 5).

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<sup>62</sup> A political economic model that England and Wales arguably ascribes to (Cavadino and Dignan 2006).

The actions that can be taken in the event of non-compliance include: ‘not being able to earn some privileges, loss of some standard privileges, and ineligibility for some training courses that are linked to post-release employment’ (PSI 28/2010: 5). The consequences of failing to comply with the Compact can therefore adversely affect the quality of one’s life inside by intensifying the pains of imprisonment, as well as post-release prospects. Throughout the Custody Compact and within the Induction session, words such as “responsibility” “voluntary” and “choice” appear. The use of such terms is interesting, for prisoners cannot ‘opt out’ of the conditions of their imprisonment. Indeed, there is no obligation, legal or otherwise, for prisoners to sign the Custody Compact. Yet even without offering their consent, they are still subject to its conditions. The Custody Compact also makes several references to the IEP scheme – the second aspect of the prison regime that would appear to incite prisoner compliance.

### 5.6.2 Incentivising Good Behaviour

Rational Choice Theory asserts that to deter criminal behaviour, the potential costs of crime (or here, misbehaviour) must outweigh any potential benefits. Deterrence becomes more likely when the likelihood of detection and conviction is perceived to be high by the would-be offender (Cornish and Clarke 1987). The IEP scheme was a ‘throw-back’ to this ideology. It is based upon “classical economic theory, rational choice theory, and opportunity theory in political thinking, and, some said, with Victorian notions of less eligibility<sup>63</sup>” (Liebling 2008: 26). As outlined in chapter two, when the IEP was first introduced there was confusion amongst the prisoner population about expected behaviours and the distinctions between basic, standard and enhanced level. There was also variability within and between institutions in terms of how the scheme was enforced, coupled with low levels of accountability and formal monitoring procedures to the extent that the IEP scheme become mixed up with the formal disciplinary practices, resulting in some cases of double jeopardy (Liebling 2008: 32). One key area in which prisoners felt wronged was in terms of family contact, as this became seen as an ‘earnable privilege’ as opposed to a ‘right’. Previously taken-for-granted aspects of prison life were lost as they became contingent upon behaviour (Liebling 2008: 33).

As outlined within HMP Cardiff’s locally-set IEP rules, the following 6 areas of prison life are designated as key earnable privileges:

- *Extra and improved visits;*
- *Eligibility to earn higher rates of pay;*
- *Access to in-cell television;*
- *Opportunity to wear own clothes;*

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<sup>63</sup> The less eligibility principle stipulates that for prison to have a deterrent effect, conditions inside must be worse than those experienced by the lowest class of free people on the outside.

- *Access to private cash;*
- *Time out of cell for association.*

(HMP Cardiff [Internal] IEP Policy 2015: 13)

The above earnable privileges have a direct bearing upon prisoner quality of life and the pain that imprisonment inflicts. For example, a convicted prisoner on Enhanced level of the IEP is entitled to receive six visits per month, whilst those on Entry and Standard are entitled to four visits per month. A prisoner on Basic level of the IEP has no access to a television and would receive minimal time out of cell, whilst a prisoner on Enhanced level of the IEP would be permitted to purchase extra entertainment devices and have full access to afternoon association. The significance of the ‘rights vs privileges’ dispute gains salience when considered in light of more recent changes to the IEP scheme.

The revised national IEP framework introduced in 2013 framed the scheme – and its associated behavioural expectations – within a “‘rights and responsibilities’ agenda” (Liebling 2008: 39) where prisoners have been ‘responsibilised’ within a culture of individual blame, paradoxically within an environment which historically inhibits autonomy. Following research in prisons in California, Calavita and Jenness (2015) highlighted a similar paradox that occurred with the introduction of the Prison Litigation Reform Act (PLRA) in 1996. This act was designed to curb prisoner litigation and force prisons to establish internal avenues for prisoners to complain. On the one hand, the new internal grievances system increased prisoners’ awareness of their own rights; whilst on the other, it caused extreme frustration due to its inefficacy and quashed prisoner rights movements. Furthermore, whilst the grievances system implied prisoner empowerment, it was in fact welcomed by prison officials as a means for maintaining security and safety. A similar ‘contradictory logic of rights and confinement’ (Calavita and Jenness 2015: 20) is found in the introduction of the IEP scheme in British prisons. Instead of rewarding prisoners that ‘quietly’ conformed to the regime, the 2013 revision required prisoners to “demonstrate a commitment towards their rehabilitation, engage in purposeful activity (for example, attend work and/or education and recovery focused interventions and services), reduce their risk of reoffending and be well behaved.” (PSI 30/2013: 26). The focus upon individual responsibility and the need to *actively* demonstrate good behaviour here is clear. Simply ‘quietly conforming’ is unlikely to allow prisoners to reap the full benefits of the scheme – now, they must go ‘above and beyond’.

The complexity and all-encompassing nature of behavioural expectations becomes even plainer when we consider the criteria for being awarded Enhanced IEP status. To be considered eligible, prisoners must:

- *Show a commitment to their rehabilitation;*
- *Demonstrate a proactive and self-motivated level of engagement with the requirements of their sentence plans;*
- *Demonstrate a proactive and self-motivated level of engagement in identified offending behaviour courses;*
- *Where appropriate, demonstrate an exemplary attendance and attitude towards purposeful activity such as education/work and where possible seek to obtain qualifications;*
- *Fully engage in recovery focused interventions/services and drug testing;*
- *Where appropriate, demonstrate a proactive and self-motivated level of engagement with treatment assessments/programmes;*
- *Help other prisoners or prison staff (e.g. be involved in the Listener Scheme, Toe by Toe, Buddy Scheme, peer supporter/recovery champion, Wing Representative, assist prisoners with disabilities);*
- *Demonstrate an exemplary attitude towards staff;*
- *Engage and co-operate with the prison regime by attending activities as required, by following orders and instructions from staff and completing any other additional requirements imposed by the Governor.*

(PSI 30/2013: 29)

This is in addition to the behavioural expectations that prisoners on all levels of the IEP must adhere to:

- *Treating others in the prison with respect, avoiding violent, intimidating, threatening and abusive language and behaviour;*
- *Behaving in a way that respects the diversity of others in the prison;*
- *Acting with decency at all times remembering prisons/cells are not private dwellings (this includes not engaging in sexual activity);*
- *Maintaining awareness of the effect of noise on others and keeping noise to an acceptable level;*
- *Co-operating with staff in the performance of their duties including complying with orders and requests;*
- *Behaving honestly and openly with staff, other prisoners and visitors to the prison in a way that promotes trust and integrity;*
- *Complying with prison compacts, rules and regulations;*
- *Making sure you only have items to which you are allowed access;*
- *Following all the requirements of the prison's safer custody and violence reduction policies, avoiding trafficking or taking items from other prisoners;*
- *Co-operation with drug and alcohol testing policies;*
- *Avoid selling and trading items, taxing or gambling;*
- *Staying within designated boundaries;*
- *Having due regard for personal hygiene and health (including appearance, neatness and suitability of clothing);*
- *Maintaining the cleanliness of cell/prison/equipment;*
- *Respecting prison property and that belonging to others;*
- *Complying with fire safety procedures, including rules governing smoking;*
- *Demonstrating a willingness to build good relationships with other prisoners.*

(PSI 30/2013: 26)

The words “proactive”, “willing”, “self-motivated”, “engagement” and “commitment” appear repeatedly in these IEP guidelines. The use of these terms suggests that simply following the rules and showing acquiescence is not enough – prisoners must help others, help the institution, and *prove* that they want to ‘help themselves’. They have been ‘empowered’ to take responsibility for their own reform (Hannah-Moffat 2001: 166). Yet there exist very few positions in HMP Cardiff that would render prisoners eligible for gaining Enhanced IEP status, as evidenced in chapter four, section 4.2 (for further detail, see also Appendix 14). Moreover, the requirement to accept some responsibility for the well-being of other prisoners through systems such as the Listeners scheme is particularly striking considering that the prison estate has historically failed to address problems surrounding prisoner self-harm and suicide (Liebling 2002; The Howard League 2016). The shifting of some of that burden on to prisoners themselves is reminiscent of the ‘responsibilising’, neo-liberal governance strategies outlined by Kemshall (2002) and Wacquant (2009) above, as well as Hannah-Moffat (2001), and David Garland (1996: 452): “[The UK Government’s] primary concern [was] to devolve responsibility for crime prevention on to agencies, organizations and individuals which are quite outside the state and to persuade them to act appropriately.” Although David Garland is here defining ‘responsibilisation’ in relation to crime control in society, the theory is relevant to the ideology underpinning the IEP scheme in the contemporary prison. The IEP scheme promotes the idea that prisoners need to self-govern, manage their own sentence, and decide how ‘best’ to use their time inside. If prisoners wish to attain the best life possible, it is not enough to simply submissively obey, they must ‘actively obey’. It is their responsibility to make the *right* choice, towards which they are forcibly steered by the constant threat of punitive action (Crewe 2011a).

The IEP scheme involves officers making a judgement about whether a prisoner is conforming, and how well they are conforming. In an analysis of the implementation of the IEP scheme in five prisons across England and Wales in 1999 (see Liebling et al 1999; Liebling 2008) it was found that that on wings which readily resorted to privilege removal, relationships between staff and prisoners were relatively poor and more distant. Conversely, in areas where privilege removal was less frequent, relationships were deemed ‘better’ and closer (Liebling 2000: 337). Similar sentiments were expressed by prisoners in HMP Cardiff, as shown in chapter four. The IEP scheme is now firmly embedded within British prison culture and is a key part of managing order and safety. It does so in two ways: firstly, and overtly, it discourages rule-breaking by making clear the punishments that will be received. Secondly, and somewhat less overtly, it communicates to prisoners that officers hold the key to a better life inside. The fundamental role of officers in shaping life inside is something that certainly did not evade prisoners in HMP Cardiff, as shown earlier in this chapter during ‘the carrot’ accounts above. Another prisoner, Jack Sparrow, offered a similar observation:

(1) I suppose the cons are one that you don't attend any of these courses or gym and don't converse with officers or socialize with them or you become disobedient there for being removed to basic level, these type of inmates are always stuck in a rut!!!

Jack Sparrow, adopting a self-assigned pseudonym, states in his hand-written letter above<sup>64</sup> that prisoners that do not converse or 'socialise' (or 'actively obey') with officers are doing themselves a disservice, they are "stuck in a rut" and the receipt of any associated punishment is firmly their own fault. However, what happens if a prisoner does not offer the 'right' behaviours, or if prisoners do not receive what they are entitled to? What about those prisoners that are, to use the phrase offered by Jack Sparrow, 'stuck in a rut'? It is now crucial to explore further what happens when things do not run smoothly on the wings and landings of HMP Cardiff.

### 5.7 Stuck in a rut

Achieving an 'easy life' inside is certainly not possible for every prisoner, at all times, and it is important to interrogate the views of prisoners for whom conformity is not straightforward. In what follows I present an excerpt from an interview with Steven who was one of the few prisoners on Basic level of the IEP in HMP Cardiff at the time of my fieldwork. He was 19 years old and had been in and out of prison since the age of 15. He had been in Cardiff prison before and was, at the time of our conversation, 12 days into a 2-month sentence. As outlined in chapter three of this thesis, my access to Basic level prisoners was constrained due to them being confined in their cells for most of the day. This could certainly have impacted upon the data I collected, particularly within the context of this chapter where many of the quotations presented thus far have intimated that offering compliance is unproblematic. This section is therefore crucial for highlighting inconsistencies in the prisoner experience, and for elucidating somewhat more hidden transcripts of discontent. Whenever the opportunity arose to speak to a Basic-level or non-wing-worker prisoner, I grasped it, and my interview with Steven was one of those moments:

#### ***Why do you think people follow the rules here and don't kick off all the time?***

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<sup>64</sup> "I suppose the cons that don't attend any of the courses or gym and don't converse with officers or socialise with them or become disobedient [they will be] removed on to Basic level. These types of inmates are always stuck in a rut!" – Jack Sparrow



*Easier to do it. Easier to follow the rules, but sometimes the rules have got to be bent. Some of the rules in here are pathetic. Because of [INDISTINCT], the staff know it, governors know it, and they just expect us to follow them. We don't get told what to do on the out, why should we get told what to do in prison. We do, we can commit a crime...but let us do the time, why make it hard for us?*

**Yeah yeah**

*A job or, treat us like shit. Some of the staff do anyway.*

***Some of them do. And the ones that don't, how, can you tell me how they are with you, like what's the difference?***

*Like, the ones that don't treat you like shit, they'll help you. Like if you need something done they'll do it for you. The ones who don't, the ones who do treat you like shit, you'll ask them to do something they'll say no. It's the way they come across, angry at you*

***Right. Like you're irritating them?***

*Yeah*

***But they can't, like they don't have the time?***

*It's a job, they choose to do the job then they get pissed off with prisoners. I don't know why it's like that. The wing here, most of the staff have a stick up their arses. It's hard. Especially when you're young. You've got to do it then but you've got staff bringing you down. If it isn't the staff all the time you've got prisoners bringing you down too...it's hard. They don't understand, because they go home at the end of the day. Only so much we can take, they keep doing it and doing it until we pop then you goes down the block, extra days, down the block a couple of days. It's awful it is.*

- Steven

Steven's words are quite at odds with many of the prisoner quotations that have preceded it within this chapter. When asked why prisoners follow the rules, Steven begins by reiterating that it is 'easier' to do so. However, he then departs from this oft-repeated mantra and admits that rules sometimes will be broken. Steven shows frustration at being expected to follow 'pathetic' prison rules and being told what to do by officers. In his eyes, these things make prison unnecessarily harder to bear: 'let us do the time, why make it hard for us?' Steven then describes the way that some officers will appear angry when he asks them to do something for him, and this is something that 'brings him down' and worsens the prison experience. Steven questions officers' ability to

empathise with the plight of prisoners: 'they don't understand, because they go home at the end of the day'. Finally, Steven suggests that for some prisoners, the threat of punishment is not always a match for the extreme frustrations and deprivations that prisoners endure: 'There's only so much prisoners can take before they pop, then you go down the block, extra days, it's awful'. This conversation with Steven serves as an important reminder that the experience of imprisonment is highly variable, and whilst the majority of prisoners that I spoke to in HMP Cardiff voiced a commitment to bettering their lives inside by following the rules, this is not so for all prisoners at all times.

Another prisoner on Basic level of the IEP, Derek, also aged 19 but serving his first custodial sentence in an adult jail, also talked to me about prisoner compliance. He began by stating that prisoners tend to follow the rules to 'be in officers' good books and keep their head down'. We then talked about his desire to move to another wing and his existing reputation with officers as a Basic-level prisoner:

*I've been trying to get off here for a week now, the induction wing, and they're saying there's no spaces but then, like people that come in after us they get moved off yesterday, the day before [and] the day before that*

***Yeah, so why do you want to move to another wing? Because then you have another chance with staff?***

*Yeah. It's not just that, I can keep my head down then innit...it's just, I'm stressed out like on this wing because they lie, I dunno, they'll come and they'll say something, and they'll say 'yeah they'll try their best'. Well they might try their best, I dunno about that...but then another governor comes on [at] the same time as him like 'I don't know nothing of it, nothing written down about it' so then, I dunno.*

- Derek

For Derek, prison life has not been as straightforward as simply offering his compliance and in return receiving privileges and having his requests fulfilled by officers. Steven notes that despite asking to be moved to another wing repeatedly his request has not been fulfilled, other prisoners' requests have been given precedence, and he has received mixed messages from officers. Within the above interview extract Derek's negative reputation amongst officers was referred to. This was also touched upon earlier in our conversation:

***Is it very different being on basic?***

*Yeah, you've got no tellys, no radios or nothing. Banged up 23 hours a day.*

***Oh that's hard. That is really hard. And how do you get off Basic?***

*Well you've got to listen to the governors haven't you, got to comply with their rules and everything*

***Yeah. Is that hard to do? Easy?***

*Well they. I only rang the bell once for two pain killers for my toothache and they give us [interviewee and his cell-mate] a negative<sup>65</sup>. Negative entry for it and our review was yesterday and he come and seen us and because of that negative entry we had to stay on another week.*

- Derek

Derek describes being on Basic level of the IEP as extremely difficult and recognises that to be moved up a privilege level he must 'listen to the governors' and 'comply with the rules'. When asked whether this is achievable, Derek describes receiving a negative sentence report seemingly due to simply asking officers for assistance. Resultantly, Derek and his cell-mate were retained on Basic-level for another week. To adopt the term offered by Jack Sparrow in his note above, Derek and Steven could aptly be described as those prisoners that are 'stuck in a rut'. In conjunction with previous suggestions from prisoners that offering compliance and 'respect' can result in *more* favourable treatment from officers, Derek's quotation implies that officers could certainly treat prisoners *less* favourably if they break the rules or have done so in the past. Unfavourable treatment from officers could involve more than recourse to the formal prison disciplinary system - 'extra' punishments could be imparted which are more informal, for example in the form of officers not listening to prisoners' requests. In this environment, prisoners can 'pop' and rebel against prison rules at times. This is discussed more holistically in the section that follows on compliant defiance.

## **5.8 Compliant Defiance**

During my time spent in Cardiff prison for this research I only witnessed a handful of incidents, and no overt collective disturbance. Whilst rule-breaking was, and is, happening across the prison each day it was mostly hidden from view. Within the following fieldnotes I describe one incident which served to boost my curiosity into prison order maintenance and forms of prisoner resistance:

*On A wing on Wed 26th August. Someone left a gate open at around 2pm, no, 2.30pm and the whole place went into lock down. General alarm bell going. Everyone banged up. Every single prisoner banged up if they were on the wing. Those that were in the kitchens or in the*

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<sup>65</sup> A negative entry on his sentence report on C-NOMIS that will accompany him throughout his sentence.

*workshops had to stay there and they did a [full prisoner] count. It wasn't correct. They gave it in to the Centre to the duty governor and it wasn't right. So then they brought people back from workshops. Called over the radio 'staff ready to receive prisoners?!' and they [all prisoners] came back. Had to count again, still wasn't right and the third time they physically had to open each cell, look under the beds, make sure there was no-one hiding in the cell. Still not right. Then they brought everyone back from visits. The visitors had to stay there, they weren't allowed out [of the prison]. Nobody allowed into or out of the jail until the count was in, with the correct roll count. Then they had to count again, counted six times, everyone back apart from prisoners still in the kitchens. Whilst this was going on it got to association which is normally at 3:15. It got to 2.45, then 3, still not correct, and it was only just correct at 3.30, no, even later, 4pm. So prisoners had association cancelled and I got to hear that thing where they all bang on the doors and kick on the doors. I was on A wing, it started in B Wing, sounds like thunder dudududud \*thud thud thud\* incredibly loud. It spreads throughout the wing and then can spread to other wings. Usually if B wing goes off then A wing does as well. Prisoners showing their frustration at association being cancelled. It means they can't have a shower, can't make phone calls, can't get things sorted with wing staff such as apps. Amazing noise. Just like thunder, rolling thunder, and it just spreads. When [correct] roll count was in the duty governor came to the wings and told the staff that they could let the prisoners out only to either get their meds or go outside for exercise, the prisoners could choose what they wanted to do but the duty governor and one of the CMs said to me 'OK if this doesn't go right then you probably don't wanna be here<sup>66</sup>' aka please fuck off! I left at 5 o'clock after getting my papers together and locking up the staff office on the wing. I told the CM 'the office is locked and I'm going off the wing'. 'Thank you very much' he said to me. He appreciated that.*

- Fieldnotes, August 2015

On re-entering the prison the following day, I was informed that no incidents occurred following this disruption. The following week I conducted an interview with two prisoners, co-defendants and cell-mates, on B Wing and we talked about the occurrence described above:

***Do you feel like things could erupt at any moment? Like, blow up?***

*Lee: Erm, things like, they have like a thing called the black Wednesday when everyone is locked up on a Wednesday, first Wednesday of every month, people don't like things like that*

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<sup>66</sup> I would in fact have preferred to remain on the wing to observe unlock, however as explained in chapter three, I was bound to respect officers' instructions and doing so was valued by staff.

**Oh yeah for training afternoon<sup>67</sup>?**

Lee: Yeah. That is a potential for everybody to kick off because they wanna get on the phone and they're not getting soc or something like that, and like bank holidays and things like that, but other than that it's, everything just runs smooth in here, it's just crazy

**Yeah. So it's when, things can kick off when something is not, when something is out?**

Lee: When something is not running as it's supposed to. If something changes. Nobody in here likes change, everything is run by the system and if the system changes for any reason, half the time we're not notified anyway, we're just left behind the door

Lenny: When there's a lock down

**Right, so, it's not knowing what's happening?**

Lenny: Yeah, yeah

Lee: Yeah, and that's the potential then for something to kick off then

**Yeah, things not being explained**

Lee: Yeah

Lee: A shortage of staff. Like if they've got a shortage of staff and like half the wing can't have association because of it and the other half is not even notified, but then the other half can hear people out playing pool and people on the phone and all that and they're not even told why they're banged up, so they think they're being punished, but then, just from not being notified

**Yeah, that seems to be the thing**

Lee: And that's the potential for them then, when they get opened they kick off!

**Yeah, absolutely, and it's not being told and thinking you're gonna be able to make that phone call**

Lee: yeah, and not being able to

Lenny: As soon as the door is open then it changes then. It's only while they're behind the door that they're kicking off

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<sup>67</sup> On the first Wednesday of every month officers participate in prison-wide training during the afternoon, meaning that prisoners will be locked in their cells for the duration and all out-of-cell activities such as association, exercise and visits will be cancelled. Colloquially termed 'Black Wednesday'.

Lee: Yeah they're warmed up when they're behind the door and then once the door is open then the frustration just seems to disappear

**Tension, yeah. I heard, oh it was amazing, I was on the wing last week and everyone had to be banged up during soc [association]**

Lee: Yeah somebody kicked off or something. Oh yeah, somebody was missing wasn't they!

**I think so**

Lee: Yeah, and he was sat in his cell! Somebody miscounted, that's what it was \*Laughing\*

**And I got to hear when everyone bangs on the doors, kicks the doors**

Lee and Lenny: yeah yeah

**Oh it sounds like thunder or something, it was absolutely fucking amazing**

Lee: Well it's like that when the football's on. Yeah. Every time the football is on and a team scores, the fucking wing, wild, like

\*Another prisoner comes up and asks for a biscuit – offered to help himself\*

**I assume it's just like 'fucking let us out' frustration**

Lenny: Celebrating, they kick the door, when they're frustrated they kick the door

**Yeah yeah!**

Lenny: Make some noise, that's what it's about

Lee: Back in the day they used to fold a piece of paper in half and put it through the gap in the door and blow into it and it makes a hell of a squeak

**Does it?!**

Lee: Yeah, on the wing, really loud echoing down the wing

Lenny: It's, and it's called the Borstal, everyone was doing it

Lee: They call it the Borstal whistle they do. But if you heard that you'd be like ah!

Lenny: Like a banshee, isn't it

Lee: Yeah, it's piercing, isn't it. But like a lot of people don't do that anymore, because they all got tellys \*Laughing\*

*Lenny: \*Laughing\**

*Lee: Because they're all watching the telly!*

*Yeah I see what you mean \*Laughing\*!*

- Lee and Lenny joint interview

This interview extract has been presented in full for it introduces many ideas which can contribute to understandings of prison order maintenance. Lee and Lenny begin by noting that order is at jeopardy when the prison regime doesn't run as it should, for example when association is cancelled during the monthly staff training afternoon, 'Black Wednesday'. Even the name 'Black Wednesday' encapsulates the negative connotations this event has for prisoners. Lee notes that 'everything is run by the system' and that the prison day normally runs smoothly. He then remarks that 'half the time prisoners are not notified anyway' when changes to the regime do occur, and he and Lenny agree that this causes extreme frustration: '[prisoners] think they're being punished then, just from not being notified'. Lee initially states that it is when prisoners do not receive what they are entitled to, particularly without an explanation, that the potential for collective and overt unrest arises. However, both Lee and Lenny then agree that 'it's only behind the door that prisoners kick off...once the door is open the frustration just seems to disappear'.

Lee, Lenny and I then discussed the incident described above where the prisoner roll-call was incorrect causing association to be cancelled, and prisoners collectively kicked their doors in protest. Lee and Lenny informed me that this is an avenue through which prisoners can express themselves by making a lot of noise, both in celebration, or in frustration, from behind their cell doors. They then told me about the 'Borstal Whistle' which prisoners previously used to cause an interference on the wing from within their cells, ending by noting that prisoners 'don't do that anymore, because they're all watching the telly!'. Key themes that can be drawn out of this conversation are that disorder is most likely to occur when prisoners do not receive what they are entitled to, or when the reasons for decisions that affect their lives are not given. The form that disorder takes is usually restricted to the 'backstage' – it plays out behind locked cell doors. In consideration of the compliance narratives presented here which suggest that prisoners tend to follow the rules to receive rewards, avoid punishment, and because rebellion is deemed pointless, it is reasonable to suggest that collective rebellion is constrained to cells for two related reasons. Firstly, it poses no real risk to officers or the security and safety of the institution; and secondly, there is therefore less of a risk to prisoners in terms of loss of privileges for whilst it is 'collective' it is also hidden behind

closed doors. It is important to note that even though resistance tends to play out behind closed doors, it should not be ignored or taken to symbolise that 'all is well' in a contemporary prison such as HMP Cardiff. This has also been noted by Ben Crewe:

Open defiance is generally considered imprudent and ineffective, leading to an outward appearance of calm and compliance [...] [t]his 'public transcript' of acquiescence masks a more complex reality in which consent comprises a range of prisoner orientations, from normative commitment to strategic, backstage resistance (Crewe 2007a: 256).

Prisoners engage in a range of behaviours to demonstrate low-level resistance against the terms of their imprisonment, here termed 'compliant defiance'. This term has been used for it demonstrates that although defiance is being shown, it is exercised in such a way that it does not pose a great threat to mundane order. An example of 'compliant defiance' is when prisoners strive to close their own cell doors:

*If you ask to be locked in a cell again shut it yourself...[d]on't give the officers the satisfaction of boxing you in. Because where someone locks you in you make, it makes the room so much smaller because you're locked in. Lock yourself in, it makes you feel...it gives you that sense that you can get out whenever you want...you're in control like. It's like your bedroom door. Like closing your bedroom door when you go to sleep. And sometimes, ah, go in your cell like that and they go to shut your door, and you'll be like, it's like a race!*

- Roger

This was a theme that arose during the first group interview with prisoners, as these two participants discuss:

*I don't ever let a screw bang my door, ever. I always bang my own door, I'll never give them the privilege of banging my door*

*\*Other participant agrees\* I'm the same, I'll do it myself*

*Ask any of those screws on there...that youngster went to bang my door up and I was like 'whoa whoa' he went what? Don't you bang that door, I'll bang that door!*

- F Wing Prisoner Group Interview

This example usefully demonstrates that resistance does not need to take the form of organised and overt insurgency, and therefore the absence of such revolts should not be taken to signify complete acquiescence, especially from a group in such an inherently subordinate position (Scott 1990; Crewe



2007a). It is a reminder that even though the prison exists in a state of 'uneasy peace', this order remains fragile. Every instance of low-level resistance, every refusal to lock up immediately, every fight, every race to close the cell door, and every collective display of frustration from within cells is a means through which prisoners can express their frustration and retain some power, and this is most likely to occur when prisoners do not receive what they are entitled to – when their treatment is not perceived to be 'right' or 'fair'.

## 5.9 Fairness and Legitimacy

Prisoners in HMP Cardiff did not *explicitly* refer to the perceived fairness, or legitimacy, of officer treatment whilst discussing their reasons for offering their compliance. This does not mean that these considerations are absent from the prison environment, however:

Prisoners are powerfully alert to matters of justice and respect, or to matters of their own moral treatment, despite some lack of awareness of the implications of these sensitivities for their own morality and behaviour, and an uneven tendency to comprehend or articulate their experiences in abstract conceptual language (Liebling 2013: 206).

Aspects of my own conversations with prisoners in HMP Cardiff lend credence to Liebling's assertion above. Prisoners in Cardiff tended not to utilise terms such as 'legitimate' nor offer grand normative statements about penal power, and this could have been interpreted as an apathetic indifference to the standards of their treatment. However, I was keen to interrogate those statements offered by prisoners that did differentiate between, for example, 'good' and 'bad' officers, and 'fair' and 'unfair' treatment. In doing so I found that prisoners in Cardiff were highly perceptive to the 'rightfulness' of the power that officers exert over them. Two aspects of my conversations with prisoners suggested that they expect, and value, fair and consistent treatment and if this is not offered it can undermine prison order. Firstly, prisoners firmly recognised the role that officers play in awarding privileges. It could therefore be argued that if officers did not reliably reward compliance, the potency of the privileges system as a means for maintaining order would be undermined. Secondly, order is most at risk when prisoners do not receive what they are entitled to, as observed by Lee and Lenny above as well as other prisoners such as Adrian: "*[W]hen things are taken off them, that's when they lose their heads. So, say if they said, like this morning they were like 'no exercise, no exercise' people are gonna say 'oh let's all of us kick our doors', do you know what I mean? [...] As long as they stick by what they offer then everyone's fine.*"

Underlying this objection to unfair treatment is a judgement of what is 'right' and what is 'wrong' in terms of treatment from officers. Within the previous chapter of this thesis prisoners spoke

eloquently about what it meant to be a 'good' officer<sup>68</sup>, and within the next chapter of this thesis it is shown that officers heavily influence the pain and suffering that imprisonment causes. The way that power is exercised over prisoners affects their perceptions of officers, and this in turn influences the perceived legitimacy of the prison system as a whole, including its system of rewards and punishments. As previously outlined, there have been four 'solutions' offered to the question of how order is maintained in prison: constraint-based or coercive motives, instrumental motives, normative motives (Wrong 1994; Bottoms 1999), and fatalistic motives (Carrabine 2005). This chapter has demonstrated that many prisoners in HMP Cardiff ascribe to fatalism, as shown within the 'resistance is futile' narratives. Some prisoners comply with prison rules for instrumental reasons as shown within 'the carrot' and 'the stick' accounts. Finally, it is important to explore whether prisoners in Cardiff comply with the rules due to a belief that the authority that officers hold is legitimate or 'right', and whether there is a perception amongst prisoners that officers are exercising their authority in a legitimate and procedurally fair manner.

As given in chapter two, compliance and legitimacy have been cogently explained by Bottoms (1999: 253) as "compliance with a rule because it has been promulgated by a person or body with legitimate authority, acting in a proper way to exercise that authority". If we apply this to the prison, it should mean that prisoners will comply if they believe that the prison authorities have a right to place restrictions on their behaviour, and that they exercise this right fairly. When explicitly asked about whether it is 'right' that officers occupy a superordinate position and 'deserve' to dictate prisoner behaviour a range of responses were offered by prisoners:

***Do you think staff have a lot of power over you?***

*Staff have yeah. Yeah of course, they love it*

***Should they have power over you?***

*Well they've got to have haven't they, they're in charge.*

- Jerry

--

*Well that's their job innit, you know they have got the right to tell you what to do. Whether some people abide by them or not is something [else] isn't it, but, yeah, that's their job...*

---

<sup>68</sup> As shown in chapter four, descriptions offered by prisoners in HMP Cardiff aligned with the 'general consensus' of what it means to be a 'good' officer (Arnold 2016), and this was something that prisoners could readily articulate as also found by Liebling (2013).

***You think it is their right?***

*Yeah. But, I dunno, yeah, it is because that's how the jail runs, they're just doing their jobs.*

- William

--

***Do you think officers deserve to have [power], to tell you what to do, bang you up?***

*That's a mad question! \*pauses\* Well, no, they shouldn't. \*pauses\* They should be able to fucking lock the wing off, do you understand me, at the end of the day it's prison.*

- Johnny

--

***Do they deserve to have power over you?***

*Yeah, of course they do! We, we, committed an offence. We should be treated right or whatever, but yeah, they've got to, they're getting paid and that's their job. So I think, yeah.*

- Finneus (Finneus and Rory joint interview)

--

*[T]hey're [officers are] only telling you because it is their job. It's their job to tell you, it's your job to do what, like, especially as a cleaner, if they tell you to do that then you can't be like 'no, fuck off' because you're a cleaner, that's what you're supposed to do.*

- Earl

From the narratives of my participants, it appeared that prisoners accept the right of the prison authority to place restrictions on their behaviour: 'it's their job' and 'they're in charge' were oft-repeated refrains. Most prisoners thus appeared to comply for the same reasons as Bottoms' fictional motorway driver described in chapter two – they were not necessarily normatively committed to the rules (they would, in many cases have preferred more leniency), but they complied because the rules were legitimately set by the appropriate legal authorities. The question then becomes whether participants believed those exercising their authority – prison officers – were fair in the exercise of their duties. Where the answer was yes, again there was compliance. Where the answer was no, compliant defiance became apparent. As evidenced in the section above, prisoners resist (withdraw consent) when they believe that they are not being treated fairly. They do this through low-level acts of resistance such as kicking their cell doors.

I do acknowledge that these are quite small acts, and the focus upon legitimacy can perhaps be interpreted as over-stating the extent to which prisoners can withdraw consent (Carrabine 2005; but see also Sparks et al 1996; Bottoms 1999 for the significance of legitimacy). Nevertheless, these are important acts that should not be overlooked or underestimated. Whilst my prisoner participants did not necessarily normatively commit to the moral plane of the prison, their narratives can be framed within Bottom's 'normative framework' for compliance. For whilst a normative commitment to the prison's ideals was *not* always detected, many prisoners mentioned staff behaviour as being the key to a better life inside. There was a distinct feeling of resigned acceptance of the sheer might of the power that the prison holds over individuals, as is in line with Bottoms' constraint-based compliance due to structural constraints which 'compel obedience through the sheer weight of penal power and a belief that things cannot be changed' (Bottoms 1999: 253-254). Yet staff behaviour had a significant impact on prisoner perceptions. This was true, whether compliance was motivated by the carrot, the stick, or a belief that resistance is futile. Despite prisoners being compelled to comply due to the 'dull compulsion' (Carrabine 2005) of the regime and their subordinate position, they still made judgements about the 'rightfulness' of officer behaviour (Symkovych 2018: 205). Additionally, I note again that acts of resistance can be about more than condemning the perceived unfair actions of the superordinate authority, they may also constitute a way of expressing autonomy – such as insisting that you close your own cell door. Resistance isn't just about effecting change for oneself or effecting change in a particular instance. It doesn't have to be about effecting change at all. It can also be a source of dignity, self-expression, and grasping at the last vestiges of power and autonomy that a person has, a way for the powerless to "maintain some conception of themselves as active, controlling agents" (McDermott and King 1988: 375). Prisoners are deprived of their autonomy in addition to their physical freedom; resistance can be a way, perhaps inarticulately, of trying to regain some independence and pride in the face of unfair and/or unreasonable treatment.

Discussions of perceptions of legitimacy and fairness are embedded throughout this thesis as opposed to being contained within a discreet chapter dedicated to the topic. In terms of my observations of resistance as well as perceptions of fairness and acts of defiance narrated to me by my participants, I have produced these narratives above, and elsewhere in the thesis, where relevant. To be clear, I agree with Crewe (2007a: 273) that "the relative absence of overt, collective resistance should not be interpreted as an indication that the prison's power strategies are entirely successful, that there are no hidden transcripts of discontent, or that all prisoners passively accept the terms of penal power." In fact, I acknowledge that within Cardiff prison there were indeed such instances of covert discontent, evidenced through compliant defiance discussed above. I therefore

also acknowledge that legitimacy is an important facet of this discussion, and it is why I have included it both here and elsewhere within this thesis.

### 5.10 Concluding Comments: Coercion or Consent?

Drawing upon observational fieldnotes and data collected through numerous conversations with staff and prisoners in HMP Cardiff, this chapter has discussed order maintenance in the contemporary British prison. It has shown that prisoners are motivated to comply with prison rules for a multitude of reasons, and this compliance is demonstrated by *most* prisoners, *most* of the time. Prisoners may comply to avoid punishments such as time in the segregation unit or a removal of IEP-related privileges, as shown within ‘the stick’ narratives above. They may also comply to pursue the receipt of rewards, a compliance displayed by prisoners ascribing to ‘the carrot’ narrative above. Such prisoners felt that offering their compliance was the best course of action if they wished to secure an ‘easy life’ inside – a life characterised by improved material conditions and the cultivation of positive relationships with officers. The perceived legitimacy of officer treatment also has an important role to play in maintaining order, for it is when prisoners do not receive their entitlements that they are most likely to display low-level forms of resistance. Whilst these acts of resistance do not necessarily pose a substantial threat to the order of the establishment, they are significant in that they may allow prisoners to grasp a vestige of autonomy. Additionally, these acts of resistance, however small, remind us that outward acquiescence does not necessarily signify content.

It is important to recognise that, for many prisoners, “power in prisons represents an inevitable, ‘external fact’ for prisoners” (Carrabine 2005: 903) and the extent to which prisoners can reasonably withdraw their consent should not be overstated. Structural constraints (Bottoms 1999) greatly limit the choices that prisoners have, and this lack of meaningful choice or ‘bounded agency’ (Evans 2007) shapes the behaviour of prisoners. Conceptualising agency as ‘bounded’ recognises that socio-structural circumstances can curtail perceptions of available courses of action, constrain choices, and ultimately inhibit the expression of agency (see Weaver et al 2021). For example, Weaver et al (2021: 443) applied the concept of bounded agency to understand non-compliance with community orders, finding that this concept helped to explain why some probationers wish to comply with the terms of their community supervision but lack the opportunities and resources to do so. For these individuals, their choices are constrained by socio-structural disadvantages. Applying this to HMP Cardiff, this narrowing of the possible field of action means that coercion and consent can no longer be considered as wholly distinct from one another. Prisoners are coerced into offering their consent by the sheer might of state-sanctioned penal power, bolstered by the promise of rewards in return

for good behaviour and the inescapable punishment that follows when cooperation and consent are withdrawn. As summarised by a prisoner that has spent most of his life inside:

*You can never beat the system. Been in for years, can't beat them, can't win. Do you know what I mean? You can't win. They've got the power haven't they. They've got the keys.*

- Jack

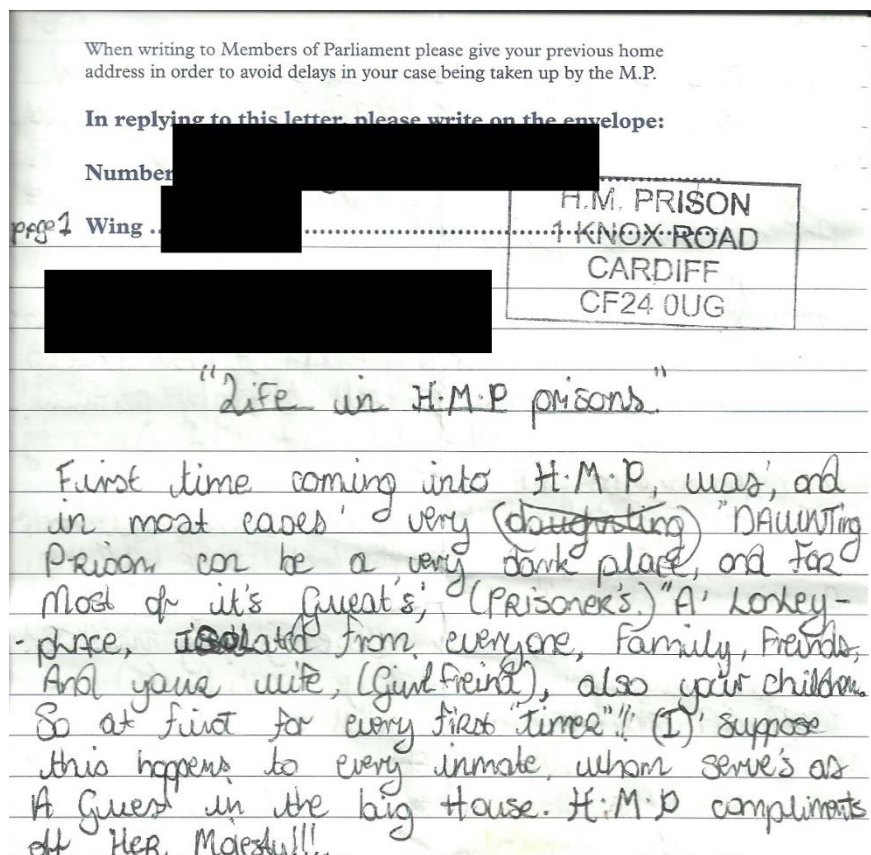
Through means such as the Prison Compact and the IEP scheme, prisoners are encouraged to make the 'responsible' choice to better their lives inside: "prisoners are thus governed, and learn to govern themselves, in ways that emphasise individual agency and autonomy" (Garland 1997: 192). The potency of this ideology in combination with a feeling that 'resistance is futile' would appear to secure order even when prisoners are not supervised.

Yet the promotion of prisoner responsabilisation should not be accompanied by a belief that officers' culpability in the giving of punishment is reduced, nor be used to detract from the pivotal role that officers play in making the prison experience bearable, or unbearable. The next chapter of this thesis applies this observation to a discussion of the pains that the prison inflicts. Whilst officers need to offer predictable and fair treatment for the privileges system to be effective in maintaining order, they should also arguably do so in recognition of the humanity of prisoners.

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## Chapter Six: Alleviating the Pains of Imprisonment

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*Letter courtesy of Jack Sparrow, a prisoner in HMP Cardiff, adopting a self-assigned pseudonym.*

### 6.1 Introduction

During the many hours spent observing and talking to prisoners and staff on the wings of HMP Cardiff, I was keen to gain a better understanding of the nature of the suffering caused by being in prison, a place described as 'daunting', 'dark', 'lonely' and 'isolating' by Jack Sparrow in the above excerpt. This excerpt is from the first page of an 8-page hand-written memoir provided to me by Jack Sparrow, dedicated to describing life in prison in his own words. This particular excerpt has been chosen to introduce this chapter because it poignantly captures the anguish that imprisonment causes for the 'guests' that serve time at Her Majesty's pleasure, one aspect of which is the pain of being separated from those on the outside: 'prison can be a very dark place...a lonely place, isolated from everyone, family, friends, and your wife or girlfriend, also your children'. I did not provide Jack Sparrow with any guidance in terms of what to include in this letter, simply inviting him to write

something down about what it is like to be in prison, if he wished to do so. He said that he would think about it, and a few days later he presented me with a neatly folded stack of prison-issue writing paper, a moment that was incredibly humbling for me, considering that writing paper is a highly-prized resource in prison. It is worth noting that without any prompt, Jack Sparrow opens with a description of the damage caused by imprisonment, something that for me acts as a poignant reminder that any discussion of the prison would be incomplete without a recognition of the suffering that it causes individual prisoners, beyond the loss of liberty that is a key aim of penal punishment globally. This first part of this chapter provides a succinct account of this suffering, before going on to explore in depth the role that officers play in making the prison experience bearable or unbearable.

During the drafting of this thesis I dedicated time (and many words) to discussing the coping mechanisms that prisoners in HMP Cardiff employed to cope with these pains, including impression management, displaying a stoic commitment to remaining positive, diversionary behaviours and ‘making the best of it’ through doggedly pursuing rewards. Upon reflection it was decided that this section did not add to the story this thesis tells and it was not possible here to ‘do justice’ to such an important, and indeed well-researched area of thinking (for example Sykes 1958; Sykes and Messinger 1960; Goffman 1961; Cohen and Taylor 1972; Zamble and Porporino 1988; Liebling 1992). Instead, I focus here upon the role that officers can play in reducing or aggravating these contemporary pains of imprisonment – something that I am able to offer due to my primary data collected from officers in Cardiff.

To begin, I outline the six key contemporary pains of imprisonment as described by prisoners in HMP Cardiff. I also consider the existence, and potential significance, of variation in terms of how acutely these pains are felt by different prisoners. Following this, the chapter considers how officers view prisoners as well as their perceptions of their own role in the daily life of the institution. To end, I discuss the implications of this discussion for prison order maintenance.

## 6.2 Prisoner Pains

When I asked prisoners in HMP Cardiff, ‘what is the hardest thing about being in prison?’, they commonly mentioned six hardships, including: separation from those on the outside, insecurity caused by other prisoners, insecurity caused by the institution, boredom, lack of privacy and lack of autonomy. The similarities and differences between these pains and those given by Sykes (1958), Goffman (1961) and Crewe (2011a) will be revisited in chapter eight.



Importantly, my research suggested that these pains were not always a 'given' for several reasons. Firstly, these pains were found to be experienced with varying intensity depending upon a prisoners' employment status and IEP level (and implicitly therefore also his behaviour). Secondly, it was found that the prison system and its staff could do a great deal more to reduce these pains – something that I return to in the conclusion to this chapter. To provide an example, the pain of missing those on the outside is not experienced consistently by all prisoners in all prisons, and the lived reality for prisoners is that family contact remains a 'qualified right' that can be withheld or limited by the state if deemed 'necessary and reasonable' (Emby 2014: 6). The pain of insecurity caused by the institution could similarly be assuaged by, for example, reducing unplanned transfers across the prison estate. A further example relates to denial of autonomy, which again may not be an implicit feature of incarceration when it is recognised that prisoners may be inconsistently empowered or suppressed by officers, as now discussed.

### 6.3 Doing things for prisoners

Staff showing willingness to assist prisoners is one of the most important factors for building positive relationships in prison. The *readiness* with which officers 'do things' for prisoners appears to convey to prisoners whether they are worthy of care and attention. Indeed, when distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' officers, prisoners most often cited willingness to help, as explained here by Angus:

***So the ones that don't give a shit...what's the difference?***

*Just treat you like shit basically, just treat you like crap and just...you ask them to do something and they just don't do it like. You can ask again and again and again and they don't get nothing done, like, the ones who is tidy you ask them to get something done and they do it straight away for you, do you know what I mean, you can tell can't you, some of them just don't care like*

- Angus

Angus notes that if an officer repeatedly denies his requests for help, they are 'treating him like shit' and displaying a lack of care, whilst those that are 'tidy' [good] will do things for prisoners right away. For Angus, willingness to 'get things done' is the defining feature of a good officer – an officer that 'cares' – something that chapter two identified as a theme within existing literature (Hulley et al 2011; also Liebling et al 2011b: 96).

Finneus and Rory, during our conversation, also cited the importance of 'getting things done':

*Rory: Bad screw is Mr X*

**Why?**

Rory: You'll ask him a question and he'll just walk off. You ask him again and he'll bang you up

**OK, so a good officer?**

Rory: Good officer. Erm. Obviously erm, listens to you. When you do something, you know, say they're gonna do it, get round to it, they don't have to do it straight away but 'when I've got free time I'm gonna do it'. And that's about it really!

- Rory (Finneus and Rory joint interview)

A vast number of other prisoners in HMP Cardiff drew distinctions between officers that do things for prisoners and those that do not. A handful of such responses are provided here:

*[I]f they can't be arsed, they'll say 'yeah', they might be an arsehole and they'll forget all about it. You do get that. Then you've got to ask again, and again, and again*

**Do you think staff are here to make your time easier or harder?**

The staff? Erm. They do make it easier. Certain times you do get the ones that do go out of their way to help...I reckon that's better.

- Roger

--

*It's like the officers on here, Mr X...he's straight. If he can do it, he'll do it. He's straight with everyone on here. If he can do it, he can do it, if he can't he won't. It's that simple. There is no 'oh, maybe I'll try tomorrow, maybe I'll...' If you can't do it, you can't do it, simple as that.*

- Dominic

--

*You know Mr X, you know the big tall officer out there? He's fucking pukka, and Miss X, she's my personal officer, she is, and she's fucking wicked do you know what I'm sayin'? She'll do anything for you, she'll do anything she can, she'll go out of her way...I was asking all the other officers and they were like 'put and app [application] in, put an app in' and everything is done by an app. But then, like Miss X, there's a couple of them, Miss X, Mr X, Mr Y, will make it their own personal fucking thing, because obviously they're sort of like you, they think we get treated a bit wrong, or not so much wrong*

[...]

*...Some of them come to do the job to do work, whereas other ones they come here for a bit of power, like a lot of a power rush with a couple of them like, you know, fucking a jobsworth basically, they've got the fucking suit on and they think they're something*

[...]

***Yeah. So it's seeing things through, like rather than just, if they can do something immediately, it's doing it, like making a phone call***

*Yeah, some of them, yeah. A lot of them won't mind*

***OK, so instead they'll just say 'put in an app'***

*Yeah, it's mostly like, like [the] old, I don't know, it's my first time in prison yeah, but like most of the boys say they're like old school officers yeah, do you know like these new youngsters and that, they're having like a power rush, do you know what I mean? Like a power rush 'keep them behind your door and things like that'.*

- Johnny

Several themes are evident in the above quotations from Roger, Dominic and Johnny, many of which have appeared previously in this thesis. For Roger, officers that do not need to be asked repeatedly to do things and those that 'go out of their way' to help make prison time easier to endure. Similarly, Dominic expresses a preference for those officers that do not make false promises about doing things, they are 'straight up', an officer quality that was discussed in chapter four. Johnny then praises a female officer for 'doing anything she can to help', including circumventing bureaucratic procedure. In Johnny's view, such officers are more sympathetic and understanding: 'they will make it their own personal fucking thing, because obviously they're sort of like you, they think we get treated a bit wrong'. Interestingly, Johnny likened these officers to me, perceiving me to be sensitive to the mistreatment of prisoners. He then distinguishes helpful officers from those that do the job for the 'power rush', using the term 'jobsworth' mentioned in chapter four. Finally, Johnny ends with a suggestion that 'old-school' officers are less likely to behave punitively towards prisoners. This again echoes the findings presented in chapter four about what it means to be a good officer, and particularly the propensity for more experienced officers to be viewed by prisoners as more 'straight up' as well as more caring, reliable, trustworthy and responsive (Tait 2011).

Each of these quotations provide yet further evidence for the importance of doing things for prisoners, but they also suggest that an officer's willingness to help can communicate something

about how they view prisoners. For most prisoners, the actual 'thing' that the staff member agreed to do was not overly important, in line with Hulley et al (2011). Rather, it was the reaction of the officer to a request and the speed with which the staff member acted that dictated whether an officer was seen to 'not give a shit' or 'go above and beyond'. As outlined in chapter two, the significance placed by prisoners upon 'getting things done' demonstrates both the severity of the suffering caused by lack of autonomy as well as the frustration caused when officers do not acknowledge their ability to greatly assuage this pain of imprisonment. Whilst some staff members were perceived by prisoners to fully recognise the importance of 'doing things' for prisoners, most typically more experienced officers as outlined in chapter four, not all staff members were willing to readily assist. In reviewing the comments boards placed in wing offices for officers to document their thoughts freely and collectively, a theme emerged in the responses given to the questions 'describe a 'typical' prisoner' and 'describe a 'perfect' prisoner'. A snapshot of such responses is given below:

Describe a 'perfect' prisoner...

There isn't one.

?

A RELEASED PRISONER



Describe a 'typical' prisoner...

Druggie.

No morals.  
Never admit their fault  
me me I syndrome.



THERE ISN'T ONE

Describe a 'typical' prisoner...

MOANING + WHINING ALL THE TIME  
THINKS THE WORLD OWES THEM A  
FAVOUR.

one who does not understand the word  
no!

Describe a 'typical' prisoner...

COCK !!!  
Needy



Describe a 'perfect' prisoner...

There is no such thing.

NO MOUTH TO MOAN ALL THE TIME  
NO ARMS TO PUSH THE CELL BELL  
NO LEGS TO KICK THE DOOR.  
BASICALLY JUST A TORSO!

Figure 2 - Collage of selected responses given on staff comments boards

It is important to firstly interrogate the context in which these comments have been made by officers. As outlined in chapter three, these comments boards were placed in a visible location in staff offices on each wing and they were designed to allow officers to provide their thoughts in lieu of the 'formal' recorded off-wing group interviews with officers which proved to be impossible to conduct. Perhaps unsurprisingly, considering some of the content given above, they caused quite a stir. On one wing, all officers decided not to write anything down for fear of reprisals from their superiors, and on another wing the populated boards were swiftly removed and binned in

anticipation of a visit from the Director of Public Sector Prisons which happened to coincide with my fieldwork. I was able to retrieve and collate all the comments boards and have a conversation about them with a governor-grade officer in Cardiff, during which we discussed the likelihood of officers writing scathing comments simply to entertain their colleagues as opposed to them being an accurate reflection of 'true' thoughts and feelings. It is difficult to ascertain whether a desire for comedic effect shaped the comments written. On the one hand, officers wrote equally derisive and mocking comments when asked to describe a 'typical' and 'perfect' officer, and when describing what prison is for. On the other hand, during one-to-one interviews, officers tended not to voice such mocking and punitive views about prisoners and about themselves. Yet it is important to recognise that officers may have purposefully chosen not to voice punitive comments directly to me during individual conversations. In the context of this discussion, establishing the validity or 'truth' of the views given on the comments boards is somewhat superfluous. Instead it is important to recognise that the tendency to offer such scathing comments may be indicative of a belief that these views would be shared by, and receive the most positive reception, from colleagues<sup>69</sup>. Specifically, the seemingly popular view perpetuated by these comments boards is one of prisoners as needy, lacking in morals, selfish, egotistical, demanding, unable to accept the word 'no' and self-pitying. If this is indeed a view of the prisoner population that is, or is perceived to be, widely held amongst the officer workforce this could certainly discourage officers from recognising the needs of prisoners and offering their assistance readily – something that has been established as of fundamental importance to forging positive staff-prisoner relationships and reducing the pain caused by a lack of autonomy.

One finding that has emerged from my individual interviews that would suggest that some officers are hesitant to validate the needs of prisoners was a distinct apprehension to admit feelings of 'sympathy' towards prisoners:

***So, do you ever feel sympathy?***

*I would go for empathy not sympathy because I try and think, right if I had to be stuck in a cell I would probably feel like shit and really that's why you've got [INDISTINCT]. But not sympathy, no, because if they didn't do what they done, didn't do the crime, they wouldn't be here.*

- Officer Isabelle

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<sup>69</sup> A parallel may be drawn here with existing literature on police culture, and specifically Rob Reiner's 'cynicism' that comprises 'cop culture' (see Reiner 2010: 120-121).

Officer Isabelle suggests that she empathises with the suffering caused by being ‘stuck in a cell’ but denies feeling *sympathetic* because prisoners knowingly committed a crime. Officer Kiera, whilst admitting that she felt highly sympathetic, suggested that this was not an acceptable view to hold:

*I feel a lot of, even, sympathy. I’m probably not even meant to feel sympathy...I think there’s a big element of worry about how other people are going to see you, other staff, and that you’re not gonna be labelled as a ‘care bear’ or that sort of stuff I suppose.*

- Officer Kiera

Officer Kiera suggests that she and her fellow officers may receive scorn from their colleagues should they be perceived to sympathise ‘too much’ with prisoners and their needs. These officer narratives suggest that confusion persists regarding what it means to ‘empathise’ and ‘sympathise’ (Gerdes 2011) and the role that these emotions play in the prison environment. In chapter two, I argued that empathy, defined as the ability to understand others emotionally (Inzunza 2015), has a rightful place in prison officer work and should not be discouraged for fear of over-familiarisation. Sympathy, on the other hand, is arguably not achievable on the part of prison officers for they do not know what it is like *to be* a prisoner. If these concepts are clearly distinguished from one another it may be possible for officers to display empathy without this being equated with a loss of professionalism or being too much of a ‘care bear’. In fact, offering empathy is in many ways a key part of prison officer professionalism, with NOMS pledging at the time of my fieldwork a commitment to treating offenders with ‘decency and respect’, and to recognising that HMPPS has a ‘duty of care’ towards prisoners (NOMS 2016). Furthermore, fostering such a positive view of empathy could go some way towards overcoming the antagonism that exists in balancing the ‘care’ and ‘custody’ aspects of the officer role (Tait 2008), as now discussed.

Officer working practices vary across time and place, and between individuals. This variability will be influenced in part by fluctuations in terms of which centrally-defined, ‘official’ aim of imprisonment should take precedence at any given time (Scott 2007). They may also be variably defined within an institution on any given day:

***What do you see your role as, when you come here each day, what do you [do]?***

*I don’t know to be honest, it depends which governor walks through that door, so you know one wants you to be a social worker, the next one wants you to be a disciplinarian, the next one wants you to be their mother, you know, it’s very, like I say it’s very confusing realistically.*

***Getting mixed messages from above***

*Constantly. Whatever is the flavour of the month.*

***Sometimes punishment? Sometimes rehabilitation?***

*Yeah, and say if the security governor walks through the door they think we are, we've all got inappropriate relationships with them, the next governor walks through the door has a different job, they see things differently.*

- Officer Kaya

Officer Kaya describes receiving mixed messages from above regarding her role and the form that her relationships with prisoners should take in line with 'the flavour of the month'. Kaya also uses various terms to describe the range of roles that she must fulfil as a prison officer, including 'social worker', 'disciplinarian', and 'mother', each of which has quite different connotations. Other officers in Cardiff described 'wearing many hats', with some seeing themselves as simply 'glorified turnkeys' (Officer Charlie), others a 'father figure' (Officer Johnathan), or a combination of several different roles: "I'm a mother, I'm a father, I'm a shoulder to cry on, I'm a psychologist" (Officer Tom). This lack of clarity surrounding the officer role is both a product of individual officer attitudes and a product of changing managerial priorities. It is also arguably necessitated by the prison environment, for at times officers will need to adopt more of a caring role when a prisoner is in crisis, and at other times they may need to exert control to, for example, de-escalate conflict. The existence of confusion surrounding the officer role may have the potential to undermine the 'sense of purpose' that is an importance aspect of the self-legitimacy of officers (Bottoms and Tankebe 2013).

#### **6.4 Power-holder legitimacy**

Writing in 2013, Anthony Bottoms and Justice Tankebe noted that the legitimization of authority in the eyes of 'power-holders' – here, prison officers – had received relatively little academic attention. The present section of this chapter provides a modest contribution to this theoretical field by considering some of the ways that prison officers in HMP Cardiff view, and justify, the power that they hold over other human beings.

The first of these justifications was the perpetuation of a belief, voiced by several officers, that prisoners 'chose' to go to prison and therefore 'deserve' to be policed. Officer Tom summarises this view, applying the notion of individual responsibility to the 'choice' that prisoners made to put themselves in prison:

*It's not a hotel. You volunteered. 'I didn't volunteer, police put me in here' 'No you didn't, you put yourself in here pal' yeah. 'You chose to do what you went and did to get yourself in here.*



*Now you've got to get on with it haven't you. You can't turn the clock back can you'. And this is how I speak to them, you know?*

- Officer Tom

Officer Gemma stated something similar:

*It cuts you, you are the same age as my children and I would be devastated to think they would ever end up, but they aren't, nobody is immune to the law, there are kids who just get mixed up in the wrong, you know, they haven't got role models. There is no excuse, there's no excuses because everybody is in charge of their own actions but it is hard, you've gotta give them trust, you've gotta give them a bit of self-respect, you have to. How are they gonna go out and be better people if they haven't had the opportunity?*

- Officer Gemma

Officer Gemma firstly acknowledges that she is emotionally affected by her job: 'it cuts you'. She admits that that she would be 'devastated' if her own children were incarcerated and goes on to note that 'nobody is immune from the law'. She suggests that some individuals may be deprived due to a lack of stable 'role models' and negative social influences. Officer Gemma then somewhat abruptly states that there is still 'no excuse' for rule-breaking for every person is autonomous. There is an element of conflict in Gemma's words – on the one hand she recognises that many prisoners are disadvantaged and aspires to give them 'trust' and 'self-respect', yet on the other she affirms the view that prisoners have knowingly chosen to misbehave. Through focusing upon prisoners' individual responsibility these officers are somewhat neutralising their own role in punishing prisoners. The almost reflexive reference to prisoner *choices* alongside recourse to the official prison rules and prisoners' awareness of consequences may be an avenue through which officers legitimate their ability to dispense punishments, as well as their own authority, and a way of dealing with the discomfort that the job can bring.

Other officers offered similar statements of discomfort, such as Officer Samantha: "*I really struggled in my first six months here interviewing prisoners...that had grown up using heroin from the age of 14. That had been abused through the care system. It was a life that I had no knowledge of, I couldn't understand, and I really struggled*". Another officer commented: "*I was away for a couple of weeks...I was in Scotland at the time, walking round, looking at all the glens and everything, and you think they haven't been out of that like 15 by 6 foot cell. All that time. It's, how are they, how are they.*" (Officer Damien). Also: "*The drive home isn't long enough. I keep going on about this because*

*it's a true statement on my behalf. The job...how far do I drive on and when does it stop?"* (Officer Dermot).

During a conversation with Officer Winston he informed me that he copes with the very real and dark aspects of 148, such as dealing with suicides, by using his uniform as a 'barrier':

***Do you think...you hang up your keys, can you quite easily leave it at the gate?***

*I struggle, I did struggle when I first started, I did struggle with that. I have [a] previous [reputation] for finding quite a lot of prisoners who have killed themselves \*awkward laughing!\* so I got some good advice from my dad because my dad was a policeman, and I used to come in in my uniform and just go home and go straight. [Now] come in in your civilian clothes, get changed, and at the end you can take them off, leave your work at the prison, and that does help.*

- Officer Winston

For Officer Winston, changing out of his uniform at the end of the working day allowed him a degree of separation between his 'work self' and his 'home self'. The shedding of his uniform has taken on a symbolic meaning for Winston for it allows him to distance himself from the position of power that he gains whilst in his uniform. Bottoms and Tankebe (2013) noted that power-holders 'legitimate through cultural symbols' which refers to the exercise of ritual to affirm one's identity and authority, for example through the wearing of a uniform to symbolise status.

Finally, the third strategy that power-holders may use to justify their authority is 'performance in office' and specifically affirming the belief that they are serving a purpose beyond simply being in a powerful position (Bottoms and Tankebe 2003). For example, prison officers may feel that they are fulfilling a 'higher purpose' such as protecting the public, deterring crime, or reducing reoffending. If they or the prison failed in each of these aims, it could undermine officers' views of the moral legitimacy of their own authority (Wrong 1995, cited in Bottoms and Tankebe 2013: 71). Many officers lamented their exclusion from popular discourse and expressed bitterness at public celebrations of other front-line services, often referring to themselves as 'the forgotten service':

*We're a forgotten body, we've got no public image, and they can treat us like crap. And that's what the governments have done, successive over the years. How do you expect the staff to react and change when they are undervalued? I mean, they treat us like crap!*

- Officer Sebastian

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*Society don't want to know the prisoners, but you know, we are the forgotten service. We're not classed as the front-line services even though we are, it's always the police, the fire service and the ambulance, so where's the prison system? You know, like I said, we've got to be prison officers first and mostly, and then we're carers, and then we're like little social workers, and, we could wear twelve hats, twelve different types of hats in one day.*

- Officer Dermot

Officers Sebastian and Dermot each appear to be expressing a desire to feel valued by wider society, and by extension, perhaps, for their role and 'purpose' to be affirmed. However, power-holder legitimacy cannot rest solely upon external perceptions of the officers' role. For officers to be able to exercise their authority confidently and responsibly, they must have positive self-perceptions of the legitimacy of their role (Bottoms and Tankebe 2003: 62). Along with the various terms used by officers above to summarise their role, from 'social worker' to 'turnkey' to 'psychologist', several officers emphatically stated that they felt their job had a 'purpose' and that they were 'making a difference' to the lives of prisoners. Officer Tom, for example, ardently stated that officers fulfil a peace-keeping and protective function on the wings and landings of HMP Cardiff:

*We stop the lids coming off prisons. The government don't do it, the governors don't do it, what have you, it's the relationship the staff have with prisoners and that's all that stop the roof coming off prisons. Definitely.*

[...]

*If staff weren't here people would die. Because, there's plenty of boys on this wing who [INDISTINCT]...if we weren't here to keep them safe, and that's part of my job as well, they would get used and abused and what have you. I mean, you know as well as I do, we had a boy spooned in here not so long ago, dreadful, come on!*

- Officer Tom

For Officer Tom, it is 'frontline' wing officers that maintain order in the prison, and without them prisoners would be in significant danger. Officer Tom's narrative provides support for Bottoms and Tankebe's (2003) argument that the self-identity of power-holders is innately tied to the effective functioning of the system of which they are part, as well as a recognition of the public function that the system plays.

To add a further dimension to this, variability also appears to exist in terms of *prisoner beliefs* about what officers should be doing during daily life on the job:

**What do you think officers are here for?**

*Just do their job...their job entails taking care of us, making sure we're safe, as well as locking us up, but erm, some of them just don't really do their, the full range of things they should do. They just lock us up.*

**So what should they be doing then, other than locking you up?**

*Just...[s]imple things like, you say 'do us a favour' but when we say to staff 'do us a favour' we're not asking them to do a favour we're asking them to do their job. But then some of the staff, when they do do things that you've asked them to do, some of them won't do them, some of them will do them but then make out like they've done you a favour but really it's just their job.*

**OK, yeah, so what things is an officers' job and what is going above and beyond for you, like doing extra stuff. So what should they be doing? Things like checking spends or PINS?**

*Yeah! Well, not so much checking, but like important things like sometimes people need phone calls and stuff to family, and they go on about you know they go on about family ties and stuff but then once someone runs out of credit and they've had a bad phone call or a bad day, there's only like 5% of the staff [that] will go out of their way to phone, check, or give them a phone call, let you use the phone in the office...it feels like they're going out of their way, but really they're not are they, they're just taking care of you.*

- Orlando

Orlando's quotation aptly sums up the confusion that surrounds the responsibilities of officers. He notes that only a handful of officers will 'go out of their way' to help prisoners maintain family contact, for example, however he then ends by suggesting that such actions do not constitute 'doing above and beyond' but rather they represent showing care. Orlando's words demonstrate that balancing 'care' with 'custody' is not always straightforward. There are some responsibilities which staff are contractually obliged to do. As a minimum, the prison officer has a range of security and safety responsibilities including escorting and supervising prisoners, locking doors, and completing reports. Aside from this, staff may – and seemingly *should* – engage in further tasks which, although desirable, may be ignored due to a lack of accountability. Some examples of 'extra tasks' would be checking the status of an application, or calling the Offender Management Unit (OMU) to check on an aspect of a prisoner's sentence plan. Often these 'extra' tasks are orientated more towards the 'care' side of the job, and in the eyes of Orlando as well as Angus, above, not all officers will engage in this part of the role. Arguably however, showing this care and 'doing things' for prisoners is crucial

to making the prison experience bearable. It can go some way towards alleviating the pains of imprisonment, and it can help to ensure that prisoners feel like human beings.

### 6.5 Concluding comments: Implicit or Explicit Pains?

This chapter began by stating that any discussion of the prison would be incomplete without a recognition of the suffering that imprisonment causes. Prisoners in HMP Cardiff described being pained by separation from loved ones, lack of personal security at the hands of other prisoners and the institution, the monotony of prison life, and the deprivation of privacy and autonomy. Whilst each of these contemporary pains of imprisonment are, to a degree, innate qualities of confinement, the prison system could arguably do a great deal more to alleviate these pains. So too, could prison officers. This chapter has shown that prison officers need to recognise that their actions, behaviours and attitudes can ‘make or break’ the prison experience – they have the power to make it ‘survivable’ or ‘destructive’ (Liebling 2000: 347). Officers are inherently in a position of power and they need not inflict further punishment through indifference or through malice, or in the name of ‘responsibilisation’.

In their current form, the pains of imprisonment have become a further avenue through which officers can exercise discretion to coax prisoners into offering their compliance. The formal punishment system of the prison, whether intentionally or not, cannot be divorced from the way that the pains of imprisonment are experienced by prisoners. It is extremely difficult to know whether the prison’s rewards and punishments system was deviously and purposefully designed by policy makers so as to mirror the pains of imprisonment. It is also entirely possible that the pains of imprisonment have been described here as such by prisoners in Cardiff precisely because these are the aspects of prison life that vary so much under the privileges system. However, the reality for prisoners persists – each of the contemporary pains of imprisonment, as given by prisoners in HMP Cardiff, can be intensified or lessened by a prisoner’s circumstances. This includes his demographic characteristics, his IEP level, his relationship with officers and, it shall be shown, his employment status. The extent to which a prisoner misses his family, how secure he feels, his privacy, the level of autonomy that he can exercise during his daily life, and the amount of activities in which he can engage varies wildly amongst the prisoner population. This is evidenced once again in the following chapter through an exploration of the lives of wing workers – those prisoners that have the greatest opportunities to alleviate the pains of imprisonment.

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## Chapter Seven: The Boys in Green

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### 7.1 Introduction

On every wing in HMP Cardiff – and indeed on every wing in most, if not all, prisons in England and Wales – there exists a small group of prisoners that are employed to undertake domestic duties on their wing. It is these prisoners, the ‘wing workers’, that are the focus of this chapter. It will be shown that the experience of imprisonment differs greatly for this group of prisoners compared to the general prisoner population. The voices of wing workers, officers, and other non-worker prisoners will be presented in this chapter to provide a better understanding of the social position of this group of prisoners, and in doing so, the chapter will contribute to existing understandings of the nature of officer discretion and the role that prisoner-officer relationships play in maintaining an ordered prison environment.

To begin, I discuss existing literature and include a note on method. Although not traditionally included alongside empirical data, these two fore-grounding sections are considered crucial considering the seemingly low levels of attention that have previously been paid to wing workers within policy and within scholarly literature. Next, the commonly adopted practices for wing worker recruitment will be explored, including the potential consequences of this process, such as encouraging officer favouritism or rewarding prisoner recidivism. I will then show that mundane prison life is in many ways improved for this group of prisoners compared to the general prisoner population, including in terms of their material conditions, their position within the prisoner hierarchy, and their relationships with officers. To end, I interrogate the extent to which these benefits represent a fundamental transformation of the experience of imprisonment and the power differential that exists between officers and prisoners.

### 7.2 New Territory

Interestingly, there appears to exist very little literature that explores the experiences of wing workers in prisons. This dearth of literature was identified following an extensive search for the terms ‘cleaners’, ‘wing workers’ and ‘orderlies’ within the Indexes of several books within the field of prisons studies. These include, amongst others and in chronological order: Thomas Mathiesen’s 1965 *Defences of the Weak*; Fitzgerald and Sim’s *British Prisons* (1982); Richard Sparks, Anthony Bottoms and William Hay’s *Prisons and the Problem of Order* (1996); Mary Bosworth’s *Engendering*

*Resistance* (1999); Alison Liebling and Helen Arnold's 2004 *Prisons and their Moral Performance*<sup>70</sup>; Elaine Crawley's 2004 *Doing Prison Work*; Alison Liebling, David Price and Guy Shefer's 2011 *The Prison Officer*; Deborah Drake's 2012 *Prisons, Punishment and the Pursuit of Security*; Joel Harvey's *Young Men in Prison* (2007); and Deborah Drake, Rod Earle and Jennifer Sloan's 2015 *Handbook of Prison Ethnography*. This list is far from exhaustive but rather illustrative of the seemingly small amount of academic attention that this unique group of prisoners has received to date. When conducting a search of both online and physical library resources for various permutations of 'prison wing workers' and 'prison cleaners', very few materials became available. The handful of works that have mentioned wing workers, even if only in passing, are now outlined.

Yvonne Jewkes' 2007 edited *Handbook on Prisons* has several indexed items dedicated to 'work in prison'. For example, Anne Owers discusses the lack of work and education available for prisoners across the estate in England and Wales, even within training prisons<sup>71</sup> (Owers 2007: 9-11). Also within the *Handbook*, Keith Soothill discusses developments in prison policy during the early 1900s which resulted in greater emphasis being placed upon prisoner reform and training, particularly in Borstals (Soothill 2007: 41-43). Relatedly, David Scott (2007: 50) discusses the impact of changing penal sensibilities between the early 1800s to the mid-1900s upon prisoner employment, noting that hard labour dominated during the late nineteenth century, to be replaced by a focus upon 'treatment and training' in the twentieth century. In a separate chapter, Elaine Crawley notes that working has been found to provide a source of identity and a means of coping amongst older prisoners such that they will try to remain in prison employment for as long as possible (Crawley 2007: 230). Finally, also within the *Handbook*, Alice Mills and Helen Codd discuss the financial impact of incarceration upon family remaining on the outside (Mills and Codd 2007: 683). However, there is no mention of wing workers *per se* within these sections, nor indexed items relating to 'orderlies' or 'cleaners'.

Roy King and Kathleen McDermott's *The State of our Prisons* (1995: 204) mentions prisoner cleaners whilst listing available prison jobs: "There were, of course, other work opportunities in all of the prisons, as cleaners, orderlies, kitchen staff". Similarly, Fitzgerald and Sim (1982) also mention wing cleaning or 'domestic duties' alongside other forms of prison work, describing all prison work as "dull, soul-destroying, and labour-intensive" (1982: 61). Again, the specificities of the wing worker role are not discussed. Goffman makes brief mention of orderlies in his *Asylums*, citing the work of Dendrickson and Thomas (1954, cited in Goffman 1961: 232): "the job of landing orderly was quite

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<sup>70</sup> As outlined below, although not assigned an Indexed category, wing cleaners are distinguished within this book.

<sup>71</sup> A training prison is designed to provide programmes and training to assist with resettlement, particularly amongst longer-term prisoners.

separate from the ordinary daily routine of work...[w]ith it went a certain amount of freedom along the landings...and a general lightening of the monotonous routine". As shall be seen, this description of the relative 'freedom' of landing orderlies is comparable to the modern-day wing worker. Sykes (1958: 27) also briefly considers prisoner workers in general, noting that this group of captives has greater freedom of movement as well as more opportunities to amass material possessions, yet again this observation is not specific to *wing* workers.

In terms of more contemporary literature, Alison Liebling and Ben Crewe have each recognised the unique position of wing workers. A summary of their thoughts is provided here, and I consider interactions with my own findings as appropriate later in this chapter.

The differential experiences of wing workers are mentioned throughout Alison Liebling and Helen Arnold's *Prisons and their Moral Performance*. For example, prisoners in HMP Belmarsh noted that their lives were improved by having a job (2004: 177) and within HMP Wandsworth, relationships between wing workers and officers were much more likely to be 'friendly, helpful and supportive', whereas for other prisoners they were characterised more by 'indifference' (2004: 192). Liebling has also differentiated wing workers in later works, for example within a chapter in *Prison Officers and the Use of Discretion* (2003) written collaboratively with David Price. They note that the existence of 'trusted prisoners' can structurally constrain officers' use of power because in giving these individuals duties and responsibilities, they are effectually allowing them to have capabilities beyond their role (2003: 79). Liebling and Price (2003: 79) go on to suggest that staff have "'given away' a certain degree of power". Ben Crewe (2009) has also provided an insight into the unique position of wing workers in the prisoner hierarchy. During his study in HMP Wellingborough he found that wing workers play a role in the everyday maintenance of order by acting as 'mediators' between officers and the general prisoner population. They would relay news and warnings from officers to inmates and communicate generalised grievances from the inmate community back to officers (Crewe 2009: 240). Crewe also found that wing workers did not generally act in a *controlling* capacity in relation to other prisoners. The "role of cleaners and servery workers" is also listed within the index of Crewe's (2009) book, included under the indexed section concerning prison order, and sandwiched between the topics 'grassing' and 'powerful prisoners', suggesting that Crewe also considered the position of these prisoners to be unique.

Providing an American and an auto-biographical perspective, Michael Santos (2003: 77) has discussed the lives of unit orderlies in an American prison. Drawing upon his 45 years incarcerated, Santos paints a picture of the life of a unit orderly which is highly comparable to wing workers in UK prisons. Santos notes that these individuals are privileged in that they can remain in their residential



area all day and enjoy free time upon completion of their work. They can play games, sleep, watch television and their jobs are less demanding in comparison to other employment positions.

The final piece of literature that has mentioned the experiences of wing workers was authored by Jennifer Sloan (2012). Sloan (2012: 406) noted that cleaning work allows prisoners a modest way of shaping their environments and a means of escaping the monotony of prison life. The income provided by cleaning work may also provide a way to combat material deprivation and missing family. The position was also found by Sloan to provide a rare source of unstructured time in prison, and access to otherwise restricted spaces.

There are numerous examples of literature that addresses the experiences of other specific groups of prisoners, such as prisoner Listeners (Davies 1994); Life-sentenced prisoners (Richards 1978; Flanagan 1980; Crewe et al 2020); Sex Offenders (Hudson 2005; levins 2014); young prisoners (Harvey 2007; Morgan 2007; Hewson and Knight 2018); black and minority ethnic prisoners (Edgar 2007); elderly prisoners (Crawley 2005; 2007); and female prisoners (Carlen 1990; Carlen and Worrall 2004). Again, this list is far from exhaustive and the specific experiences of other 'types' of prisoners have been addressed by many penal scholars over many decades. The present chapter therefore contributes to a great body of work concerning the diverse experience of imprisonment. It will also 'converse' with some of the literature outlined above, drawing upon the experiences of wing workers in HMP Cardiff using their own words and the words of officers that put them in that position.

### 7.3 A Note on Method

As outlined in chapter three, concerning methods, I spent a great deal of time with wing workers in HMP Cardiff throughout my fieldwork. Whilst wing workers are not over-represented in my prisoner interviewee sample, much of my time spent engaging in informal, spontaneous conversations occurred with wing workers. This level of access, in combination with the lack of existing literature specifically concerning wing workers, allows me to provide a unique insight into the contemporary prison using their experiences. Within this chapter the terms 'workers', 'wing workers', 'wing cleaners' and 'cleaners' will be used interchangeably. Officers and prisoners most commonly used the term 'cleaners' to refer to this group, however the term 'wing worker' has been adopted here because it demonstrates that these individuals perform a range of tasks.

There are usually 6-8 workers on each wing tasked with keeping the wing clean, serving food to the entire wing, and providing basic provisions to other inmates (for further detail, please see Appendix 14). They are distinguishable by their uniform, and in HMP Cardiff they were observed to be

predominantly white Welsh<sup>72</sup>, aged over 25, physically fit and confident, well-known to officers due to having previously served time in the establishment, and with at least a few months to serve in Cardiff during their current sentence.

#### 7.4 Recruitment, Discretion and Risk-management

The issue of discretion in the prison context has been commonly explored in relation to the IEP scheme (see, for example, Liebling 2008; Khan 2016 discussed in chapter two). Distinctively, this section will explore another area of prison life in which officers can exercise a great deal of discretion – the recruitment of wing workers:

##### ***So how do you choose who becomes a cleaner?***

*Well, we try and leave most of it to Mr X [anonymised officer], he's sort of delegated himself the cleaning officer, something he enjoys doing. But, like I said, it's what relationships you build up a lot of the time, so if you trust somebody and you feel that they're actually capable of doing the work as well, then, I do tend to hire them. I do fire a lot of cleaners mind you, if they step out of line, I'm happy to do that, but as I say, we leave most of it to Mr X.*

- Officer Kaya

As suggested by Officer Kaya in the above quotation, there is usually a self-designated officer that decides who becomes a worker on each wing. This was observed on all wings in Cardiff. Crewe (2009: 240) witnessed the same informal recruitment procedures in HMP Wellingborough, where wing workers were usually selected by regular wing staff through “informal polling”. Officer Kaya suggests that recruiting cleaners is something her colleague ‘enjoys doing’, which is perhaps not surprising considering the behaviours that this position may elicit from prisoners in their quest to secure a cleaning job. Officer Kaya explains that two factors are considered whilst recruiting wing workers – firstly, being *trusted* to do the job, a trust which is built up over time as discussed in section 7.10 of this chapter; and secondly being deemed *capable* of doing the job. Yet what does ‘capability’ mean?

##### 7.4.1 Assertiveness

Assessments of ‘capability’ to become a wing worker rest in part upon one’s perceived assertiveness and confidence, particularly around other inmates. For example, Officer Richard describes hiring those that he perceives to be ‘outgoing’ and capable of declining the requests of fellow inmates: “If I

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<sup>72</sup> Whilst the entire prisoner population in HMP Cardiff was predominantly white Welsh, commonly originating from the South Wales Valleys and Cardiff (around 80%, as stated in chapter four), the over-representation of white Welsh prisoners was even more pronounced amongst wing workers.

*employ a cleaner, I employ a cleaner that is more outgoing...that can be down on the hot plate [servery on wing] and if somebody says to [them] 'I want extra' 'you're not having it'..."* (Officer Richard). It is interesting that Officer Richard uses the term 'employ' whilst describing the process of selecting wing workers, for officers do not pay wing workers' wages nor are they in a formal manner their 'employer' or 'boss'. However, this phrase aptly captures the directive role that officers play in relation to these prisoners.

Assertiveness as a marker of 'capability' was mentioned by several officers:

***How do they get to that status?***

*Well that's a choice the staff make. You know, we have to look at them and see how they interact. It's obvious if you're gonna put a prisoner in a position of trust, even if it's just doing the food, they've got to be able to say no and they've got to be able to stand up for themselves or they'll just get walked over...[y]ou don't want a bully, but you've gotta have somebody who is able to do the job...[t]hey have to be reasonably able to look after themselves, have a little bit of intelligence, and want to do it.*

- Officer Sebastian

In a similar manner to Officers Kaya and Richard, Officer Sebastian firstly notes that wing worker recruitment rests heavily upon staff perceptions and discretion. Officer Sebastian then states that wing workers will be chosen for their ability to direct the behaviour of other prisoners and their ability to 'stand up for themselves'. By noting that wing workers should not be 'bullies', Officer Sebastian may be acknowledging that recruiting 'tougher' individuals presents a risk of inadvertently empowering those that victimise others.

**7.4.2 Politeness**

A further criterion for becoming a wing worker is displaying the 'right' sorts of behaviours towards officers:

***They [cleaners] are given first name status, and I was wondering how that comes about, like how does a prisoner earn that?***

*You get to know them. Right. You get to know them...you watch them, you watch their behaviours...they're very polite and respectful to staff, they'll go behind their doors when it's time to, and without being told to, you know? They'll help staff out, they'll help other prisoners out, you know? ...[a]nd a lot of them, and this is no word of a lie...if there was an incident on the wing and there was any of my cleaners nearby, and they thought I was*

*getting hurt, they would jump in. Not just me but any member of staff on this wing, they would jump in to stop it. And that's no word of a lie. And I think you'll find that wherever you go around the jail.*

- Officer Stella

Officer Stella, in the above quotation, lists several qualities that she appears to value from the cleaners on her wing, including: being 'polite' and 'respectful', readily following prison rules, helping officers, helping other prisoners, and even protecting officers in times of disorder. There are interesting parallels here between the qualities that Officer Stella appears to look for in a wing worker and the IEP criteria outlined in chapter five, where prisoners are required to help themselves and help others, and to actively demonstrate their obedience. Officer Stella repeatedly comments upon the position of wing workers in relation to officers, suggesting that they must display deference, but also assertiveness should they need to protect officers.

Another officer, Officer Winston, expresses a highly similar view to Officer Stella whilst describing the 'character assessments' he engages in during recruitment decisions:

*When they come in, it's, I can tell, well we can pretty much tell that they'd make a good cleaner...[i]t's like there's two boys on the threes [third landing on a wing] that came in, they're absolutely polite as anything, absolutely polite as anything, won't say boo to a goose, they've been polite, they've been respectful, they've done as they're told, they keep their cells tidy, their beds are made, their plates are washed up in their cell and I'm thinking you're gonna be cleaners. And you can trust. I could open all the gates on C Wing and I know X wouldn't run off. I wouldn't but, that's, he'd come and tell me that the gates were open, or 'did you know you left your radio on there' that sort of prisoner, which you need.*

- Officer Winston

For Officer Winston, the type of prisoner that would be considered for a wing worker position not only follows prison rules, they also offer politeness and treat officers 'well'. They would even be expected to proactively protect the security of the institution: '*he'd come and tell me that the gates were open, or if I left my radio on there*'. These responsibilities are quite removed from the formal duties of a wing worker outlined above (and in Appendix 14), and they suggest that officers have extremely high and varied expectations of these individuals.

### 7.4.3. Familiarity

A third aspect of wing worker recruitment is familiarity. If a prisoner is well-known to staff and they have in the past been a cleaner, they are very likely to receive that status again, even if they have been released and re-enter prison. Prisoners themselves recognised this. For example, Sam, a cleaner on A Wing was out for three months and on return to prison he was immediately reinstated as a cleaner. When asked to elaborate, Sam stated: “[I’ve been] coming back and forth a long time so I know all the screws. So [I] knew them all, they knew I’m a good worker and that” (Sam). Another prisoner echoed this when asked how he got his cleaning job: “[I] was on B wing, just come in, they know me, do you know what I mean? So, they just come and said.” (Rory). Similarly, Mackenzie, a non-cleaner prisoner stated that his friend was recruited due to being known to officers: “One of the lads I know, well, I’ve got to know him, he’s only been in couple of weeks in this jail and he’s already turned into a cleaner, know what I mean, but he knows them innit” (Mackenzie).

The apparent tendency to recruit well-known prisoners was also acknowledged by Officer Sebastian:

*If we have workers working on the wings then they need to be trusted...we used to have prisoners, you’d have prisoners coming in on the same sentence and they’d get the same job because they were so trustworthy and they were so good, but they knew the line and they wouldn’t cross it but it’s extremely hard to find prisoners like that...[t]here are some prisoners that will [return] and it’s always the way...[t]he vast majority always come back. And always will!*

- Officer Sebastian

Officer Sebastian’s quotation provokes several questions about the wing worker recruitment process and what it might tell us about prison life, expected prisoner behaviour, and the translation of imprisonment aims into practice, to which I now turn.

### 7.5 Risk

Each of the above criteria for wing worker recruitment focuses exclusively upon the everyday behaviour of prisoners on the wings. Wing workers should not be seen to pose any risk to officers or to the ordered running of the jail. To provide a brief recapitulation of employment categorisation in the prison, inmates are deemed eligible for either a high-, medium- or low-risk job, with high-risk jobs considered to pose the greatest threat to *the institution’s security*. This is a very particular way of defining risk, that is – risk posed to the security of the prison. This can be contrasted with, for example, the risk posed to other prisoners, the risk posed to the public, or the risk of reoffending. This is intriguing for two reasons. Firstly, IEP guidelines supposedly represent the ‘gold standard’ by

which all prisoner behaviour is judged, and within these guidelines, prisoners are encouraged to 'demonstrate a commitment to their rehabilitation'. The habitual recruitment of repeat recidivists as wing workers therefore presents something of a contradiction. On the one hand, prisoners are encouraged to desist from offending within formal policy; yet in practice, recidivism is essentially rewarded. It is prisoners' behaviour and attitudes towards officers, and officers' resultant discretionary decisions, that would ultimately appear to shape prisoners' lives here.

Secondly and relatedly, these wing worker recruitment practices suggest that, in practice, reducing recidivism may not be a foremost concern for officers. Indeed, prisoners and officers alike in HMP Cardiff ridiculed the notion of rehabilitation during our conversations and on the staff comments boards (for example, some staff described rehabilitation as a 'joke' and 'bollocks'). Furthermore, when asked to characterise a 'good day', 'rehabilitation' was not explicitly cited as an aspiration. Instead, they simply wanted to 'get through the day' without incident:

*A good day? A good day would be no member of staff got hurt. Right. No alarm bells. And everything runs smoothly. And that's it. That's all I ask for.*

- Officer Stella

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*To me a good day in work is where everything runs perfectly to the book, nothing goes wrong and nobody gets assaulted. No tons of paperwork, you know, and no stress.*

- Officer Sebastian

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*Come into work. There's not been any general alarms, not been any incidents, everything has run smoothly, there's not been no erm, prisoners fighting, no staff getting abused, the regime has been run effective, everything goes according to plan.*

- Officer Andy

This mirrors the findings of Liebling et al (2011b: 6) where, using an Appreciative Inquiry approach which focuses upon the strengths and possibilities of organisations (see Liebling et al 2001), they

found that: *“life at its best’ for prison staff was quiet, ‘a day going by with no trouble’...[[l]ack of tension and confrontation made ‘a good day’.*” Whilst this may initially appear to be quite a negative or modest characterisation of a ‘good day’, it may instead be indicative of a desire amongst officers to use their “peacekeeping” skills – their diplomacy, the avoidance of force, their humour (Liebling et al 2011b: 7). If officers can finish a shift without incident, it would likely indicate that they were able to use these skills successfully. The mention of positive verbal interactions with prisoners within the following quotations from Officers Gemma, Winston and Finley supports this view:

*What’s a good day...? ...[Y]ou’ve just got no confrontation that day, you know, there’s no bells, no staff are injured...[s]o a good day would just generally be all of the above and more staff happy with no moaning and whinging, you know, maybe a ‘thank you miss’.*

- Officer Gemma

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*Everything just runs smoothly...we chat with them we put them behind the door, whatever, and no hiccups like that.*

- Officer Winston

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*You come into work, nobody gets injured, or hurt...perhaps you’ve got the work done that you had in your mind that you set out to do that day, or you’ve achieved something with a prisoner perhaps nobody else has achieved. It could be somebody that’s quite volatile and always not doing that, anti-establishment, and perhaps you’ve had a chat with them and you’ve managed to turn them round and they’ve gone ‘oh go on then’.*

- Officer Finley

Officer Finley’s quotation is particularly interesting, for whilst he also characterises a ‘good day’ in terms of lack of harm, he additionally mentions achieving something with a prisoner: *‘perhaps you’ve had a chat with them and managed to turn them round’*. In many ways, having a constructive conversation with a prisoner is arguably part of the process of rehabilitation, and it is something that can be achieved during mundane interactions between officers and prisoners. Therefore, whilst ‘rehabilitation’ as a *formal* concept was shunned by officers, it is highly probable that many prison officers do aspire to incorporate positive, constructive, or ‘rehabilitative’ interactions with prisoners into their daily working lives. These positive interactions need not necessarily contribute to rehabilitation as conceptualised as ‘desistance’ or ‘resettlement’, they may simply, but powerfully,

have the capacity to maintain the 'uneasy peace' that is needed for the prison to run safely and smoothly. It would also therefore follow that officers recruit prisoners that they perceive to be able to fulfil the vital wing worker functions that keep the jail running smoothly on a daily basis. In other words, those prisoners that are perceived to pose the least risk to the order and security of the institution. Thus, it is those prisoners that frequently serve time in Cardiff that are *most* likely to receive the perks and privileges that are associated with the position of wing worker.

## 7.6 Face Fits

A further outcome of this wing worker recruitment process is that it may encourage favouritism and disbar some prisoners from being considered for the highly sought-after position of wing worker. This might include prisoners that are viewed as antagonistic by officers, those that are new to the prison environment, or those that do not fit the 'usual profile' of wing worker. For example, Kevin, a prisoner on A Wing described to me in detail the difficulties he experienced whilst attempting to secure a cleaning job. He described to me being referred to numerous officers over several days, each vaguely promising that a cleaning job might be available, only to be informed that he would not be considered due to apparently previously refusing to share a cell. Kevin explained that despite being promised a cleaning position, on returning from the Food Hygiene course necessary for the job, the position had been given to someone else:

*I've gone into the office, 'oh can I have my job back, I notice there's two new cleaners'. [He] said 'ah, well no I'm not having you as a cleaner on my wing because you refused to share a cell' I was like 'oh!' I was thinking, has this guy got like a memory amnesia or something. We've been through this before, but then he made it as if, he said 'look I'm not discussing this with you. That's it. I'm not having you as a cleaner on my wing, that's it'. So I walked off. Down to Segregation, knocked on the door, I said 'listen, get my cell ready I've had enough of this'. Like this is where I'm gonna end up because like I'm doing everything the right way and I just felt at that point in time that there was, that was the only option...[I]ike every time I tried to speak to the PO that had authorised my job I was just hitting a brick wall.*

- Kevin

In Kevin's words, despite doing 'everything right', he was punished for previous behaviour and later in our interview he attributed this treatment to racism. It is not possible to ascertain whether this was indeed the reason for him being denied a cleaning job, however Kevin's experience serves to underline the argument that officer discretion plays a key role in shaping the prison experience. It also acts as a reminder that receiving rewards in return for offering compliance may not be straightforward for all prisoners, at all times, as shown in chapter five.



Despite Officers Kaya, Sebastian, Stella and Winston offering a consensus regarding the qualities considered during wing worker recruitment, decisions may also be somewhat arbitrary. This becomes apparent when comparing Kevin's experience with that of Marshall who became a cleaner simply because the recruiting officer "noticed [him] playing football and they were a big Notts country fan so they give [him] a job!" (Marshall).

For those prisoners that are 'stuck in a rut' and seemingly unlikely to be awarded the opportunity to become a wing worker, the recruitment process and the corresponding perks that the position provides may seem unfair. This view was voiced by Adrian:

*I thought I'd have a job by now innit, nah, nothing yet. Coz all the jobs are taken and they don't wanna move. I reckon, see, when they have them cleaners on work they should take one of them off when they've been on for so long. Give someone else a chance, do you know what I mean? Oh keep them on until the end of their sentence, but it's sick, like we don't get no work, we don't get no money, they're earning, some of them down there got three jobs, they've got wing painter, serves out the bread, cleans up the wing, he's getting like 27 pound a week and that like, do you know what I mean? How is that fair? Give someone else one of your jobs, who needs it. Like me, without my family contacting me whatsoever, they don't wanna know me.*

- Adrian

Having spent only three weeks in prison, Adrian had already formed quite strong impressions of the wing worker group, something that I believe highlights quite how unique the imprisonment experience is for this group compared to the general prisoner population. Adrian spoke at length about the relative privilege of wing workers, and the above excerpt from our conversation reiterates that wing worker recruitment practices may be exclusionary. Adrian then laments the increased material wealth of wing workers, stating that it is 'unfair' that certain prisoners may have significantly more earning potential when he has no money coming in from the outside due to being rejected by his family, nor the opportunity to earn a wage inside.

The favouritism that can be exercised during the wing worker recruitment processes is particularly problematic when considered in relation to the responsabilisation of prisoners discussed in chapter five. In brief, officers and prisoners in HMP Cardiff tended to ascribe to the view that privileges are equally available to all, if *only* a prisoner *chooses* to display the right sorts of behaviours. However, just as within wider society, there exists a differential in terms of the accessibility of these prizes (Merton 1968: 229). Prisoners that are 'stick in a rut' and have negative reputations amongst

officers, or those that simply do not conform to the 'ideal' wing worker profile of being assertive, confident, polite and well-known, are not equally eligible for privileges – whether these privileges refer to IEP progression, being recruited as a wing worker, or simply having their needs recognised by officers on a daily basis. For such disadvantaged prisoners, there is a real risk that they may turn to ever-more 'maladaptive' coping strategies (Zamble and Porporino 1988; Toch and Grant 1989), suicide or self-harm; or personally reject institutional goals and suffer repeated segregation. Indeed, it was remarked by one senior member of staff in HMP Cardiff that officers working in the segregation unit often 'see the same faces' recurrently. Further evidence for the disparate treatment of prisoners can be found within the 2014 MQPL survey carried out in HMP Cardiff, where 58% of prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that 'things only happen for you in this prison if your face fits' (NOMS 2014: 13). Whilst this MQPL survey was not carried out in the same year as my fieldwork, as acknowledged in chapter four, the data presented thus far in this chapter concerning wing worker recruitment certainly provides some support for the existence of a 'face fits' culture in the prison. Also within the 2014 MQPL survey, some respondents asserted that prisoners from the South Wales Valleys were particularly favoured by officers (NOMS 2014: 8). This is interesting in light of the prisoner and officer demographics given in chapter four: Firstly, the South Wales Valleys represents the main 'catchment area' for the prison, along with Cardiff city. Secondly, prisoners and officers in Cardiff prison often originated from the same localities on the outside. Thirdly, officers in Cardiff spoke proudly of their own perceived ability to communicate particularly well due to their Welsh cultural heritage – a quality that, perhaps, they also ascribe to Welsh prisoners.

Despite being framed as such, it is important to recognise that rewards for good behaviour are not equally available to all prisoners and at all times. Officer discretion, if exercised poorly, may give rise to prejudice and prevent some prisoners from being 'given a chance', as per Adrian's lamentation above. To become a wing worker one must possess an array of qualities, many of which provide a source of status within the prisoner community without the added status of 'wing worker', such as assertiveness and experience of doing time. At the other end of the scale, a new prisoner that is perceived to be weak and could perhaps benefit the most from being awarded this status is least likely to be recruited. It is difficult to overlook the congruencies between these observations about contemporary prison life and the astute comment offered by Roy King and Kathleen McDermott written decades previously about the management of trouble in prisons: "offer incentives for good behaviour, but keep them niggardly and in any case offer most to those who need them least and vice versa" (King and McDermott 1990: 447).

## 7.7 Killing Time in the Penthouse Suite

Much as with officer discretion, the IEP scheme first springs to mind when thinking about the privileges that can be awarded by the institution. However, the following sections in this chapter will show that prisoners can gain significant benefits by becoming a wing worker – something that is wholly external to the IEP (to reiterate, prisoners need only be on Entry IEP level to become a cleaner). These benefits include: more opportunities for contact with the outside world, greater stability and security, increased autonomy, and decreased boredom. The present research has been uniquely able to explore these benefits and their impact upon the pains of imprisonment. These prisoners also experience better material conditions and more informal relationships with officers. A cleaner on D Wing sums up the ‘perks of the job’:

*Because I’m a cleaner I’ve gotta stay on the wing all day so we can use that [kitchen, toaster and microwave<sup>73</sup>] whenever we want, we get extra bread from when we have food so we can have some toast and that whenever you want. Because I’m on the servery as well, so when everyone else is banged up at five, six o’clock and I can use the phone, between six and seven I’m out as well so I’ve just made it, all I’ve done is made my jail better for myself, do you know what I mean? Make it go, time pass as well, because you know, as I say if you sit there lying on your bed all day the days are gonna drag, just gonna do nothing, do you know what I mean? I train in my cell as well. Train at the gym, I get that five times a week, I do the yard circuit, I don’t know if you’ve seen on B wing sort of when I was running round the yard, I do that and then I do something on the nights as well, so I’ve turned it into sort of like a health farm if you like, because I eat well.*

- Jason

Jason’s quotation introduces us to the multitude of benefits that wing workers in HMP Cardiff attested to during my research. He mentions increased freedom – being able to use the wing facilities ‘whenever he wants’ and having the luxury of evening unlock. He also mentions decreased boredom – being able to use the gym frequently and working to help the time pass quicker. He feels that he has ‘made jail better *for himself*’ by becoming a wing worker – an adage that was repeated countless times during conversations with wing workers – and something that is a common theme throughout this thesis, and highly reminiscent of ‘the carrot’ compliance narratives discussed in chapter five. This will be returned to later in this chapter. Jason’s use of the term “health farm” to describe the prison is highly telling of the benefits that the position of wing worker offers in terms of

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<sup>73</sup> There is a small, shared kitchen available to prisoners housed on D Wing.

material wealth and personal health. Wing workers can consume more food and enjoy a more varied diet. Their earnings can also be used to purchase food from the canteen, including luxury items such as fresh fruit, milk, coffee, sweetener and tobacco products<sup>74</sup>. Personal health and privacy levels are also improved by enhanced and more flexible access to the gym, exercise yard, showers and wing toilets.

It is important to note that the relative wealth of wing workers is so pronounced because material possessions 'mean more' in prison, and their accumulation can provide a source of power in the prison's informal economy:

*Sugar and tea is like gold dust in here...because on the outside you take everything for granted. 20 pence is nothing. 20p in here is worth ah! Tea and sugar! Coffee! You know? It's worth a fortune!*

- Marshall

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*Fags, sugar, gold, like gold dust...all the...like coffee you call it bobby in here, that's mad that is innit, stupid, 'oh you got any bobby and that?' like what you on about?!*

- Adrian

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*When I first come in...they run out of food on the kitchens! Now how can a fucking prison run out of food?! They hadn't run out of food. I ordered chicken leg, fucking pasta, and you might laugh at this but you know that's fucking main ingredients, that's something you look forward to, and they'd run out of the pasta, and they put like a chicken leg and two boiled potatoes.*

- Johnny

The emphatic manner with which these prisoners, both wing workers (Johnny and Marshall) and non-wing workers (Adrian), talk about the importance of seemingly innocuous things helps to demonstrate not only the extreme deprivation that prisoners experience, but also the significance of the material wealth that wing workers possess.

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<sup>74</sup> At the time of my fieldwork, smoking was still permitted in HMP Cardiff. Since the smoking ban, these have been replaced by e-cigarette products.

Regarding family contact, wing workers have access to the wing telephones during their entire working day, including during evenings when families are more likely to be available<sup>75</sup>. Opportunities for family contact are also increased due to enhanced access to letter-writing materials, stamps, and even the possibility of using staff telephones to make calls. Being a wing worker can also reduce the pains caused by insecurity and instability within the institution because staff have the power to keep individual prisoners on their wing, and even in the establishment, if they wish to retain them as a worker: *“They’re not gonna move me to another part of the prison because other officers have tried to come over and get me and they’ve said no he’s staying on this one”* (Reggie).

In terms of mitigating against the pain of boredom, all cleaners spoke highly favourably about the extra time out of their cells provided by their position, as well as work providing a break from the monotony of prison life, as also found by Sloan (2012):

***Do you think your lives have improved by becoming cleaners?***

*Jeremy: Of course, it’s easier because you’re working. You’ve got something to do*

*Jared: It passes the time*

*Jeremy: It’s better than sitting 23 hours in a cell. If you’re doing a bit of cleaning. It’s not a tiring job but you’re, it keeps your brain occupied*

*Jim: Yeah that’s what I was gonna say, it keeps your brain occupied.*

- Jim, Jeremy and Jared joint interview

Importantly, these prisoners note that ‘keeping busy’ is not only important for alleviating boredom, but also for ‘keeping their brains occupied’. This was echoed by a new, first-time prisoner on another wing: *“because I’ve always been around company and haven’t had time alone...I haven’t really thought about it. I mean, I’ve always been talking, sleeping or working so, I haven’t really like sat in my cell, felt alone and thought like ‘oh what’s this coming to”* (Reggie). For Reggie, working on the wing has prevented him from ruminating on his situation. This is a particularly noteworthy benefit of the cleaners’ position considering the psychological pain that imprisonment causes, including feelings of anxiety and impotence described by prisoners such as Earl, Isaac, Orlando and Keith in the previous chapter. Boredom is also reduced for wing workers prisoners as they have sole access to wing recreational facilities such as the pool and ping-pong tables during evenings when all other

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<sup>75</sup> Non-worker prisoners explained to me that it is difficult to contact their loved ones because they are locked in their cells from 5pm – the time when partners will be able to take calls at home. Similarly, the telephones are in very high demand during afternoon association.

prisoners are locked in their cells. This aligns with Santos' (2003) auto-biographical account mentioned above in section 7.2, where he described unit orderlies as being comparatively privileged due to their ability to enjoy free time compared to other inmates. The wing workers' enhanced purchasing-power also enables the attainment of entertainment such as books, magazines, sound systems and radios from the prison catalogue. The cost of contacting those on the outside as well as purchasing items such as toiletries is disproportionately high compared to prison wages (for evidence, please see Appendix 14), therefore the monetary benefits of being a wing worker cannot be overstated.

Another wing worker, Earl, offers his perspective on the benefits of being a wing worker in the following quotation:

*I like this job...it's fine, you're out all the time. When you've got phone credit you just use the phone anytime, you shower any time, it's a lot better than being locked away all day!*

***Do you think your life in here would be quite different if you weren't working?***

*Well, like when I was on C Wing it was a lot different because you're always banged up...and you only have like an hour a day you know. When you're a cleaner, once all the cleaning's done and the floors are done, we just go and sit, chill out and have a chat and that, so it's not really that bad of a job, like. You're out of your cell all day is the main thing, you know?*

***Do you get any privileges because of being a cleaner?***

*Well, you don't really get that many privileges...with the kit and stuff, you get...we can change it, like if you want a new t-shirt we can go in and get a new t-shirt, you know? Erm, same as like if we want stuff for our cell, like cleaning stuff, we can go in there and get it, so they're the only real privileges we get, and, like, we can go for food first, like we come up these stairs whereas the others, the rest of the wing goes round that way, do you know what I mean, they've gotta walk down them steps...if you're on the servery, which the cleaners are, then you get a bit of extra food at the end if there is extra food there.*

- Earl

Alongside increased freedom and privacy, in a similar vein to Jason above, Earl also comments upon receiving more food, enhanced access to wing telephones<sup>76</sup>, greater autonomy to structure his day, and improved ability to maintain personal health and cleanliness.

Interestingly, Earl appears somewhat hesitant to acknowledge the privileges that he enjoys: *'well, you don't really get that many privileges...'* however he then goes on to list several significant benefits his position provides. He even describes the separation of cleaners from the general prisoner population in terms of their movements within the physical landscape of the institution: *'we can go for food first like we come up these stairs whereas the others, the rest of the wing goes round that way'*. The physical separation of wing workers compared to the general prisoner population also occurs during the allocation of cells.

Wing workers often occupy comparatively better cells compared to other prisoners, with one cleaner referring to his cell as the "Penthouse Suite" (Sam). As discussed in the previous chapter about the pains of imprisonment, being forced to reside in a confined space with a stranger removes any lingering hope of privacy and may pose a threat to physical and mental health as well as perceived quality of life (Molleman and van Ginneken 2015). For wing workers however, this is a further aspect of life that is improved through their position. They are often housed in single cells or with their cleaner colleagues, most commonly grouped together at the end of each landing. On one wing in Cardiff the wing workers are even housed on a separate unit underneath the main wing, further highlighting their distinctive position within the prisoner community. Further to these material perks, wing workers also hold a degree of power over other inmates.

### 7.8 Wing workers: power

Wing workers have a great deal of responsibility on each wing and associated with this is a degree of power over other prisoners. The cleaners and servery workers can withhold goods which are important to maintaining a decent life inside, including toilet roll, bedding and cleaning products, as well as controlling food and portion sizes. I often observed mealtimes during my fieldwork, as follows:

*All prisoners line up to get their food, landing by landing, and the order in which landings are called changes every day so that each landing has a chance at getting the hottest and freshest food. He [the number one servery worker] has a list of every prisoner on the wing showing what they ordered for that meal. When each prisoner goes up and gives his name to*

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<sup>76</sup> Some evenings, cleaners will not be allowed out of their cells if the prison is short-staffed, however this appeared to be a rarity.

*this 'number one' worker he then shouts out the order and tells his colleagues, other wing workers, what to serve up. Alongside the 'number one' there are usually three workers serving the hot food, one serving desserts, and one serving bread. Staff take a back seat at meals times and just stand around in a big circle supervising. If there is food left over the cleaners can have it...because of this job, the 'number one' gets to know the names of everyone on the wing and he must keep order in the queue as well as make sure that everyone gets the correct food. If you work on the servery you could give your friends extra or give people less food if you want to. I witnessed the bread-giver giving some people more bread than others on all wings.*

- Amalgamated Fieldnotes, Aug-Sep 2015

The ability for wing workers to control resources on the wings has appeared often in this chapter, and the power of the 'number one' servery worker trumps all in this respect. It was fascinating to watch these individuals work on every wing. I was fortunate enough to gain an insight into the self-perceptions of a former 'number one' wing worker. Below he describes the power and influence this position gave him:

***Yeah, you being number one cleaner did it change your relationships with other prisoners at all?***

*Yeah, really. You know because like I was number one, do you know what that role is on here? Number one, you're in charge of everything then, like food list, you're in charge of who has what on food*

***Oh you [were] the one! Oh, that job looks so difficult!***

*It is, it's hard work, and I was on remand I was, last year, and you know how so many people are always coming and going, I didn't have a clue with that list! So, you know, one of those people who, how can I describe it, who looks a bit hard done by like, I got, like I do the cage fighting and that and I got this reputation for being up for a fight but I got a heart as well. You know when I see people and I think he looks [thin], I give him extra food, if there was extra food there I'd pile his food on for him, so I dunno, people got loads of respect for me then, actually they do*

***That makes sense, yeah. Doing those little things like you could give someone a bit better food...[and]...you could potentially give them less if you...?***



*Yeah! You get the dickheads like that and you do get piles of food left over which just gets chucked out anyway so I think I'd rather the boys have it than have it go to waste like, in the bins. And don't get me wrong, we had a dickhead in here last year and you know he'd go out of his way to be a dick. Like our canteen was like a well-oiled machine, there was no muck-ups, no food missing, they were proper running in there and he used to come in and he used to just chuck his food everywhere all over the servery boys but I knew he hated fish so I fucking defaulted his menu. You know those menus that come in to number one and then they sort them into piles and give them to the officers, I used to [INDISTINCT] with them all the time, so he'd put whatever in and I put fish for everything. He'd have fish finger baguettes, he'd have smoked haddock pasta, he fucking, he was going nuts. In the end he gets twisted up and taken down the block then. But that was his thing, he had, I asked him nicely to stop it and he just wanted to be a dick, so.*

- Donnie

Drawing upon Donnie's account and my own observations of the servery, presented here is a clear demonstration of the power that wing workers can wield over other prisoners. The ability to withhold food is particularly striking within the prison environment where food is not readily available. Donnie describes how he was able to easily alter the menu choices of a prisoner that he disliked, resulting in the other prisoner 'going nuts' and being segregated. In Donnie's view, his actions were justified because the other prisoner was 'being a dick' and having a negative influence on the wing. Conversely, Donnie describes how he has in the past chosen to give other prisoners more food if they appear to be vulnerable or malnourished. This is something that Donnie feels earned him 'respect' within the inmate community and his story conjures up images of a 'Robin Hood' figure – a character that takes from the bullies and gives to the victims.

The extent to which other, non-worker prisoners, do indeed 'respect' wing workers requires further exploration. For example, Adrian above lamented the impenetrable nature of the wing worker clique, yet he also expressed a clear desire to become a wing worker himself. Similarly, Kevin expressed grievances about the seemingly biased recruitment practices employed by officers, yet he also aspired to occupy a wing worker position and did not comment upon his perceptions of wing workers themselves. Seemingly therefore, for some non-worker prisoners in HMP Cardiff, the relative privilege of wing workers appeared to be begrudged, yet the individuals that hold that position were not generally held in contempt. Rather, their position was one to be aspired to, and it is possible that the attractiveness of the position of wing worker is increased in HMP Cardiff due to poor availability of Enhanced IEP level as identified in chapter four.

This complexity in terms of the wing worker's status amongst other inmates was also detected by Crewe (2009), where cleaners in HMP Wellingborough, as in HMP Cardiff, were generally found to be at low risk of victimisation from other inmates, but unlikely to exploit their position by exerting *direct* control over other inmates. These prisoners certainly possess a degree of power over other prisoners and yet they largely remain powerless themselves, despite benefiting from privileges, and they rarely appear to exercise their power overtly over others in a malicious way (excepting, of course, Donnie's actions described above). To further compare my observations of wing workers in HMP Cardiff and Crewe's observations of wing workers in HMP Wellingborough, a congruency exists in that this group could be seen to 'bridge the gap' or "mediate" between prisoners and officers (Crewe 2009: 240), for example in letting officers know when a new inmate needed something. However, diverging from Crewe's study, no participants in HMP Cardiff (neither wing workers themselves, non-wing worker prisoners, nor officers) attested to wing workers acting in an *informant* capacity. This was also not something that I observed during the hundreds of hours spent with wing workers both alone and in the company of officers. Yet the power that wing workers can exercise over other inmates in certain circumstances does not operate outside of the consciousness of wing staff. Indeed, staff in Cardiff prison appeared not only to be aware of it, they actively encouraged it as a way of maintaining order on the wings. Officer Kiera explains how and why this occurs:

*I think you have that [hierarchy] anyway, and we encourage that by giving [...] number one cleaners, we give them the power over the other cleaners [...] really and truthfully that is the most power because he is controlling the food.*

[...]

*[J]ust like we can take away everything, make prisoners' lives hells, so can a cleaner, he can [decide] not [to] give him toilet roll, he can [decide] not [to] give him shower gel, you know, he can spit in his food if he wants to, you know, he can do all of those things...which probably isn't very nice from another prisoners' point of view, the fact that actually we are giving other prisoners, that are no better than them, they're just better behaved for whatever reason, but we are giving them that...they probably hate us all, but they know they need that job.*

- Officer Kiera

Officer Kiera in the above quotation recognises that the wing workers and particularly the 'number one' worker have a significant degree of power over other prisoners, even likening their level of

influence to that of officers: *'Just like we can take away everything, make prisoners' lives hells, so can a cleaner'*. If they so wish, wing workers could significantly reduce the quality of life of their fellow prisoners, which firmly resonates with Donnie's narrative above. Officer Kiera then suggests that other prisoners may resent the power that is awarded to cleaners, which would align with Adrian and Kevin's previous viewpoints. Officer Kiera then comments upon the status of wing workers and their relationship with officers, noting that wing workers are 'no better' than other prisoners, they are simply 'better behaved'. Crucially, in her view this does not mean that these prisoners are necessarily normatively committed to complying with officer requests: *'they probably hate us all, but they know they need that job'*. As shown in chapter five, and above within this chapter, demonstrating compliance is a necessity for being considered for a wing worker position. It is also crucial for forging positive relationships with officers such that they will readily offer their assistance. However, in the view of Officer Kiera, this compliance does not need to be offered for normative reasons – those that successfully demonstrate compliance for instrumental or fatalistic reasons can achieve the prize of becoming a wing worker and gain access to its associated benefits. Finally, Officer Kiera reiterates that the power possessed by wing workers is bestowed upon them by officers, and it can be rescinded at any time should these prisoners misbehave. It is therefore important to recognise that even these relatively privileged and powerful prisoners are wholly at the mercy of staff discretionary power for 'they know they need that job'. The insecurity that surrounds the position of wing worker is returned to below. It is presently important to continue to explore the benefits associated with the role.

### 7.9 Wing workers: perks

Further to these material perks, wing workers in HMP Cardiff described receiving favours from officers, as explained by Jason and Donnie:

*You can get stuff without putting an app in if you're a cleaner, do you know what I mean, say you wanna see how much is in your private cash and your spends, or like....see if I needed anything more sent in...I was alright, like, just went in [to the staff office] and asked her [a female officer] 'tell me how much money I've got there and how much I can spend on my next two canteens' so, where other people would have to put an app in and wouldn't get it back, might be a day or two days.*

- Jason

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*You go to him [referring to officer] and if I said 'oh can you go on the computer and book me a visit?', he'd go straight to the computer and book you a visit. And, just simple things...because I was Number One on A wing I had some really tidy officers...the officers would open them [the cleaners] up pretty much in the morning and they'd be open up all day until they [officers] went home in the night, so we had it really really cushy, like. I could go over there 'eh listen, can you give my mum [a call]', if I run out of phone credit...just let her know that I've booked a visit for Tuesday at three o'clock', and they'd do go in the office on their own day break, and they'd ring my mother and they'd sort it out for me and I think that's just going a bit extra way like.*

- Donnie

The above quotations from Jason and Donnie suggest that staff will more readily address cleaners' needs, including circumventing the usual bureaucratic channels: '*You can get stuff without putting an app in if you're a cleaner...whereas other people would have to [wait] one or two days*' (Jason). As established in chapters four and six, the willingness of officers to 'do things' was not only the most distinguishing feature of a 'good officer' in the eyes of prisoners in Cardiff, it can also help to alleviate the pain of lack of autonomy and communicate to prisoners that they are worthy of care. The significance of officers doing 'simple things' (Donnie) such as making telephone calls on behalf of wing workers therefore cannot be overstated, for it can significantly enhance the prison experience.

Having a wing worker position on one's prison record can also help with progression through the system to lower security categories and higher levels of the IEP, which can ultimately affect release decisions. In addition to offering favours, officers may also enforce the rules less strictly for wing workers: "[we get] more lee-way, like...we get on with the officers much better as cleaners, definitely, [compared to] to the majority of the wing" (Lee and Lenny). Here, Lee and Lenny note that cleaners 'get on better' with officers, however what does this mean in practice? How can the relationship between wing workers and officers best be characterised? In what follows, I unpick the dynamics of this relationship and consider possible implications for understandings of the flow of power in prison.

I observed a stark difference in terms of the way that officers interacted with wing workers compared to the general prisoner population. As noted within my fieldnotes:

*Cleaners can for example go into [staff] wing offices without being invited/questioned, even when the office door is shut and officer on phone and other prisoners waiting outside. Division between cleaners and non-cleaners. Get to talk to staff more when out and all others locked up*

*e.g. after night-time bang-up - after 5pm the cleaners may be let out again for the evening if enough staff...[o]ne officer said to me: "I see the cleaners more than my own family".*

- Fieldnotes, August 2015

The observation that wing workers were able to walk freely into staff offices on the wings was quite striking for me, as these areas were wholly off-limits to all other prisoners. I considered these offices to be a manifestation of the divide between the prisoner and officer groups. Witnessing cleaners entering these spaces, including when uninvited, was therefore one of the foremost indicators that these prisoners have a differential relationship with officers. I interrogated this during some of my interviews, for example with wing workers Reggie and Stephen, both of whom described their relationships with officers as distinctly 'friendly' and informal:

***Are you friends with them [officers]?***

*Because I'm out most nights now until, like last night I was out until half past nine before I went to bed, you get to, it's only like three or four of you out and then the officers, so you get to speak to some of them, friendly, I played ping pong with one, you know? I wouldn't say we're mates, I dunno, they're not gonna say that you know, but, I quite like them, they're alright.*

- Reggie

Reggie describes spending time unlocked from his cell during evenings with only officers and fellow cleaners, providing an opportunity to chat, be 'friendly', and engage in recreational activities with officers. Although Reggie is hesitant to refer to officers as 'mates' and notes that he would not expect officers to use that term, he describes them as 'alright' and acknowledges that he likes them. Whilst the relationships between officers and prisoners in HMP Cardiff were generally described as positive by my participants (including wing worker and non-wing worker prisoners and officers alike), Reggie's description of his interactions with officers is remarkably positive. He describes not simply tolerating officers but enjoying spending time with them. Yet he remained keen to stress that their relationship does not equate to *friendship*, particularly in the eyes of officers.

Stephen, a cleaner on another wing, explains that he has been employed in various positions in the establishment, having spent much of the last four years of his life intermittently in HMP Cardiff:

***[D]o you think you can talk to staff differently if you're a cleaner? Do you know them?***

*I get on with all the staff here. They all know me by my first name because I've been here for so long and I've had a good rapport, I've done every job – gym orderly for a while. Peer advisor. Worked in reception. All them trusted jobs.*

- Stephen

Stephen notes that officers know him by his first name, and that he has a 'good rapport' with them due to their mutual familiarity that has developed over time. Later in our interview I asked Stephen about his thoughts on being called by his first name by officers, to which he responded: "*you feel like a sort of respect thing, the ones I've known for years who call me by my first name*". In HMP Cardiff, the use of prisoner first names was highly sporadic. For example, some officers adopted first names with some non-cleaner prisoners that they knew well, either due to the inmate having served time repeatedly in HMP Cardiff or due to them serving a long, continual sentence in the establishment. Almost without fail, officers would address wing workers by their first names. This was not reciprocated however, with officers being addressed as 'Guv', 'Boss', 'Miss', 'Mr X' or 'Miss Y' by all prisoners, including wing workers. It is important to note that the familiarity that Stephen refers to, and which plays a role in wing worker recruitment as outlined above, may be particularly prominent in HMP Cardiff as an establishment that boasts high officer retention and which 'sees the same [prisoner] faces time after time after time again' (Officer Oscar), as evidenced in chapter four. These prisoner narratives, and my own observations of interactions on the wings in HMP Cardiff, align with Liebling's characterisation of the wing worker-officer relationships as 'friendly, helpful and supportive' (Liebling and Arnold 2004: 192). Stephen also refers to the trust, something that he repeatedly mentioned during our interview whilst discussing the wing worker's position, often displaying pride in the trust that officers have deigned to place upon him. The word 'trust' has appeared in many of the quotations above from both officers and prisoners. However, what does trust mean in the context of the prison?

### 7.10 Trust

Wing workers, as well as orderlies, are placed in 'trusted' positions within prisons (Liebling and Arnold 2004: 241 and see Appendix 14). Yet what precisely are wing workers trusted to do, and why are they afforded such trust by officers?

When I asked wing worker Jason to explain what he interpreted trust from officers to mean, he explained it as follows:

***Do you think they trust you a bit more?***

*Yeah, what now, to have a job?*

**Yeah**

*To have a cleaning job you have to be a trusted prisoner to get a cleaning job anyway*

**Trusted to...?**

*Trusted to behave yourself, be on the wing, run the wing, do your cleaning, erm, they, well when I asked for the job they asked me 'have you ever been a red band [most trusted prisoner position – see Appendix 14] in a prison?' And I have...so, you have to be trusted, yeah, to be a cleaner.*

- Jason

Drawing upon Jason's words, cleaners are trusted to follow the rules, to work unattended, and to carry out their duties. These are all *role-based* expectations and trust is developed based upon a prisoner's previous behaviour and his associated reputation amongst officers. This aligns well with the following definition of trust offered by Partha Dasgupta:

For trust to be developed between individuals they must have repeated encounters, and they must have some memory of previous encounters. Moreover, for honesty to have potency as a concept there must be some *cost* in honest behaviour. And finally, trust is linked with reputation, and reputation has to be acquired (Dasgupta 2000: 59, italics in original).

This definition of trust suggests that trust is developed over time, that it is based upon prior experiences and associated reputation, and that there is some cost to those that occupy the trusted position. In consideration of the wing worker recruitment criteria outlined above, including perceived capability and familiarity, this conceptualisation of trust works well for describing the trust that officers place in the prisoners that they recruit as wing workers. Usefully, it also acknowledges that to earn that trust comes at a cost, and wing workers must unquestioningly offer servitude and respect to officers in return for being placed in such a 'trusted' position.

Dasgupta's characterisation of trust is also useful here for he suggests that for trust to develop, one must make a prediction about the other's likely chosen path in a cost-benefit analysis of the available options:

You do not trust a person to do something merely because he says he will do it. You trust him because, knowing what you know of his disposition, his information, his ability, his

available options and their consequences, you expect he will *choose* to do it (Dasgupta 2000: 55-56, italics in original).

In line with the rational choice model of behaviour that underpins the IEP scheme in prisons and ‘the carrot’ and ‘the stick’ motivations for prisoner behaviour described in chapter five, this is a model of human behaviour that is arguably ascribed to, and promoted, by officers and by the institution’s formal processes. Considering the arguments presented thus far in this chapter concerning the relative privilege of wing workers, as well as the potency of the threat of punishment that encourages compliance amongst the entire prisoner population, it is reasonable to suggest that officers can confidently place a great deal of trust in the likelihood that wing workers will choose to fulfil their role and responsibilities.

Earlier, Officers Winston and Stella spoke very highly of the wing workers on their wings, stating that they would even trust wing workers to protect them in times of disorder and to assist them in protecting the security of the institution. However, when probed further about this trust, they offered the following:

*[Y]ou can just see it, it’s like the two that are there, they’re the reception orderlies, you just know there’s something about them, that they’re not, I don’t know how to put this politely...they’re not, a bag of shit if you know what I mean?*

- Officer Winston

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*And all these things will come together and it all builds a big picture of that person, and you look and you say ‘yeah, actually, that prisoner...’ you know, we’ll have him as a cleaner or we’ll have him to work in the gym....and, you do, you’ll never give them fully 100% trust, they are prisoners at the end of the day, erm, I’m not trying to sound negative, but they are. But you will trust them more.*

- Officer Stella

Despite speaking very highly of those prisoners that are chosen to become wing workers, these officer quotations suggest that this high regard is contingent upon wing workers’ behaviour in their role. Similarly, despite earlier stating that wing workers could be trusted, these officers appear to remain highly suspicious because ‘they are prisoners, at the end of the day’. Officer Sebastian offered a similar comment:



*[T]hey're still the prisoner and you're still the officer. And that was always the difficulty of trying to get a good cleaner. If we have workers working on the wings then they need to be trusted, as much as you can trust any prisoner.*

- Officer Sebastian

Whilst these officers attest to offering trust in wing workers to fulfil their duties, this does not appear to extend beyond role-based trust. Sections of the quotations above strongly suggest that trust is highly constrained: *"you'll never give them fully 100% trust, they are prisoners at the end of the day"; "they need to be trusted, as much as you can trust any prisoner" and "there's something about them...they're not, a bag of shit"*. Other officers expressed similar sentiments when we were discussing wing workers: *"They're not trusted. You can't trust anyone...the only reason the cleaners are here is because he wants to be a cleaner...to me he's not trusted"* (Officer Alex).

Officer Gemma, in the following quotation, similarly reinforces that wing workers are only trusted to fulfil their duties and not abuse the power that their position affords. She also expresses a level of concern about officers becoming overly familiar with cleaners, or the risk of cleaners 'knowing too much':

*You have to trust them but it's not, you're not trusting them with any personal...I've gotta trust them to do their job and I've gotta trust that they'll clean the landings, I've gotta trust that they're not gonna bully the other prisoners...you have to trust that they're not gonna [be] running drugs round the wing...there's then, how much information do they have because they're out all the time they do hear staff talking...I know years ago it was very very different and you would never find staff addressing each other by their first names...it's relaxed a lot now, I don't want the prisoners calling me [first name]. Miss or Ms [surname] is fine. I'm not here to be their friend, but I'm also not here to be their enemy...we're not here to watch them all the time, you know, they are trusted to do their job.*

- Officer Gemma

Officer Gemma emphasises that wing workers are trusted to complete their work, but she is hesitant to bestow any trust beyond this. Officer Gemma appears to be keen to establish boundaries with wing workers, choosing not to divulge any personal information and not to be called by her first name. This is particularly interesting when we revisit Officer Stella's words, presented in section 7.4.2 above, where she noted that prisoners must earn the right to be called by their first name by displaying politeness. Furthermore, wing worker Stephen stated above that when officers use his first name it feels to him that they are offering him respect. Yet the use of officer first names was not

commonplace in HMP Cardiff, and in Officer Gemma's eyes it is something to be discouraged. There is something of a double-standard here that could be highly confusing to inmates, in that the use of prisoners' first names by officers is acceptable, but only if they have earned that status; yet the use of an officers' first name is 'crossing a line' into over-familiarisation.

In 2008, following an unannounced inspection in HMP Bullingdon, HM Inspectorate of Prisons recommended that to improve staff-prisoner relationships, "prisoners should be addressed by their first name or surname and title according to their individual preference" (HMCIP 2008: 90), something that received scorn in a media outlet at the time (Mail Online 2008). The topic of prisoner names has often enjoyed media attention, commonly being portrayed as a sign that prisons are 'too soft' Lockley or officers are 'too friendly' with inmates (see, for example, BBC News Online 1999; Dawar 2009; 2014). The use of prisoner first names has been variously recommended by HMCIP across time and within different establishments (although it was not mentioned within the 2013, 2016 and 2019 HMCIP reports for HMP Cardiff), and it has been found, as during this research, to be a marker of respect for prisoners, but also an entitlement that a prisoner has to earn (Scott 2011). Much in the same vein that respect, in the form of respect-as-consideration (Butler and Drake 2007, see chapter two), can and indeed should be afforded to prisoners in recognition of their humanity, I would argue that being referred to by one's first name should also not be a qualified right. Similarly, in chapter three I noted that names 'mean something', and the quotations presented here would certainly align with this view. If addressing a prisoner by their first name can help prisoners "*feel like a sort of respect thing*" (Stephen) it should arguably be universally encouraged. To reiterate and extend a point made in the previous chapter, officers need to recognise that their actions, behaviours and attitudes can 'make or break' the prison experience, and that they are in a strong position of power. Within the prison environment, where autonomy is inhibited and the ability for prisoners to earn respect-as-esteem (Butler and Drake 2007) through acquired status is lost, it seems unlikely that officer power will be shaken by the simple act of deigning to use a prisoner's first name.

Officer Gemma also notes above that she is not there to be a 'friend' to prisoners, which confirms prisoner Reggie's opinion from above: "*I wouldn't say we're mates, I dunno, they're not gonna say that you know*". With a relationship that involves such a stark power differential it is difficult to imagine that trust can ever be engendered, however the above analysis would suggest that trust does exist, even though it is related to the role and responsibilities of the wing worker and the likelihood that wing workers can and will do their job autonomously and without question. This finding upholds Liebling's characterisation of trust in the prison environment, as follows:

The word 'trust' is loaded and constrained in the prison context. As in many circumstances, admitting that one trusts a prisoner is tantamount to jettisoning the basic wisdom of 'jail craft': 'never trust a con'. Beneath this façade, and contrary to much that is written about the prison, trust exists, unevenly (Liebling and Arnold 2004: 241).

Whilst Officer Gemma, as well as Officers Winston, Stella, Sebastian and Alex are keen to emphasise that they would not, or could not, wholly trust a prisoner, they do admit to placing trust in wing workers to fulfil the responsibilities associated with their role. Arguably this trust even extends to functions beyond the wing workers' role, including protecting institutional order and security.

The wing worker-officer relationship provides mutual benefits for both parties. For officers, they have individuals that they can rely upon to perform vital functions that keep the prison running. For wing workers, they will readily receive assistance from staff, they have greater material wealth, and in many ways the contemporary pains of imprisonment are reduced. However, despite the relationship between wing workers and officers being mutually beneficial, it remains to be seen whether this represents a fundamental disruption to the superordinate officer – subordinate prisoner dynamic. This shall now be explored.

### 7.11 Wing workers: precarity

My fieldwork has enabled me to provide a unique insight into the dynamics between officers and wing workers as well as the variability that exists within the prisoner population. These insights may also be applied to enhance existing understandings of the flow of power in prison. During our interview, Officer Isabelle provided her perspective on the officer-wing worker relationship, as follows:

*What I think it is, is the amount of time that you spend with cleaners is a lot more than the amount of time you spend with a standard prisoner that are out at work or locked in their cells. So, you tend to know the cleaners very well. If you can't see them you know where they are. Which cell they're in. You know who they associate with. You could write lists on what they do, who they associate with, what they do every day. I know who I could go to if I want to clean the floor, or if I want dusting done, if I need something out of the laundry, if I need someone to have a t-shirt, a pillow, a telly. Cleaners know where everything is. And they are privileged because they spend a lot of time out of their cells*

***Yeah. They seem to be more trusted as well.***

*Definitely, yeah. Definitely.*

***Also, just like with me for example, as in with me associating with cleaners no one has ever batted an eye lid from me just sitting with cleaners on my own***

*I would expect absolutely perfect behaviour from a cleaner. If they were sat talking to you they wouldn't be disrespectful to you, they wouldn't be rude to you...and I would expect that with them.*

- Officer Isabelle

Officer Isabelle's narrative is interesting for whilst she speaks very highly of the wing workers and appears to be proud of her intimate knowledge of their behaviours and movements, there is an inescapable sense that Isabelle feels in control of these individuals, a control that is justified because wing workers get something in return for their servitude. In describing how well she knows these prisoners Isabelle refers to her ability to command them to perform appropriate tasks and emphatically states that these inmates are in a privileged position. Officer Isabelle also notes that she would expect "absolutely perfect behaviour" from cleaners, particularly in terms of their manner, a view that has been reiterated within many of the officer quotations in this chapter. Arguably, wing workers must offer this politeness even if it is not reciprocated by officers, as demonstrated within the following fieldnotes entry from the early stages of my fieldwork. During an interview with cleaners on F Wing towards the end of the day, an officer came over and abruptly stopped our interview, telling all the cleaners to go back to their cells. In my fieldnotes I describe this moment as 'painful':

*I was conducting an impromptu joint interview with the group of cleaners on F Wing at the end of the day, close to 5pm...[t]he officer [came up] then immediately turned away from me and addressed the cleaners directly, saying "Yeah, you can go can't you". The cleaners all looked confused and one said to the officer "Where?" The officer then simply said "Away". There was an immediate shift in the mood. It was painful. All the prisoners just mumbled assent and went back to their cells looking incredibly dejected. I shout 'thank you very much!' to them all. I felt completely helpless and incredibly sad.*

- Adapted Fieldnotes, August 2015

This exchange between an officer and the group of wing workers was so poignant because it demonstrated to me quite how much power officers have, and how quickly the atmosphere within the prison can change. One moment I was chatting with these prisoners comfortably on the landings with the approval of the officers, the next they were locked behind their cell doors. I think it is important to interrogate why this moment was so significant to me, for one may argue that it

occurred in a prison after all, and close to evening lock-up, so why should this sort of exchange be noteworthy? For me, this moment was significant for it was a stark example of an officer ‘pulling rank’ in the company of prisoners that usually occupy an unusually privileged position. The occurrence was shaming and unexpected for the prisoners involved, yet despite this they still followed the officer’s instructions readily. The disrespectful way in which this officer addressed these prisoners was arguably unnecessary. It also did not represent the typical exchanges that I witnessed between officers and prisoners in HMP Cardiff – an important observation in itself that has been mentioned previously in this thesis. Yet it is important to recognise that officers can treat prisoners in a disrespectful manner on a whim, and most of the time this will be tolerated as shown in chapter five (but certainly would not be tolerated by officers if the situation were reversed, despite prisoners placing faith in the notion of reciprocity – see section 5.3). Even wing workers, despite their seemingly ‘improved’ or more informal relationships with officers, remain firmly in a precarious and subservient position because *“they know they need that job”* (Officer Kiera). A similar situation was identified during research in the Philippines, where even the relatively ‘powerful’ prisoner groups or ‘gangs’, particularly Muslim groups, remained in a weaker position than those in authority. This is because the privileges they received from wardens were only given because they could be withdrawn, therefore assisting in the maintenance of order (Jefferson and Gaborit 2015: 154-155). It is therefore argued here that whilst officers do bestow a ‘degree of power’ upon wing workers, in line with Liebling and Price (2003: 79), they are not necessarily giving away or relinquishing their own power in doing so. As summarised by a long-term prisoner Listener<sup>77</sup> on C Wing: *“you’re put in a position of trust and you can either look after your job and toe the line or you can go behind your door.”*

### 7.12 Concluding comments: Haves and Have-Nots

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the experience of imprisonment for wing workers – a group of prisoners that are in many ways unique, and whose experiences have not received a great deal of attention within academic literature to date. This chapter has shown that the experience of imprisonment varies greatly from prisoner to prisoner. At one end of the spectrum, one may place wing workers who are out of their cells for most of the day and experience greater material wealth as well as more informal relationships with officers. At the other end of the spectrum, one could place prisoners on Basic level of the IEP. These prisoners are locked in their cells for up to 23 hours per day, live in comparatively poorer material conditions, and often have a negative reputation amongst wing officers. Being recruited to become a wing worker can significantly improve one’s life

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<sup>77</sup> As outlined in Appendix 14, Listeners are employed by The Samaritans to support fellow inmates.

inside and provide a level of influence and power over the lives of other inmates. However, officer discretion ultimately dictates who gains this status, and it can be rescinded at any time. Therefore, this chapter argues that despite being afforded unusual freedoms, despite having a degree of power over other inmates, and despite being relied upon by staff, these prisoners remain in a subordinate position in relation to officers. Increased autonomy does not necessarily translate into increased *authority*, even for this relatively favoured group. This may be due to an officer culture which discourages the placing of trust in prisoners – that is, trust beyond that which is role-based. The wing worker-officer relationship may best be characterised as more informal and mutually beneficial, however wing workers remain dispensable and they are ultimately far more reliant upon officers than officers are reliant upon them, for to retain their privileged position they must consistently maintain behavioural standards. This has implications for some of the arguments presented elsewhere in this thesis.

In chapter five, it was argued that prisoners themselves and prison staff promote the fallacious view that every prisoner could have a better life inside if only they choose to make the right choices and display the right behaviours. This chapter has further problematised this view by highlighting the role that favouritism, discretion and ‘face fits’ ideas play in the receipt of rewards. Ultimately, only a few prisoners can become wing workers – arguably the most privileged group inside prison. To further problematise this behaviour-and-reward relationship, this chapter has also highlighted some of the inconsistencies surrounding the behaviours that are rewarded in prison policy versus in practice. For example, on the one hand ‘rehabilitation’ is encouraged by the IEP, but on the other, recidivism is rewarded, informally, by wing worker recruitment. Arguably these issues are exacerbated within HMP Cardiff due to the familiarity that develops between many of the officers and prisoners in the establishment, as outlined in chapter four. This chapter has also shown that the contemporary pains of imprisonment as outlined in the previous chapter, chapter six, are felt variably by different prisoner groups. The status of wing worker affords these individuals increased opportunities for family contact, greater security, heightened autonomy, and reduced boredom. This provides further evidence for the need to recognise the fluidity of penal deprivations, and as a warning against characterising ‘the prison experience’ as a total and static phenomenon, as even within a highly dispossessing environment such as the prison, one still encounters ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’.

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## Chapter Eight: Conclusion

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### 8.1 Introducing the Conclusion

Utilising data collected during an extended period of fieldwork in HMP Cardiff, this thesis has explored the maintenance of order in the contemporary prison. Primary data has been analysed and discussed throughout the empirical chapters within this thesis, with references made to existing literature in the field. The purpose of this conclusion chapter, therefore, is to holistically bring together the themes discussed within all chapters to address the primary research questions given at the beginning of this thesis, as follows:

1. To what extent may HMP Cardiff be considered a 'well-ordered' prison?
2. What motivates prisoners to comply with prison rules?
3. What are the contemporary pains of imprisonment and are they experienced consistently across all prisoners?
4. Does the experience of imprisonment differ for prisoner wing workers? If so, how, and are there any implications for the maintenance of an ordered prison environment?

Within this chapter I will address each of these research questions in turn, using findings drawn from across each of my preliminary and empirical chapters. This will allow me to recapitulate the key findings from each of the chapters in this thesis, whilst avoiding stagnant repetition and enabling me to explicitly address the questions that drove this study. I will outline the key methodological, empirical and theoretical contributions of this research. I will then consider the implications of this study for the prison as a social institution, for prison policy and practice, and for further research.

### 8.2 To what extent may HMP Cardiff be considered a 'well-ordered' prison?

Chapter four presented findings that suggested that HMP Cardiff was, in the eyes of prisoners and officers in the institution, well-ordered. It also compared Cardiff to five comparator prisons similar in terms of size and function, finding that safety levels (as measured by self-harm and assaults data) were comparatively strong in HMP Cardiff. Examining this further, chapter four then considered the composition of the prisoner population and officer workforce, finding that HMP Cardiff imposed an improved regime and was uniquely able to retain a high number of experienced officers at a time when the wider prison estate experienced widespread loss of experienced staff following NWOW in 2013. Specifically, in Cardiff prison the average length of service was 15.9 years and at least 70% of

officers in Cardiff had been employed by HMPS for at least 15 years, with some having worked in prisons, and Cardiff specifically, for significantly longer. In terms of implications for the prison's culture, it was the working styles of precisely these more experienced officers that prisoners in Cardiff voiced a preference for. Experienced officers were described by prisoners in Cardiff as 'calmer' and 'non-judgemental', with a tendency to 'treat all prisoners equally'. They were also known for laying down clear behavioural expectations that helped prisoners to 'know where they stand'; and perceived to be more empathetic and therefore more likely to gain prisoners' trust. Finally, they were seen to be less reliant upon formal sanctioning to keep the peace, but equally able to use punitive measures when required, thus increasing prisoner security. The valued officer attributes offered by prisoners in HMP Cardiff lend support to two areas of established thinking within prison studies, as outlined in chapter two. Firstly, prisoners in Cardiff preferred officers to be 'present' (Crewe et al 2014a) and described them generally in such terms. Secondly, existing conceptualisations of what makes for a 'good' prison officer, as offered by Liebling et al (2011), Crawley (2004) and Arnold (2016), are wholly applicable to this research.

Chapter four also demonstrated that HMP Cardiff was considered, in the view of officers and prisoners, to be unique in other ways. Officers felt that they were able to forge particularly congenial relationships with prisoners due to the influence of Welsh 'culture'. For context, it was found that most officers and indeed prisoners in Cardiff originated from the local area, and officers perceived themselves to be particularly adept at talking to and socialising with prisoners due to sociability being, in their view, a characteristic of Welsh people. The shared geographical backgrounds of officers and prisoners in Cardiff, along with the repeated incarceration of many of Cardiff's prisoners within the jail, was found to result in high familiarity between inmates and staff. This could have had positive effects upon the prison environment in that officers 'knew their prisoners' (Crewe et al 2014a: 404), enhancing their ability to wisely exercise their discretion. Conversely, familiarity was found to present a risk of favouritism. Drawing upon their own experiences of other establishments, prisoners suggested that Cardiff prison was archaic in its bureaucratic processes, but that it was safer and quieter than other prisons, both public and private.

Bringing these characteristics of HMP Cardiff together – characteristics that were considered to be unique to the prison in the view of prisoners and officers themselves – it was concluded that HMP Cardiff could be considered to be relatively well-ordered. It was conjectured that the higher levels of



experience offered by officers in Cardiff served to boost the legitimacy of the prison in the eyes of prisoners, thus helping to preserve mundane order<sup>78</sup>.

### 8.3 What motivates prisoners to comply with prison rules?

Chapter two introduced four existing theories of prison order maintenance: instrumentalism, normativity, constraint and fatalism. This research has shown that each of these have a role to play in encouraging prisoner compliance, something that *most* prisoners in HMP Cardiff did, *most* of the time. Within chapter five, it was shown that some prisoners were motivated to comply with the prison rules to obtain rewards, termed within this thesis ‘the carrot’ narratives. Others, those ascribing to ‘the stick’ narrative, were motivated to comply to avoid punishment. Prisoners ascribing to both ‘the carrot’ and ‘the stick’ were arguably adopting instrumental reasoning, providing support for the argument that prison order can be maintained through incentives and disincentives (Bottoms 1999). For these prisoners the officially sanctioned rewards available to them in return for compliance were highly prized, contra Sykes (1958). Other prisoners expressed a feeling of resigned acceptance when asked why they offer their compliance. For such prisoners, referred to within this thesis as adopting a ‘resistance is futile’ narrative, penal power and the conditions of their imprisonment were seen to be immutable. This provided support for the existence of fatalistic compliance due to ‘dull compulsion’ (Carrabine 2005), and ‘structural constraints’ (Bottoms 1999). Further support for the existence of ‘dull compulsion’ as an order maintenance strategy in HMP Cardiff can be found in Carrabine’s (2005: 905) observation that, citing Cohen and Taylor (1972), compliance due to fatalism often results in low-level resistance or “collective passivity” (Crewe 2009: 228), which is precisely the type of resistance or ‘compliant defiance’ described in chapter five.

Although prisoner participants did not make explicit reference to ‘legitimacy’, this was also found to play an important role in prison order. Specifically, it was during times when prisoners judged their treatment to be unfair or when they did not receive what they felt they were entitled to that they were most likely to rebel. Crucially, it was found that whilst these ‘rebellious’ acts were relatively low-level, their existence served as a vital reminder of three things. Firstly, the importance of offering fair and legitimate treatment for the purposes of order maintenance (Bottoms 1999). Secondly, that even when an institution appears to be well-ordered, much as HMP Cardiff does, this does not negate the existence of discontent nor should it lead to complacency in terms of presuming

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<sup>78</sup> Appendix 14 provides further detail on the regimentation of prison life and the prison’s regime or ‘Core Day’. From the provision of food to the allocation of cells, and from the processing of new prisoners to dealing with disturbances, it was found that each aspect of daily prison life contributes to the maintenance of mundane order by placing restrictions upon prisoner autonomy, movement and association which impose a sense of inevitability regarding the structure and power relations of the institution.

that 'all is well'. Thirdly, it provides support for Useem and Kimball's (1989, cited in Carrabine 2005) suggestion that prison disorder most commonly arises due to institutional failures.

The pervasiveness of the 'resistance is futile' narrative amongst prisoners in HMP Cardiff also provided a warning against over-reliance upon normative explanations for prisoner compliance. That is to say, caution should be exercised so as not to over-exaggerate the extent to which prisoners can reasonably withdraw their compliance even when they perceive the regime to be unfair, and/or officer authority illegitimate. The keen awareness of the processes available for dealing with disturbances<sup>79</sup> induced in many inmates a feeling that rebellion was 'pointless', encapsulated by the oft-repeated mantra 'we can't win' (Jason, Jerry).

In sum, the present research offers support for each of the established 'solutions' to the problem of order in prison, and is thus in agreement with Wrong's (1994) observation that the application of any one theory of compliance does not, and should not, preclude the application of others. Instead, all theories may be amalgamated and are variably applicable in HMP Cardiff in different situations.

#### 8.4 What are the contemporary pains of imprisonment and are they experienced consistently across all prisoners?

Chapter six discussed six key contemporary pains of imprisonment described by prisoners in HMP Cardiff, including separation from those on the outside, insecurity caused by other prisoners, insecurity caused by the institution, boredom, lack of privacy and lack of autonomy. It was argued that whilst these pains are to a degree implicit to incarceration, the institution could arguably do more to reduce their intensity. For example, the prison system could strengthen opportunities for family contact, not only for the purposes of reducing reoffending but also to alleviate some distress amongst prisoners and their loved ones. Furthermore, these pains were felt variably throughout the prisoner population. For example, insecurity caused by the institution<sup>80</sup> was experienced most variably across the prisoner population, with movements decisions being highly discretionary to the extent that certain prisoners, predominantly wing workers, can be retained in any given prison or on any given wing at the behest of officers. Data suggested that this pain is not inherent to imprisonment and could be lessened if officers were encouraged to exercise empathy during daily interactions with prisoners, including communicating information to prisoners (see chapter two, Sykes 1958; Hulley et al 2011).

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<sup>79</sup> See Appendix 14 for further detail on how disturbances are dealt with.

<sup>80</sup> Insecurity caused by the sudden and repetitive movement of prisoners to other cells, wings and prisons without warning, in line with McDermott and King's (1988: 373) description of 'the power of paper and pen' (see chapter two).

Similarly, it was argued in chapter six that whilst a degree of lack of choice may be intrinsic to punishment by imprisonment, officers need to recognise that they can alleviate this pain somewhat by showing a willingness to help prisoners, or 'organisational respect' (Hulley et al 2011). In the view of prisoners in HMP Cardiff, this was one of the most important, if not *the* most important, characteristic of a 'good' prison officer. It was tied heavily to prisoner perceptions of officer empathy, understanding and care; as well as prisoners' perceptions of their own self-worth.

The extent to which officers in HMP Cardiff recognised the utmost importance of 'doing things' for prisoners was found to be questionable. For example, the staff comments boards suggested that it was perhaps most acceptable within officer culture to view prisoners as 'needy' (as opposed to *in need* of help). Quotations from some officers also suggested a reticence to 'sympathise' with prisoners, for fear of being seen by colleagues as a 'care bear'. In addition, whilst officers described their role in highly variable terms, it was found that the aspects of the job that are most orientated towards 'care' are most at risk of being side-lined in favour of the 'custody' aspects of the job. Returning to Figure 1 (adapted from Crewe et al 2014a: 404) presented in chapter two, these officer narratives are most aligned with those found within 'heavy' prisons, one characteristic of which is a perception of prisoners as morally inferior and undeserving.

Chapter five considered how the IEP scheme and Prison Compact, two formal order maintenance processes available to the prison, work in relation to prisoner compliance. These schemes were found to encourage a behaviourist ideology (Wacquant 2009) which encouraged self-blame when a prisoner found themselves unable to 'effectively' take responsibility for their own sentences and rehabilitation. This was best explained by the notion of 'responsibilisation':

Self-regulation is the key principle of government in advanced liberal societies. The well-educated citizen will make the required choice. Those who do not are recast as the blameworthy agents of their own misfortune. Disadvantage and exclusion are re-framed as matters of choice and not of structural processes (Kemshall 2002: 43, informed by Rose 1996).

My findings therefore support Crewe's observation (2011a: 519-520) that contemporary British prisons encourage the 'responsibilisation' of prisoners through narrowly defining 'good' behaviour and placing all blame upon the individual. Some prisoners ascribed to this view, such as Jack Sparrow and Donnie, describing rebellious fellow inmates as simply 'making it worse for themselves'. However, this research problematised this view. In exploring the narratives of prisoners described as 'stuck in a rut', chapter five showed that not all prisoners have an equal chance of receiving rewards and avoiding punishments simply by following the rules. Indeed, as chapters six and seven

demonstrated, the experience of imprisonment varies hugely and some prisoners fare better than others by virtue of their personal characteristics and, potentially, favourable treatment by officers.

In sum, chapter six has suggested that the seminal accounts of the pains of imprisonment offered by Sykes (1958) and Goffman (1961) remain pertinent, however a lack of heterosexual opportunities was not explicitly described by prisoners in HMP Cardiff as a dominant concern. In addition, although Sykes (1958: 65) acknowledged that loss of liberty and the resulting separation from loved ones is experienced as 'painfully depriving, frustrating, lonely and boring', this brief mention arguably does not fully represent the pain of separation described by prisoners in Cardiff prison. In comparing the present research with the contemporary account of the pains of imprisonment offered by Crewe (2011a) reviewed in chapter two, the pains of uncertainty caused by the institution also afflicts prisoners in HMP Cardiff.

The pains of psychological assessment identified by Crewe (2011a) have been found to affect all prisoners and at all sentence stages, not only those being subjected to formal assessments by psychologists to determine their 'readiness' for release, but also during the everyday decisions made by wing officers. As shown in chapter seven, officers pass judgement about a prisoners' character, deciding whether he is a "bag of shit" (Officer Winston) or "actually capable" (Officer Kaya) of being a wing worker, something that greatly enhances the prison experience as this research has shown. A further dimension to the pain of assessment is its permanency, something that is likely exacerbated by the familiarity that exists between prisoners and officers in HMP Cardiff:

Unlike the brutal immediacy of physical coercion...psychological power suspends itself perpetually, never quite revealing when it might take effect. Prisoners cannot rely on there being any such thing as a heat of the moment exchange or a forgotten incident (Crewe 2011a: 518).

In line with Crewe (2011a), my data has shown that past digressions can have a significant impact upon a prisoners' present and future, particularly due to the significance placed upon 'reputation' in HMP Cardiff. Reputation could be affected by one's behaviour or perceived 'attitude' earlier in a sentence, during a past sentence, or even by the reputation of friends or relatives that are already known to officers. Gaining a negative reputation or label or not conforming to officers' ideals was found to hold some prisoners back, such as Steven, Derek, Kevin and Adrian. Whether a prisoners' 'face fits' or they are 'stuck in a rut' will have a bearing on many of the mundane decision-making processes that significantly affect prisoner quality of life, including the allocation of employment and cells or whether officers are willing to subvert official rules to offer their assistance. In terms of the

pain of self-government, data presented within chapters five and seven suggested that prisoners in HMP Cardiff have been 'responsibilised', in line with Crewe (2011a, 2011b).

Throughout this thesis there has been a persistent observation that the pains of imprisonment, in their current form, are not necessarily a tacit feature of incarceration. They could, at least, be lessened by changes in penal policy and practice as well as changes in the behaviour of officers. Thus, it has been argued that officers need to recognise that their attitudes and actions can 'make or break' the prison experience. In addition, analysis has shown that the contemporary pains of imprisonment are tightly bound to prison order maintenance in that through offering compliance, it may be possible to reduce the pain of missing loved ones, insecurity, boredom, deprivation of privacy and autonomy. This may occur formally through being awarded a higher privilege level under the IEP, informally through receiving preferential treatment from officers or, most meaningfully, through becoming a wing worker.

### 8.5 Does the experience of imprisonment differ for prisoner wing workers? If so, how, and are there any implications for the maintenance of an ordered prison environment?

Chapter seven focused exclusively on the experiences of wing workers in HMP Cardiff. The collection and presentation of this data has been hugely important for several reasons. Firstly, it has gone some way towards filling the gap in existing literature about these prisoners. Secondly, learning more about the experiences of any particular group of prisoners is arguably worthwhile. Thirdly, looking at their position in the prison's social world has wider implications for understandings of prison life, power, staff-prisoner relationships, officer discretion and the punishment and reward system.

In chapters four and five it was shown that the experience of imprisonment varies depending upon a prisoners' IEP level, and that the IEP is a formal, institutionally approved means for rewarding 'good' behaviour. Data has also suggested that the IEP is a powerful tool in the prison's arsenal in terms of managing behaviour and encouraging prisoner compliance. Chapter seven, however, uniquely demonstrated that substantial benefits can be gained through being recruited as a wing worker. Whilst the wing worker scheme is, like the IEP, a formal and institutionally approved aspect of prison life, this thesis has shown that the recruitment of wing workers occurs informally, with many of the privileges associated with becoming a wing worker taking the form of unofficial 'perks'. The data presented in chapter seven therefore represents a new lens through which to explore the privilege system, and the exercise of discretion amongst officers.

It was shown that the aforementioned pains of imprisonment were, for wing workers, at times diminished by virtue of their position which affords them increased freedom of movement, greater material wealth, greater purchasing power, a better diet, a cleaner environment, improved cells, enhanced access to recreational facilities, more exercise, improved opportunities family contact, greater stability and security, more time out of cell and increased autonomy. This is in addition to holding power over other inmates due to being able to withhold goods and food, something that officers encourage for the sake of order and security. Further to material benefits and status, wing workers also attested to having more informal relationships with officers, and to receiving associated informal perks. For example, officers may be more likely to circumvent official bureaucratic procedures as well as more willing to do things for wing workers, things which have been shown within this thesis to make prison life more bearable. The wing worker-officer relationship was also found to be 'friendlier' and wing workers described being placed in a position of trust. However, upon probing the issue of 'trust', officer quotations suggested that the trust they placed in wing workers was purely 'role-based' as opposed to 'full 100% trust' (Officer Stella). Indeed, in examining further the relationship between wing workers and officers, it was found that the relative privilege of wing workers, as well as the role-based trust placed in wing workers by officers, did not fundamentally change their position within the institution's hierarchy. Despite the mutual benefits that the wing worker arrangement provided for both parties, these prisoners remained just that – prisoners – in the eyes of officers, and they were required to uphold prescribed (and high) behavioural standards to retain their employment.

Interestingly, of the handful of non-wing worker prisoners that did expressly comment upon the relative status of cleaners, they did not appear to be begrudge the cleaners themselves, but instead stated that it was unfair that they themselves had not been chosen for this highly-prized position. As outlined in chapter seven, the recruitment of wing workers is wholly at the discretion of wing staff - usually one self-nominated member of staff. Officers in Cardiff described to me the qualities they look for in a potential wing worker as assertiveness, confidence, politeness, respectfulness, deference and a commitment to helping officers maintain the order and security of the institution. Analysis also showed that a prisoner is more likely to be recruited as a cleaner if they are well-known to officers. This highlighted a contradiction in that prisoners are officially encouraged to desist from offending within policy; yet in practice, recidivism is essentially rewarded through the recruitment of offenders that repeatedly return to the prison. It also pointed to the existence of a 'face fits' culture in the prison and highlighted the associated negatives of favouritism for prisoners that do not 'fit the mould' in terms of officer preferences whilst selecting cleaners. The existence of favouritism

effectively disrupts the assumption promoted by official rhetoric that all prisoners have an equal chance at improving their lives inside if only they 'choose' to behave 'well'.

It is perhaps unsurprising that officers recruit only those prisoners that they deem 'capable' to fulfil the position of wing worker, for the individuals employed in this position perform vital functions that keep the prison running smoothly. It is important to acknowledge, however, that these recruitment practices may inadvertently reward recidivism and encourage favouritism. The inequity and discretion associated with wing worker recruitment has important implications for penal legitimacy. On the one hand the fulfilment of wing worker duties, including cleaning, serving food and assisting new prisoners undoubtedly helps to maintain mundane order within the establishment. This, arguably, assists in preserving the external legitimacy of the prison in the eyes of society, for a legitimacy deficit is most likely to occur when the prison is seen to be failing to achieve its aims, for example if order breaks down (Cavadino et al 2013). On the other hand, the official aim of 'reducing re-offending' is undermined when recidivism is effectively rewarded – although, it should be noted, this is likely not public knowledge.

In terms of the internal legitimacy of the institution, this rests upon prisoners perceiving the authority that is exercised over them as being fairly imposed by officers that are legitimately entitled to do so (Bottoms 1999). Accordingly, the potential for unfairness that arises during wing worker recruitment could have the potential to undermine prisoners' perceptions of the legitimacy of the prison. It is interesting, therefore, that my data suggested that the wing worker scheme was not generally held in contempt by the prisoner population. This may be because wing worker recruitment arrangements, however unfairly perceived, were seen to be an inevitable 'fact' – much in the same way that rebellion was seen to be 'pointless' by those prisoners ascribing to the 'resistance is futile' compliance narratives. Alternatively, it is possible that wing worker recruitment practices were not generally viewed as unfair at all, with there being a pervading feeling that any and all prisoners could be considered for this prized position, if only they offered their compliance and deference, as suggested by 'the carrot' narratives. Alternatively, the complex status of wing workers may suggest that a broader conceptualisation of legitimacy is needed here, one that recognises that the perceived legitimacy of the institution in the eyes of prisoners rests upon not only perceived fairness, consistency, and the 'rightfulness' of authority, but also upon other qualities, such as living within an environment that is felt to be generally safe, with officers perceived to be in control. The wing worker scheme in many ways aids the preservation of order and safety in the prison environment, therefore potentially increasing feelings of prisoner security and, correspondingly, beliefs in the internal legitimacy of the institution.

Ultimately, prisoner perceptions of legitimacy within any given establishment likely rest upon a variety of factors, including perceived empathy and the willingness of officers to help, as attested to by prisoners in HMP Cardiff. Perceptions of legitimacy may also fluctuate across the prisoner population, for example depending upon the severity with which the pains of imprisonment are experienced. They may also change over time, for example when the officer workforce changes, or new regimes are imposed.

This provides support for Sparks and Bottoms' (1995: 52-54) and James et al's (1997: 149) suggestion that a more nuanced conception of legitimacy is needed, one which recognises that legitimacy exists on a continuum as opposed to an 'either/or' state. It also supports Liebling's (2011: 486) observation that legitimacy in the prison context is often linked only to procedural justice and respect, but in fact it is dynamic in nature. Legitimacy may therefore best be conceived not as a means to an end but an end in itself, and something that may assist in achieving a humane prison environment. In other words, offering legitimate and fair treatment does not need to be exclusively linked to achieving order maintenance, but instead it may represent a guiding principle for prison practice that has the potential to enhance prisoner well-being (Liebling et al 2005: 210-211) and reduce the painfulness of the prison experience.

## 8.6 Unique Contribution

In my introduction chapter, I noted that this thesis offers several novel contributions to the field of prison-based research, including methodological, empirical and theoretical contributions, as follows: Firstly, the very recent history of publications in the field of prison studies has not focused explicitly upon the maintenance of order. Secondly, this thesis provides a unique insight of the experiences of a very specific group of prisoners – wing workers. Thirdly, whilst it has been noted that ethnographic-style prison research is flourishing globally, this research is methodologically unique due to the depth and breadth of access that was achieved. Fourthly, this research has considered the views of both staff and prisoners within HMP Cardiff. I will now return to these contributions, augmenting them in light of the foregoing empirical chapters, to clearly explain the unique contribution to knowledge provided by my thesis.

### 8.6.1 Methodological Contributions

Not only did I achieve comprehensive access, I was also embedded in the field for a significant period of time and utilised a mixture of data collection methods which enabled me to collect multiple sources of data. This is not to suggest that other researchers have not achieved such access or utilised these methods before, but instead to highlight that I combined several well-established methods which are often employed separately, and that I have been able to offer an insight into



prison life outside of the 'normal' hours of weekdays 9-5. Furthermore, by including the voices of officers and prisoners I was able to avoid awarding prisoners 'intellectual hegemony', helping me to provide a 'standing on the standpoints' of both the overdog and the underdog in HMP Cardiff, to adopt the terminology of Becker (1967), Gouldner (1975) and Liebling (2001).

### 8.6.2 Empirical Contributions

This research distinctively focuses on the mundane as opposed to the exceptional. In other words, my thesis considers how the prison functions daily and what happens when things go right, as opposed to focusing solely on when things go wrong. This approach is appropriate for responding to Anthony Bottoms' plea, given in the introductory chapter of this thesis, to consider 'the often-ignored question of how daily social order is in fact maintained' (Bottoms 1999: 213). I have additionally provided a highly unique contribution to the field by considering prisoner wing workers. As I have shown, their experiences of imprisonment are markedly different to the 'average' non-worker British male prisoner, an observation that is well-evidenced and distinct to my thesis. I have additionally highlighted the need for further empirical research to add to the small but growing body of literature that is sensitive to the Welsh context.

### 8.6.3 Theoretical Contributions

In terms of contributions to theory, my thesis brings a topic that was in-vogue in the 1990s and early 2000s into the present day. As outlined in chapter one, there has recently been little research focusing exclusively on order in British prisons. Instead, the focus appears to have been on more sensational or 'exceptional' occurrences of disorder such as extreme violence or deaths in custody. Secondly, the data collected and analysed during my research has shown the continued relevance of the concepts of 'light', 'heavy', 'present' and 'absent' prison environments, discussed by Ben Crewe, Alison Liebling and Susan Hulley in their 2014 article. I drew heavily upon this article, adapting it to produce a concise diagram displaying the prison officer authority continuum and its interaction with legitimacy. It would be interesting in future research to explore whether this conceptual framework is just as applicable to different penal cultures and geographical areas outside of the UK. My thesis has, thirdly, provided a unique theoretical contribution by questioning over-reliance on normative explanations for prison order. I have importantly evidenced that fatalism and feelings of powerlessness potently shape compliance, and, that prisoners cannot reasonably or unproblematically withdraw their consent even if they judge their treatment to be unfair or illegitimate. Fourthly, my research has demonstrated the need for a nuanced appreciation of officer culture by disrupting the traditional belief that more experienced, ex-army, or 'old-school' officers usually hold punitive beliefs. Finally, by looking at the recruitment and retention of prisoner wing

workers, I have provided a new lens through which to research the well-established themes of officer discretion and power in prisons research.

This thesis matters because it offers the scholarly contributions to knowledge outlined above and because I have achieved my aim of exploring how the prison can 'best function daily'. I have shown that there are certain conditions in which the prison can be more survivable, more legitimate and more well-ordered. Crucially, I have also given the people of HMP Cardiff the chance to be heard. As per Dominic's quotation towards the end of my methods chapter: "you have made an impact now...[i]t's not about bringing biscuits, it's not about bringing tea! It's about listening". By going into the prison for one complete year and spending time listening to prisoners and staff, my research made a difference to them.

### 8.7 Implications for the Prison as a Social Institution

Taking a broader view, I will now consider the implications of my research and the resulting research account for debates surrounding what it means to do prisons research and the prison as a social institution. To begin, I will highlight and define two broad approaches to prison-based research: reformism and abolitionism.

Reformism, firstly, considers the concept of penal control not as something inherently problematic but as something that can be 'harnessed' to achieve a more humane and legitimate prison environment. Thinkers (such as Liebling, and Sparks, Bottoms and Hay, cited in Martin et al 2014: 9) ascribing to this view will often focus upon finding "pragmatic pathways toward promoting a minimalist use of the prison or maintaining legitimate order in prisons" (Martin et al 2014: 9). The congruence between this and the present research are quite clear. This research has explored how the prison may best function daily, in an ordered manner, and in a way that is most likely to foster positive staff-prisoner relationships. It has been underpinned by a belief in the possibility of identifying and championing penal practices which can help to achieve a more humane, and therefore a more legitimate, prison system (Sparks and Bottoms 1995). It is important to recognise, however, that not all would agree that it is possible for prisons to ever be considered legitimate. This is the second approach to prison-based research, as follows.

To provide a necessarily succinct definition of neo-abolitionist or 'sceptical' approaches to prison-based research, these emphasise "the problematic and illegitimate aspects of control – the inherently problematic power dynamics affecting those whose lives are touched by the prison experience." (Martin et al 2014: 9). It is argued that custody concerns will always trump care when it comes to institutional life, and that attempts to reform actually serve to strengthen the prison (see, for example, Scraton et al. 1991; Sim 2009; Chantraine 2010). In detail, Gilles Chantraine (2010: 27)

has argued that attempts at penal reform tend to reproduce the prison and consolidate its rationale and form, rather than questioning or transforming it. For example, penal history in France has been continually marked by tension between attempts to adhere to the principle of less eligibility and attempts to reform prison conditions judged to be 'inhumane'. Prison reforms have thus become 'monotonous', continually observing that the prison is failing to achieve its aims and attempting to achieve a 'better prison' using the same techniques and knowledge (Chantraine 2010: 33). Thought of in such a way, it is not difficult to see how reformism could be seen as futile – repeating the same action but expecting a different result – and as potentially contributing to “penal resilience” (Piacentini and Katz 2017: 14).

This viewpoint has been echoed by numerous scholars, such as Sarah Armstrong (2018) who suggested that efforts to reform the prison effectively work to secure the continued existence of the prison as a socially- and politically- approved form of punishment (Armstrong 2018). For example, Piacentini and Katz (2017) and Calavita and Jenness (2015) have each strikingly observed that the importation of human rights policies, procedures, and discourses into prison life has in fact masked the realities of life in prison and prevented discussion of the fundamental problems surrounding imprisonment, as opposed to improving prisoner rights and prison conditions as heralded by prison authorities and governments. The emergence of similar conclusions from research conducted in different jurisdictions and social-political contexts, including Russia (Piacentini and Katz 2017) and North America (Calavita and Jenness 2015), highlights convergence in penal practices across international borders (see Piacentini and Katz 2017). Indeed, similar conclusions have been reached by prison researchers across several continents. In African prisons, Jefferson and Martin (2016) found that incidences of abuse, corruption and violence are often presented as being the fault of individual, errant prison officers as opposed to system failures. In Scotland, Armstrong (cited in Armstrong and Jefferson 2017: 250) found that suicide amongst female prisoners was framed within policy as being predominantly the result of poor coping on the behalf of the women. Personal failures as opposed to system failures were to blame. Following research on the Canadian prison system, Hannah-Moffat (2001) argued that even the most well-intentioned efforts to reform women's imprisonment in fact serve to obscure, and therefore reproduce, problematic power relations. To illustrate this point, Hannah-Moffat (2001: 194) commented that 'it is difficult to imagine how meaningful or supportive relationships can develop when officers continue to perform strip searches, monitor relationships, and punish prisoners for infractions against institutional order'. At the heart of this view is the assertion that minor 'tweaks' brought in to seemingly improve prison practice, as well as research orientated towards improving prison life, can both detract attention

away from questioning the continued existence of the prison as well as secure 'the' prison (Armstrong and Jefferson 2017) as a concept and an entity:

The endless demand to do good, where things are apparently so wrong, and the ceaseless calls to bring prisons in Africa up to standard, seem sometimes to drown out more profound questions about imprisonment and its role.

Jefferson and Martin 2016: 436

A further concern surrounding reformism is that the repetition of ideas surrounding 'normality' in the prison context may provide a further avenue for the reproduction of homologous prisons (Chantraine 2010). This is particularly problematic when Western ideas about what constitutes 'good', 'normal' and 'humane' prisons are awarded hegemony and uncritically applied to analyses of penal culture in other geographical areas and cultures. For example, the 'top-down' forms of authority that have been found to be reproduced in HMP Cardiff should not be taken as the 'norm' across the globe: "the idea of the state having authority is a taken-for-granted fact and value of Western prison practice and scholarship...[yet]...in fact, only a minority of prisons globally operate under such a logic" (Armstrong and Jefferson 2017: 253). Therefore, whilst the present study has been able to effectively utilise the conceptual frameworks offered by (other) research undertaken in Western prisons, these will not be appropriate for all prisons, particularly those in the global South (Martin et al 2014: 10). The inability to directly and unproblematically transfer ideas across jurisdictions may occur on a smaller scale *within* territories, for example prison reforms that are welcomed in one North American state could be rejected by another (Lynch 2011: 689). Policy divergences and convergences within and across the UK nations would be a further example of this, explored in greater depth below. These are extremely thought-provoking debates that raise important questions for the present research. For example, is it still appropriate to explore how a prison can function 'better'? In doing so, can sociological research about prison order actually make the prison more resilient? Would time and energy be better spent questioning the existence of the prison system and interrogating the power relations it reproduces?

In response to these questions, I contend that these two approaches – a reformist desire to improve prison conditions and an abolitionist desire to dismantle the prison as a social institution – do not have to be conflicting or mutually exclusive. It is possible to champion changes to everyday practice whilst also trying to disrupt, criticise and ultimately dissect the existence of the prison. In line with Kitty Calavita and Valerie Jenness (2015: 192) this may best be achieved through conducting immersive research inside institutions to 'analyse the dynamics of life inside, make visible the invisible and to propose reforms to reign in almighty carceral power'. This thesis achieved precisely

this, utilising rich data about the everyday interactions occurring in an adult male prison to demonstrate that, ultimately, life in HMP Cardiff is saturated with suffering and that prisoners remain powerless in the face of the prison's state-sanctioned power to punish. Yet it was also acknowledged that some things will always remain invisible to the ethnographer. For example, it was beyond the scope of this research to definitively surmise whether the prison's punishment and reward system had been deviously designed with prisoner pains in mind (see chapter six). Furthermore, I could never 'take the same crap that my participants had been taking', to repeat the important caveat from chapter four on methods. This research has therefore provided an imperfect, yet thorough and honest, account of life in HMP Cardiff – the good and the bad. The question now stands – where do we go from here?

Criticisms levelled at abolitionism for being 'romantic or naïve' (Cohen 1998: 229) are highly unhelpful and simplistic. Indeed, dismissing a social movement simply for being too 'revolutionary' is highly dangerous – imagine where society would be if such a view had prevailed over historic attempts to improve the rights of black people, women, or gay people, for example. Similarly, suggesting that all attempts to reform effectively work to preserve the system they are trying to change is equally unhelpful. Again, this view could halt amendments to policies and legislation that result in the immediate rectification of human rights abuses or the immediate improvement of people's lives, both in prison and on the outside. In addition, there are other ways to 'reform' the prison which target legislation and policy, rather than prison conditions (see Lynch 2011), and these directly question the role of the prison. The aim here, therefore, is to think about how these 'reformist' and 'abolitionist' approaches interact with the aims, methods, findings and contributions of the present study. The most promising avenue through which to do so is advocating for penal reductionism or 'attrition' (Cohen 1998: 230) and reform.

Writing in *The Guardian* in 2021, Frances Crook, chief executive of the Howard League for Penal Reform offered the dour recognition that prisons are "fundamentally unjust", requiring a "radical overhaul, starting with a swingeing reduction in the number of people we imprison" (Crook 2021). In advocating for this reductionist stance, it is hoped that this thesis further contributes to remedying the tensions between reform and abolitionist approaches. Prison should be used less, but it should also be used better. To this end, this thesis uses the extensive data collected in HMP Cardiff to think about how everyday life could be made better for prisoners. This does not preclude but rather complements the asking of fundamental questions about the role of the prison as a social institution. It is also sensitive to the current global situation, as follows.

## 8.8 Implications for Practice and Policy

At the time of writing this conclusion, the UK and the rest of the world is in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic which is having a devastating effect upon health, well-being and the economy. Prisons, prison officers and prisoners are far from insulated from this pandemic. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 the UK went into lockdown, and so too did prisons. This resulted in prisoners spending very little time unlocked from their cells, the suspension of visits, the cessation of 'non-essential' employment and a reduction in education and activities. A few days later prison administrators implemented 'Exceptional Regime Management Plans' to (i) minimise transmission of Covid-19 within prisons, (ii) reduce the potential for the virus to be brought into prisons, and (iii) manage the prisoner population to contain the virus (Brennan 2020). The harrowing effects of these measures upon prisoners' mental health and relationships with the outside world have been documented (see, for example, House of Commons Justice Committee 2020) and in May it was reported that 16 prisoners incarcerated in England and Wales had committed suicide since the extreme lockdown measures were imposed (Grierson 2020). In March 2020 it was reported that only 'key' prisoner workers such as cleaners and kitchen workers would not be confined to their cells (Allison and Mason 2020), thus allowing them exercise and access to the wing telephones to contact family. Even in these extraordinary times, some prisoners still appear to be faring better than others. The over-crowded conditions within prisons make it highly likely that the virus will reach horrendous levels across the estate, risking thousands of lives. As of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2020 there had been a total of 16 deaths amongst HMPPS staff where Covid-19 was suspected to have caused or contributed to death. During this same period there had been 208 staff absences linked to Covid-19 (Ministry of Justice 2020a). As of 31<sup>st</sup> August 2020 there had been 23 prisoner deaths and 21 deaths of offenders on probation suspected to be caused by Covid-19 (Ministry of Justice 2020b). It is not possible to speculate further here on the implications of Covid-19 for prisoners in England and Wales, or HMP Cardiff specifically, however further research into this topic is certainly anticipated and needed.

It is important to acknowledge the likely lasting impact of novel Coronavirus within prisons, if only to demonstrate that life within prisons is heavily affected by occurrences in the outside world. It is also recognised that "despite starting to reverse the reductions in [government] spending on prisons and the number of prison officers, both remain below 2009/10 levels and prison performance continues to deteriorate" (Institute for Government 2020). In keeping with this, albeit cheerless, recognition that adequate resourcing is unlikely to be invested into existing prisons soon, the recommendations given here aim to be realistic and targeted towards those 'on the frontline' – prison officers and prison managers. Some might say they are modest, but I would rather contend that they are 'achievable'. The key recommendations are as follows:

- Prison officers need to allow the recognition that they can ‘make or break’ the prison experience to be a guiding principle of their work. This reality should be firmly embraced by prison management and communicated to officers. In terms of the practice of prison work, officers need to similarly recognise the importance of ‘doing things’ for prisoners.
- Prison managers should communicate to officers the importance of offering empathy, and that there is no such thing as ‘too much empathy’. It would be valuable to distinguish between ‘empathy’ and ‘sympathy’.
- Prison managers should endeavour to keep officer priorities stable, something that would assist officers in balancing care with custody responsibilities. Management should additionally be committed to making prison officers feel valued, to help them feel that their position and their work is valuable and legitimate.
- Prison officers should broaden their recruitment criteria for wing workers, in the hope that a more diverse group are given the chance at gaining the benefits associated with the position.
- A key finding within this research is that prisoners are, in part, motivated to comply with prison rules due to a feeling that resistance is futile. This should not be taken to imply that the prison environment should be made more austere in a bid to maintain order! Instead, note that prisoners are most likely to rebel when they do not receive what they are entitled to. So, officers need to offer fair and reliable treatment and not impose unnecessary time in cell, for example.
- Finally, in terms of policy implications, my data suggests that the Prison Service should prioritise the retainment of experienced prison officers. A sharp reduction in the number of people incarcerated, starting with the immediate release of all IPP prisoners, would additionally help to reduce the pains of imprisonment by making officers more available to ‘do things’ for prisoners.

### 8.9 Implications for Further Research

In Chapter Four, the geo-cultural context of HMP Cardiff was explored and it was shown that several officers in Cardiff prison believed that staff-prisoner relationships in the establishment were positively influenced by the perceived sociability of Welsh people. However, it was also recognised in Section 4.5 that without venturing inside other prisons in Wales it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions regarding the extent to which Welsh culture has influenced relationships inside HMP Cardiff. This highlighted the need for further research with a comparative element. I would like to

take this further now by thinking about convergences and divergences between Wales, England, and other small countries in the UK and beyond. Research undertaken by Edwards and Hughes (2009), Field (2015) and Jones (2016) suggested that there are some distinctive aspects of the Welsh experience, as given in chapter four. However, the same could be said about other UK nations. For example, Katrine Morrison's 2009/10 research found that the Scottish probation system was more orientated towards social work compared to the service in England and Wales. Careful not to romanticise, it is possible that Scotland took a more Welfarist approach to policy-making in the area of criminal justice, sheltering it from the radical probation reforms occurring in England and Wales (Morrison 2015: 164-165). Sarah Armstrong's review of the inflated rates of remand prisoners in Scotland usefully drew a comparison with countries outside of the UK, noting that Scotland's remand practices were out of step with other small countries in Western Europe but more in line with Eastern European countries (Armstrong 2009: 11), strengthening claims that the Scottish policy context, such as the 'crack-down' on knife crime, directly affected the remand population.

These studies have shown the importance of being aware of geo-cultural context so that research accounts are not peculiarly specific, overly abstract, or insensitive to global policy developments (Edwards and Hughes 2005). Nor should research unquestioningly apply models of empirical analysis or theoretical concepts in all contexts, as noted in Section 8.7 above (Armstrong and Jefferson 2017). The present research, as a single-prison-case-study, cannot provide any definitive conclusions regarding whether, how and to what extent the political economy of Wales has influenced the level of order in HMP Cardiff, not least because this is not something that my participants reflected upon. It has however shown that there is an urgent need for further empirical research into this topic.

In consideration of the dearth of existing literature that focuses exclusively upon wing workers, including their recruitment, prison experience and social standing, more research in this area would also be valuable. Furthermore, the wing worker scheme would provide a novel lens through which to explore the established themes of officer discretion and punishments and privileges within prison-based research. Finally, it would be highly interesting to conduct research in other prisons in Wales to explore whether there exists a perception amongst officers in other establishments that Welsh 'culture' positively influences the prison environment and staff-prisoner relationships. Such research could valuably be conducted in both private and public establishments to add a new dimension to the established 'public/private' debate in criminology.

### 8.10 Final Comments

Ultimately, this thesis has provided a unique and nuanced response to the question of order in the contemporary prison. It has done so by linking data collected in HMP Cardiff with existing research in



the field. It has also embedded existing theories about prison order maintenance with wider debates concerning prisoner compliance, penal legitimacy, staff-prisoner relationships and the pains of imprisonment. Finally, it has provided a unique insight into a hitherto relatively unexplored topic – the experience of imprisonment for prisoner wing workers.

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## Appendices


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### Appendix 1: 'Design your perfect prison' Prisoner Group Interviews Group Activity Handout

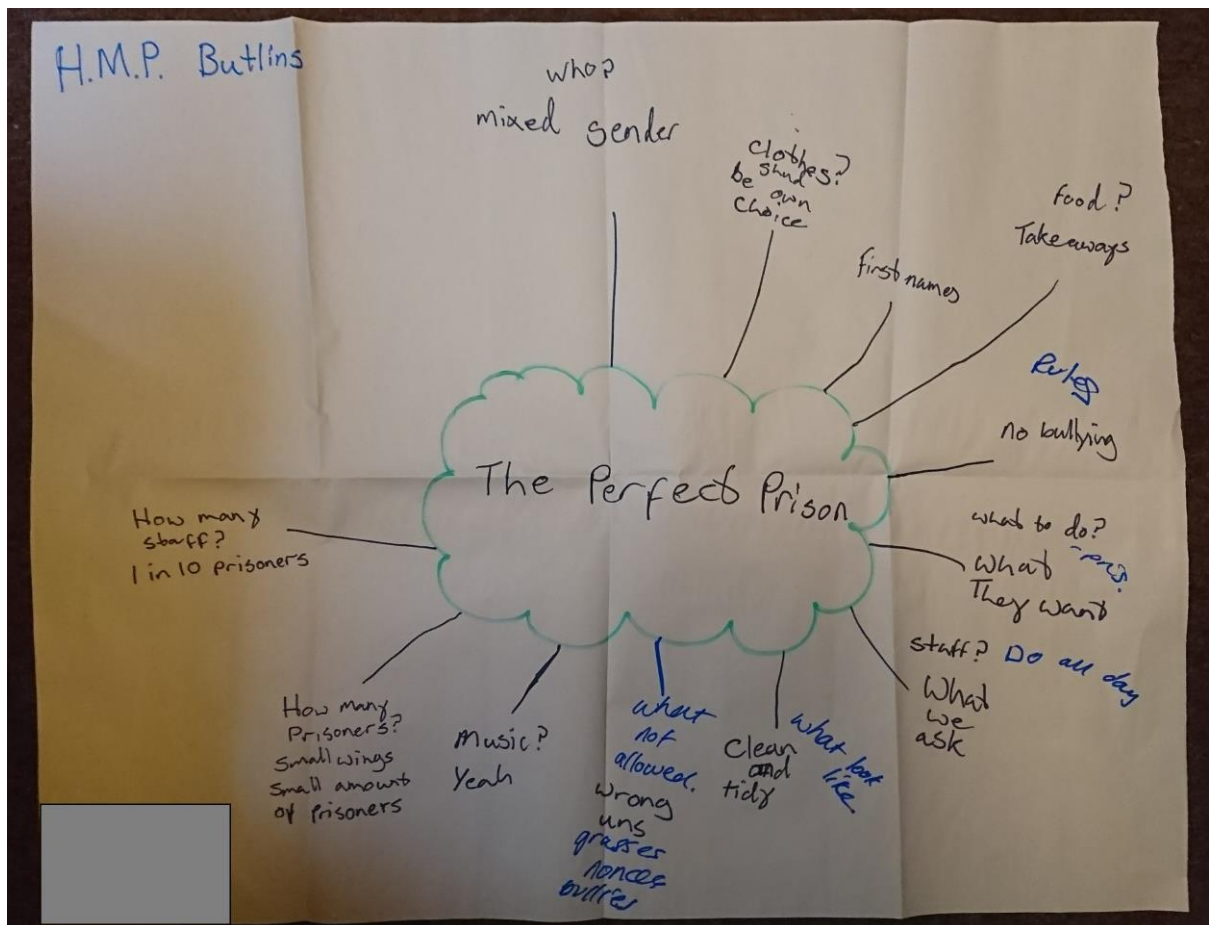
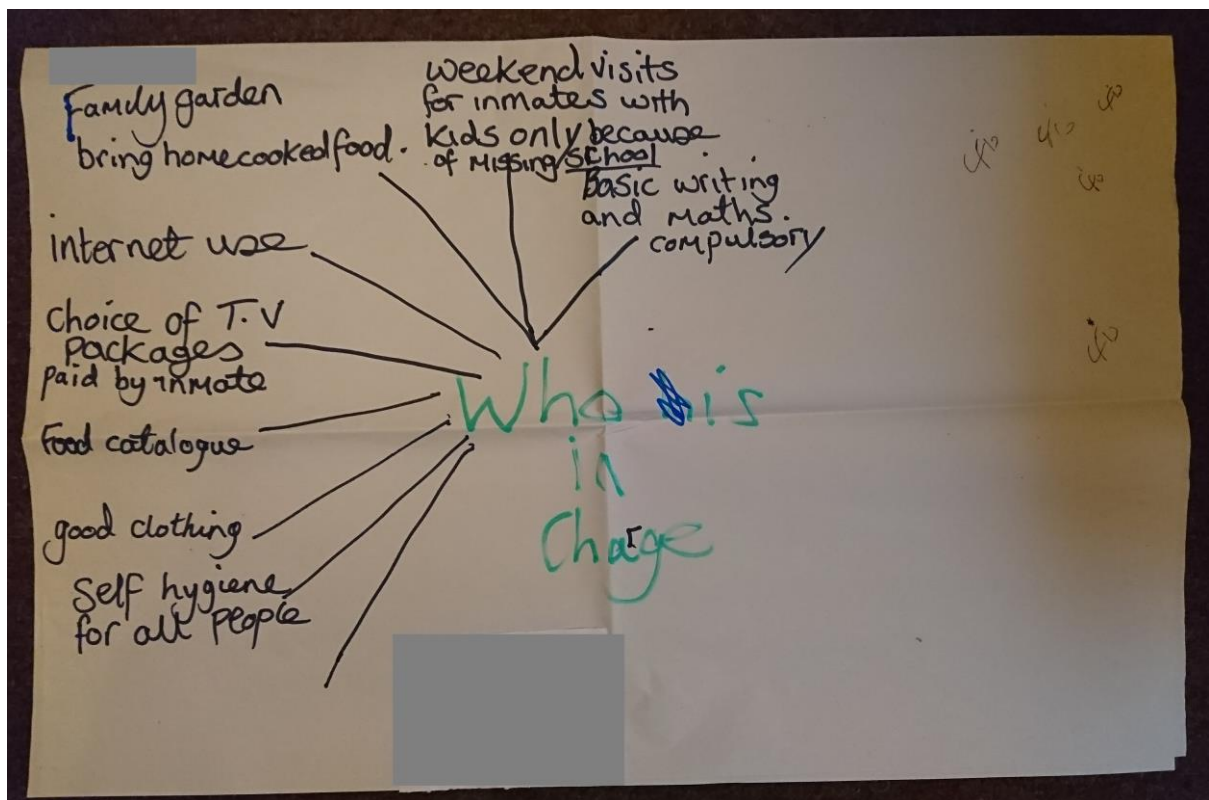
**Design your perfect prison...**

- Who is there?
- Aim of your prison?
- What does everyone wear?
- What do you call each other?
- How many prisoners are there?



- Any rules?
- What do prisoners do all day?
- What do staff do all day?
- What does it look like?
- What is not allowed?
- Any music playing
- How many staff are there?

Appendix 2: Exemplar Populated Prisoner Posters



### Appendix 3: Blank Staff Comments Boards

Describe a 'typical' officer...



Describe a 'perfect' prisoner...



**Appendix 3 (cont.): Blank Staff Comments Boards**

**Describe a 'typical' prisoner...**



**Describe a 'perfect' officer...**



**Appendix 3 (cont.): Blank Staff Comments Boards**

**What is prison for?**





Consent Form

Cardiff University PhD Research  
HMP Cardiff 2015

**Staff-Prisoner Relationships: Maintaining Order, Increasing Safety  
and Improving Outcomes.**

Researcher Name: Ruth

Contact: Ruth via Dr Hudson, Cardiff University School of Social Sciences. Glamorgan Building, King Edward VII Avenue, Cardiff. CF10 3WT.

**If you would like to contact me you can also leave a note in the Complaints Box on your wing labelled with 'Ruth PHD'.** Alternatively, you can ask a member of staff on your wing.

This research is looking at how relationships between prisoners and staff can help to keep order on the wings, reduce violence, improve your daily lives and keep you safe.

I'm conducting this research for my PhD in Criminology at Cardiff Uni. I've conducted research a few times in Cardiff prison since 2011 and have spent time with many different prisoners. Please note that I'm adhering to strict confidentiality and ethical guidelines, so your name will not be mentioned in my work.

The project has been approved by NOMS and is being supported by Governor Cross.

I have spent some time on the wings to learn more about the Core Day and it is now time for me to find out a little more about prison life. To do this I need to request your permission. There are some questions below relating to your time in prison and also a consent form.



**Consent Form**

1. How old are you?

.....

2. What ethnicity would you use to describe yourself?

.....

3. How long have you been in Cardiff prison? (Approximately)

.....

4. How long have you been on your current wing? (Approximately)

.....

5. Have you been in Cardiff prison before? (Yes or No)

.....

6. How much of your life has been spent in prison? (Approximately)

.....

7. How long do you expect to spend in Cardiff prison during this sentence?  
(Approximately)

.....

**Consent Form**

In order to proceed with the research, your written consent is required. Please be aware of the following points:

- **Your participation is voluntary.** You do not have to answer my questions and you are free to leave at any time without repercussions.
- **Your identity will be anonymised, and all information provided will remain confidential.** If harm to another person is mentioned however, a relevant body will have to be informed.
- **This interview will be recorded and notes will be taken.** This is to help me write up my work. I may use quotes in my thesis however your name will be changed to ensure you remain anonymous.
- I will write up the final results of this study into my thesis, which will be seen by my tutors and markers. I have also agreed to provide a report of my findings to the Prison Service. I may in the future also publish my findings in a journal or book, but your identity will remain anonymous at all times.
- **This research is being conducted by an external organisation not connected to Cardiff prison or any governmental bodies.** Therefore participation in this research will not have any impact on your sentence or time in prison.

If you have any questions prior to signing this form please let me know. Thank you.

**I confirm that I understand the above points and I agree to take part in this study:**

**Interviewee Signature .....** **Date .....**

**Interviewer Signature .....** **Date .....**

Your input in this research is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Ruth



Consent Form - Staff



Cardiff University PhD Research  
HMP Cardiff 2015

**Staff-Prisoner Relationships: Maintaining Order, Increasing Safety and  
Improving Outcomes.**

Researcher Name: Ruth  
Contact: doubledayrb@cardiff.ac.uk  
ruth.doubleday@hmps.gsi.gov.uk  
Ext. 3398 Business Hub

This research is exploring how relationships between staff and prisoners can contribute to maintaining order, reducing violence, improving your daily working lives, and generally keeping you and prisoners safe.

I'm conducting this research for my PhD in Criminology at Cardiff Uni. I've conducted research a few times in Cardiff prison since 2011, spending time with prisoners of various backgrounds and with staff of all grades. I carry keys and have completed prison safety training to ensure that my research will not impact upon your daily tasks in any way. Please also be assured that I'm adhering to strict confidentiality and ethical guidelines.

The project has been approved by NOMS and is being supported by Governor Cross. My key contacts are Joe Aggett and Alex Reed.

I have spent some time on the wings to learn about the Core Day and it is now time for me to find out a little more about you and your work. To do this I need to request your consent. Below you will find some questions relating to your time as a Prison Officer and also a consent form.

1. Approximately how long have you worked in HMP Cardiff? .....
2. Approximately how long have you been a Prison Officer? .....
3. In which wing/area of HMP Cardiff do you usually work? .....
4. During training, were you given any information about the role that relationships can play in maintaining order in prison? (Yes or No) .....

**Consent Form - Staff**

In order to proceed with the research, your written consent is required. Please be aware of the following points:

- **Your participation is voluntary.** You do not have to answer my questions, and you are free to leave at any time without repercussions.
- **Your identity will be anonymised, and all information provided will remain confidential.** If harm to another person is mentioned however, a relevant body will have to be informed.
- **This interview will be recorded and notes will be taken.** This is to help me write up my work. I may use quotes in my thesis however your name will be changed to ensure you remain anonymous.
- I will write up the final results of this study into my thesis, which will be seen by my supervisors and markers. I have also agreed to provide a report of my findings to the Prison Service. I may, in the future, also publish my findings in a journal or book, but your identity will remain anonymous at all times.
- **This research is being conducted by an external organisation, not connected to Cardiff prison or any governmental bodies.** Therefore participation in this research will not have any impact on your employment.

If you have any questions prior to signing this form please let me know. Thank you.

**I confirm that I understand the above points and I agree to take part in this study:**

**Interviewee Signature .....** **Date .....**

**Interviewer Signature .....** **Date .....**

Your support in this research is greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Ruth

## Appendix 6: Information Sheet for Staff



Information for staff



Cardiff University PhD Research

HMP Cardiff 2015

**Staff-Prisoner Relationships: Maintaining Order, Increasing Safety and Improving Outcomes.**

Researcher Name: Ruth  
Contact: [doubledayrb@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:doubledayrb@cardiff.ac.uk)  
[ruth.doubleday@hmps.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ruth.doubleday@hmps.gsi.gov.uk)  
Ext. 3398 Business Hub



### **To all staff,**

My name is Ruth and over the next few months I'll be conducting research here in Cardiff prison.

I'm studying for my PhD in Criminology at Cardiff Uni and I've conducted research a few times in Cardiff prison since 2011, spending time with prisoners of various backgrounds and with staff of all grades. I carry keys and have completed prison safety training to ensure that my research will not impact upon your daily tasks in any way. Please also be assured that I'm adhering to strict confidentiality and anonymity guidelines.

The project has been approved by NOMS and is being supported by Governor Cross. My key contacts are Joe Aggett and Alex Reed.

My research is exploring how the quality of relationships between staff and prisoners can contribute to maintaining order, reducing violence, improving your daily working lives, and generally keeping you and prisoners safe.

To begin with I'll be spending a couple of hours on each wing to learn more about the Core Day, so I look forward to chatting further with you then.

In the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me using the above details if you'd like any further info about me or my research.

**Your support in this research is greatly appreciated. Thank you!**

**Ruth**



# ACTIVITY POLICY DOCUMENT



October 2015

[Anonymised]  
Activities Hub Manager/ Industries Manager  
Activities CM

## Appendix 7 (cont.): HMP Cardiff Activity Policy, Abridged and Anonymised

The Hub will publish the updated Activities Spreadsheet daily for the AM and PM splits, this will be available for viewing in the Activity Attendance Folder in the z drive. This will then allow all Activity areas to update Nomis accordingly.

This will provide activity areas with the list of reasons confirming why a prisoner has not attended. The Hub will confirm if they are acceptable or non-acceptable reasons.

If the Hub have not been able to find a reason, they will be recorded as Unacceptable absence.

### PRISONER EMPLOYMENT & ACTIVITY RISK CRITERIA MATRIX

Activity	Risk	Minimum IEP Level	Compliance Testing MDT	Legal Status
Peer Advisor	High	Standard	6 Months	N/A
FTE - Cleaner	High	Entry	N/A	N/A
Resettlement Peer Advisor	High	Standard	N/A	N/A
Resettlement Clnr	High	Entry	N/A	N/A
Gym Orderly	High	Entry	N/A	N/A
Healthcare Orderly	High	Entry	N/A	N/A
Library Orderly	High	Entry	N/A	N/A
Reception Orderly	High	Entry	N/A	N/A
Stores	High	Standard	N/A	Sentenced
Waste Environment	High	Standard	N/A	Sentenced
Canteen	High	Entry	N/A	N/A
Centre Orderly	High	Standard	N/A	N/A
Chapel Orderly	High	Entry	N/A	N/A
Kitchen	High	Entry	N/A	N/A
Rail Training	High	Standard	6 Months	Sentenced
Road Training	High	Standard	N/A	N/A
Wing Cleaner / Painter	Medium	Entry	N/A	N/A
Wing Barber	Medium	Entry	N/A	N/A
Fastrack to Maths/English	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
LSU - ESOL	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
LSU	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Music	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Virtual Learning Environment	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Multi Media	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Tools For Change	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A

**Appendix 7 (cont.): HMP Cardiff Activity Policy, Abridged and Anonymised**

Beating the Blues	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Magazine	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Recruitment Agency	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Activity Induction Unit	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Resettlement - Health & Safety	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Employability & Entrepreneur	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Resettlement - Fire Safety	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Resettlement - CSCS Card Training	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Virtual Campus - e-learning	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Gym Course	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Vehicle Repair	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Bicycle Repair	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Multi Skills - Construction	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Sign / Print Production	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Shop 4 - Video Production	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
BICS Industrial Cleaning	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Life Skills (B1)	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Laundry	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Single Portions - F/T	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Contract Services - F/T	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Computer Recycling and Repair Shop	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Basic Computers & PICTA	Medium	Basic	N/A	N/A
Therapy B Wing	Low	Basic	N/A	N/A



## Appendix 8: HMP Cardiff Prisoner Demographics

**Table 3 - Prisoner age, religion and sentence band**

HMP Cardiff prisoner population by age, religion and sentence band, 2015*			
Demographic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage of all prisoners (N=804) per demographic category*
Age	Adult (22 and over)	761	94.7%
	Young Person (aged 18-21)	43	5.3%
Religion	Agnostic	167	20.8%
	Atheist	147	18.3%
	Baptist	2	0.2%
	Buddhist	5	0.6%
	Christian	106	13.2%
	Church In Wales	135	16.8%
	Church of England (Anglican)	17	2.1%
	Greek Orthodox	2	0.2%
	Hindu	3	0.4%
	Jewish	1	0.1%
	Methodist	1	0.1%
	Mormon	6	0.7%
	Muslim	79	9.8%
	No Religion	15	1.9%
	Not Specified	4	0.5%
	Pagan	3	0.4%
	Protestant	1	0.1%
	Rastafarian	1	0.1%
Roman Catholic	109	13.6%	
Sentence Band	Less than 6 Months	174	21.6%
	6 Months to less than 1 Year	58	7.2%
	1 Year to less than 2 Years	92	11.4%
	2 Years to less than 3 Years	51	6.3%
	3 Years to less than 4 Years	31	3.9%
	4 Years to less than 10 Years	54	6.7%
	10 Years or more	4	0.5%
	Life	44	5.5%
	No sentence***	296	36.8%

\*April 2015.

\*\*Given to 1 decimal point, rounded up where next figure 5 or more.

\*\*\*Includes convicted unsentenced and remand prisoners.

## Appendix 8 (cont.): HMP Cardiff Prisoner demographics

**Table 4 - Prisoner ethnicity and security categories**

HMP Cardiff prisoner population by ethnicity and security category, 2015*			
Demographic	Categories	Frequency	Percentage of all prisoners (N=804) per demographic category*
Ethnicity	Asian/Asian British: Any other	9	1.1%
	Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	3	0.4%
	Asian/Asian British: Indian	2	0.2%
	Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	11	1.4%
	Black/Black British: African	12	1.5%
	Black/Black British: Any other	14	1.7%
	Black/Black British: Caribbean	7	0.9%
	Code Missing	5	0.6%
	Mixed: Any other background	9	1.1%
	Mixed: White and Asian	3	0.4%
	Mixed: White and Black African	2	0.2%
	Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	13	1.6%
	Other: Any other background	5	0.6%
	Other: Arab	6	0.7%
	Prefer not to say	2	0.2%
	White: Any other background	34	4.2%
	White:	652	81.1%
	White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	14	1.7%
	White: Irish	1	0.1%
Security Category	Cat B	15	1.9%
	Cat C	404	50.2%
	Cat D	9	1.1%
	Unclassified	104	12.9%
	Unsentenced	254	31.6%
	YOI Closed	18	2.2%

\*April 2015.

\*\*Given to 1 decimal point, rounded up where next figure 5 or more.

**Appendix 9: HMP Cardiff's prisoner population and officer workforce compared to the wider prison estate**

**Table 5 - Prisoner demographics HMP Cardiff versus national male prisoner population**

Snapshot of prisoner age, ethnicity and religion in HMP Cardiff versus national male prisoner population			
Demographic	Categories	Percentage of all prisoners HMP Cardiff (N=804)	Percentage of all male prisoners nationally (N=82,289)*
Age**	Adult (22 and over)	95%	93%
	Young Person (aged 18-21)	5%	6%
Religion	All Christian	46%	50%
	Non-religious	42%	30%
	Any other non-Christian religion	12%	20%
Ethnicity	White	87%	73%
	Non-white ethnic group***	12%	26%
	Not stated/Not recorded	1%	1%
Sentence Length	Unsentenced	37%	14%
	Less than 6 Months	22%	5%
	4 years or more	13%	34%

\*Data obtained from Ministry of Justice *Offender Management Statistics Quarterly*, published 2015. Not possible to obtain this data for male locals specifically, therefore all male prisoner data utilised.

\*\*Age bracketed to 18-20, 21 and over in national figures. Age bracketed to 18-21, 22 and over in HMP Cardiff.

\*\*\*Non-white ethnic groups include: Mixed, Asian or Asian British, Black or Black British, Chinese or Other ethnic group.

**Table 6 - Prisoner IEP levels HMP Cardiff versus national male local prisoner population**

Prisoner IEP levels in HMP Cardiff versus male local prisons nationally		
IEP level	Percentage of all prisoners in HMP Cardiff (N=804)	Percentage of prisoners in male local prisons England and Wales (N=32,344)*
Basic	5%	5%
Standard	69%	58%
Enhanced	6%	19%
Entry	21%	18%

\*Data obtained from *Annual NOMS Digest*, published 2016.

**Appendix 9 (cont.): HMP Cardiff's prisoner population and officer workforce compared to the wider prison estate**

**Table 7 - Officer demographics HMP Cardiff versus nationally**

Officer demographics in HMP Cardiff versus national NOMS employment trends			
Demographic	Categories	Estimated percentage of all staff HMP Cardiff (N=c.360)	Percentage of all NOMS staff nationally (N=45,330)
Age	18 – 39	35%	35%*
	40 and over	65%	65%
Sex	Female	35%	46%
	Male	65%	54%
Ethnicity	White	98%**	94%
	Non-white ethnic group	2%	6%

\*NOMS workforce age and sex data obtained from *NOMS Workforce Statistics Data Tables, published 2016*.

\*\*HMP Cardiff and NOMS workforce ethnicity data obtained from NOMS Management Information (MI) Addendum dataset, published 2015.

**Table 8 - Officer grades HMP Cardiff versus nationally**

Officer grades in HMP Cardiff versus national operational staff employment trends		
Band	Percentage of all Operational Grade staff HMP Cardiff (N=250)*	Percentage of all Prison Service Operational staff nationally (N=24,100)*
Band 2 / Operational Support	16%	20%
Band 3-4 / Prison Officer	64%	63%
Band 4 / Supervising Officer	8%	8%
Band 5 / Custodial Managers	4%	6%
Bands 6-8 / Managers	4%	3%

\*Data obtained from *NOMS Workforce Statistics Data Tables, published 2016*.

## Appendix 10: Prisoner poems and memoirs summary table

Table 9 - Prisoner written data summary table

Pseudonym	Source Type	Title	Length (pages)
Blondie (self-assigned)	Typed reflections on prison life	<i>Aspects of Prison Life</i>	2
Jack Sparrow (self-assigned)	Hand-written memoir	<i>Life in H.M.P Prisons</i>	8
Mr Glynn (self-assigned)	Hand-written memoir	<i>How the Prison System has changed over the years</i>	9
Tyler	Typed poems	<i>A Prisoner's Life: An Education in a Glass Room</i>  <i>British Justice = Best in the World</i>  <i>The Conversion of a Conspiracy Theorist?</i>  <i>Fair Warning</i>  <i>HMP is all good, Honestly!</i>  <i>The Price of Wisdom</i>	11
Mr Phillips (self-assigned)	Hand-written reflections on prison life	<i>Relationships between Staff and Prisoners,</i> <i>How things stay safe and quiet on the wings,</i> <i>Hardest thing about prison</i>	2

## Appendix 11: Prisoner group interviews participants

Table 10 - Participant Table I

Wing	Number of participants
F	4
A	5
B	6
D	4
E	5
C	6

## Appendix 12: Prisoner individual interviews participants

**Table 11 - Participant Table II**

Pseudonym	Wing	Age	Ethnicity	How long have you been in Cardiff prison?	How long have you been on your current wing?	Have you been in Cardiff prison before? ('Y'/Yes or 'N'/No)	How much of your life has been spent in prison?	How long do you expect to stay in Cardiff during this sentence?
Johnny	A	25	White	4 months	4months	N	4 months	"Until around November"*
Orlando	A	26	White Welsh	7 months	7 months	Y	9.5 years	"Hopefully parole soon!!"
Jack	A	30	White Welsh	8 months	Not long	N	10 years	"Until parole in October"
Sam	A	30	White Welsh	4 weeks	4 weeks	Y	18.5 years	18 months
Kevin	A	28	Black British	10 weeks	7 weeks	N	5 years	"Hopefully not long"
Blondie**	A	29	White Welsh	21 weeks	5months	Y	5 years	"Out in 5 weeks"
Greg	B	***						
Keith	B	25	White Welsh	3 months	3 months	Y	In and out since age 16. 8 months out longest.	9 days
Stephen	B	25	White British	9 months remand in 2011. Back in 2013 for 2 years	6 weeks	Y	4 years 3 months	5 months
Lee	B	40	White Welsh	6 weeks	4 weeks	Y	Too much	6 weeks
Lenny	B	35	White Welsh	6 weeks	4 weeks	Y	10 years	8 weeks
Mackenzie	B	20	White British	3 weeks	3 weeks	N	3 weeks	2 years
Martin	B	18	White British	3 months	3 months	N	3 months	2 months
Reggie	C							
Adrian	C	19	White Welsh	22 days	22 days	N	22 days	Up to 7 years
Marshall	C	45	White Welsh	5 weeks	5 weeks	N	5 weeks	6 more weeks

Angus	C	27	White British	2 days	2 days	Y	"?"	"?"
Giles	C	49	White British	16 months	16 months	Y	"Half"	7 more months
Paul	C	18	Black British	2 day	2 days	N	3 weeks	Few weeks
Robbie	C	22	White Welsh	1 day	1 day	Y	6 months	5 weeks
Steven	C	19	White British	12 days	12 days	Y	Since age 15 (4 years)	2 months
Derek	C	19	White Welsh	1 week	1 week	N	4 months	5 weeks
Danny	C	22	White Welsh	1 night	1 night	N	1 night	15 months to serve 7.5 months
Anton	C	20	White Welsh	1 night	1 night	N	1 night	Remand - 2 years
Roger	C	18	White Welsh	3 months	Few days, moved between C-B-F-C	N	3 months	"Don't know"
Jason	D		White British	3 months	2 weeks	N	3 years	3 months, out in 2 weeks
Isaac	D	47	White British	5 years	10 months (D/E Wing)	Y	9 years	7 years (D Cat after 4 years)
Vince	D	31	White Welsh	2 weeks	2 weeks	Y	13 years	1 week
Finneus	D	24	White British	4 months	3-4 weeks	Y	About 18-24 months	5.5 months / 1 month left
Rory	D	28	White Welsh	3.5 months	1 month	Y	4 years	3.5 months
Bryan	D	31	White Welsh	3 weeks	3 weeks	N	14 years	2 weeks
Michael	D	34	White Welsh	8 months	"Since Dec 23rd (Approx 2 months)"	Y "numerous times"	11 years 9 months	"6 weeks 6 days! :) :)"
Tommy	D	29	White Welsh	2 months	2 weeks	Y	5 years	Unsentenced
Tyler**	D	46	White Welsh	"2 weeks on AV's Previously 4 years (2008-2012)"	2 weeks	"Yes, as above; plus 6 months in 1992"	9 years	1-3months



Jerry	E	33	Mixed Race	4 months	"B Wing first for 14-16 weeks"	Y	10+ years	"4.5 years. Going to [X Prison] in Jan (4 months left in CDF)"
Dominic	E	42	White Welsh	5 months	4 months	Y	Since the age of 16 years	"Not long"
Ted	E	32	White British	2 years	2 years	Y	14 years	"Till December parole"
Tobias	E	28	White Welsh	"On and on for years"	16 months	Y	10 - decade (2 years YOI)	"No longer than 4 weeks Woo Hoo Hostel"
Thorsten (individual and joint interviews)	E	31	White British	"On and off for years"	1 years	Y	10 years and still going strong	"Parole 23 November"
Gerald	E	31	Black African	8 months	8 months	N	4 years	2-3 months
Earl	F	21	White Welsh	8 weeks	5 weeks	N	None	2 years
William	F							
Donnie	F	25	Welsh	week	1 day	Y	2 years	"?"
Gregory	F	24	Welsh-British-White	2 months	2 months	Y	5 months	3 years
Jim	F	49	British	10 weeks	10 weeks	Y	6 years	"I don't know"
Jeremy	F	22	British	"Too long"	"Too long"	Y	Too much	7 years
Jared	F	35	British	7 weeks	5 weeks	Y	15 years	4 months
Jack Sparrow**	F	36	White Welsh British	2.5 weeks	1 week	Y	15 years	6 months
Mr Phillips**	F	19	White British	12 days	11 days	N	18 months	28 days
Mr Glynn**	B	44	White Welsh	8 weeks	7 weeks	Y	Most	2-3 months

\*All details directly quoted from consent forms completed by prisoners.

\*\*Also supplied written poem, memoir or story.

\*\*\*Any information missing from this table was not given by participant.

## Appendix 13: Staff individual and ad hoc group interviews participants

Table 12 - Participant Table III

Pseudonym	Wing	Sex ('M'/Male or 'F'/Female)	How long have you worked in HMP Cardiff?	How long have you been a Prison Officer?	In which wing/area do you usually work?	During training, were you given any information about the role that relationships play in maintaining order? ('Y'/Yes or 'N'/No)
Stella	A	F	17 years	18.5 years	A Wing	"Can't remember"*
Johnathan	A	M	**			
Bill	A	M	14 years	18 years	A Wing	Y
Tom	A	M	26 years	29 years	A Wing	N
Isabelle	A	F	6 months	6 months	A Wing	Y
Sebastian	B	M				
Alex	B	M				
Oscar	B	M	14 years	27 years	B1	Y
Penelope	B	F	8 months	8 months	B Wing	Y
Damian	B	M	2 months	2 months	B Wing	Y
Richard	B	M	11 years	25 years	B Wing	Y
Gemma	C	F				
Winston	C	M				
Dermot	C	M	4 weeks	"4 weeks (previously OSG)"	C Wing	"?"
Luke	D	M				
Thomas	D_E	M				
Kaya	D	F	12 years	18 years	D Wing	Y
Anthony	E	M	14 years	17 years	E Wing	Y
Charlie	E	M	10 years	18 years	D and E Wing	Y
Finley	F	M				
Hector	F	M				
Flynn	F	M				
Zoe	F	F	1 week	1 week	F Wing	Y
Rex	F	M	7 years	7 years	F Wing	Y
Ross	F	M	1 year	1 years	F Wing	N
Shaun	F	M	5 years	11 years	F Wing	Y
Ethan, Edgar, Elliot	F	M, M, M, M				

and Edison						
Patrick	A	M	5 years	"15 years but worked in prisons 25 years"	A Wing and CSU	Y
Andy	B	M	19 years	20 years	F Wing	Y
Kiera	A	F	2 years	9 years	A Wing	Y
Clive	Security	M	2.5 years	"25 years on 17/12/15"	Operations/Security	Y
Peter	Security	M	20 years	20 years	Security	Y
Samantha	N/A	F				
Nicholas	N/A	M	3 years 3 months	27 years		N
Harry	N/A	M	3 years	33 years		N

\*All details directly quoted from consent forms completed by officers.

\*\*Any information missing from this table was not given by participant.

## Appendix 14: The Prison: A day in the life

This appendix provides a descriptive account of the daily life of the institution. In doing so it fulfils two important functions: firstly, it provides contextual data to supplement the foregoing discussions of prison order and safety, the pains of imprisonment, and the role of the prison wing worker. Secondly, it provides a detailed insight into the more ‘mysterious’ aspects of life inside - mysterious in that this information is not in the public domain nor easily accessible. The presentation of this data was therefore only made possible by the amount of time spent in Cardiff prison and the levels of access secured. This appendix is organised as follows. Firstly, I describe a typical day in the life of the institution. I then outline the function of each of the main residential wings in HMP Cardiff, before providing a detailed account of some of the core features of prison life that serve to shape prisoners’ lives and officers’ livelihoods, such as cell allocation, mealtimes, prisoner employment, and dealing with disturbances.

### A Typical day in HMP Cardiff

The prison day is highly structured, with all residential wings following the same ‘Core Day’ or regime:

**Table 13 - The Prison Regime**

Monday – Friday	Activity	Saturday and Sunday	Activity
08:00 – 08:30	Morning unlock	09:00	Morning unlock
08:30 – 11:45	Work and Activities	09:00 – 12:00	Association, Chapel, Gym, Visits
11:45 – 12:00	Movements back to wing		
12:00 – 13:00	Prisoners collect lunch from on-wing servery and eat in cells	12:00 – 13:00	Prisoners collect lunch from on-wing servery and eat in cells
13:00 – 13:30	Movements to activities	13:00 – 16:00	Association, Chapel, Gym, Visits
13:30 – 15:15	Work and Activities		
15:15 – 15:30	Movements back to wing		
15:30 – 16:45	Association (all prisoners unlocked on wing) and Visits		
16:45 – 17:15	Collect evening meal	16:15 – 16:45	Collect evening meal
17:15 – 17:30	Evening bang-up	16:45 – 17:00	Evening bang-up

Monday through to Friday prisoners are unlocked at 08:00 to go to court, or work and education. If unemployed or on Basic level of the IEP, prisoners will remain in their cells. All prisoners are on the wings for lunch and afternoon association, with lunch eaten in cells. Most of the weekend is spent unlocked, although this will vary depending upon prisoners’ privilege levels, staffing levels, across

wings and, seemingly, officer discretion. For example, I observed that prisoners on D and E wings (the 'enhanced' wings) tended to spend more time unlocked compared to prisoners on other wings, even when staffing levels were adequate. Meals are served earlier at weekends to allow for a slightly earlier lock-up at 17:00, and therefore an earlier staff finish.

Officer working hours align with the above Core Day, with the main shift running from 07:30 – 18:00 Monday to Thursday, including a lunch hour 12:00 - 13:00. On Fridays the main day shift starts at 07:30 and finishes at 17:30, and at weekends officers start at 08:30 and finish at 17:00. The typical number of officers on duty during the main day shift is detailed below. Outside of these times officer numbers will vary. During evenings a small number of staff will remain on the wings between 18:00 - 21:00, at which point night staff take over and the entire prison is 'shut down'. During their lunch hour, one member of staff must elect to remain on duty on each wing whilst prisoners are locked in their cells eating. Officers usually work on the same wing each day, sometimes for many months or even years, although I was informed by an officer that management endeavour to rotate staff frequently to prevent officers from 'getting too comfortable' and potentially neglecting security procedures or becoming too familiar with prisoners on any given wing.

## Wing Overview

**Table 14 - Wing Overview**

Wing	Wing role	Prisoner Type	Operational Capacity*	Ratio Staff:Prisoners**
<b>C</b>	Induction	All new entrants.	70	1:14
<b>A</b>	Convicted Unsentenced	All convicted unsentenced but may accept other prisoners if space needed.	200***	1:33
<b>A1</b>	Selected Full-Time workers including kitchen and gym orderlies	Prisoners of trusted status working full time, receiving more privileges. Not necessarily Enhanced IEP.	16	1:16
<b>B</b>	Convicted Sentenced – two months and over	All sentenced to at least two months but may accept other prisoners if space needed.	169	1:28
<b>B1</b>	Therapeutic Landing	Poor copers. Accepts all types of prisoner.	35	1:18
<b>D</b>	Enhanced (best standard) Category Cs – two months and over	Designed for all Enhanced IEP prisoners serving at least two months. May accept other prisoners if space needed. Majority enter from A and B Wing.	69	1:17
<b>E</b>	Category Cs – two months and over	Designed for all Category C prisoners serving at least two months. May accept other prisoners if space needed. Majority enter from A and B Wing.	98	1:25
<b>F</b>	Unconvicted trials, remands, fines, recalls and sentenced to under two months	Designed for all remand and unconvicted prisoners or those serving less than two months. May accept other prisoners if space needed. Passes prisoners on to A and B wing predominantly.	190	1:32
<b>F1</b>	Drug Treatment	Designed for prisoners receiving drug detox.	40	1:20
<b>CSU</b>	Segregation and Separation	All prisoner types.	9	2:1

\*On D Wing, E Wing and in CSU most cells are single cells housing one prisoner. On all other wings most cells house two prisoners, albeit within cells that were originally designed for one person.

\*\*Unlocked daytime ratio.

\*\*\* Including two single cells for high-risk prisoners and an E-man cell for prisoners on the Escape List.

Whilst this research does not aim to compare the various wings in Cardiff, the above table is useful for highlighting the existence of variation not only between prisons, but also within them. As shown in Table 14 above, HMP Cardiff is comprised of several wings, each with a different function, size and staff:prisoner ratio.

### **Association**

Afternoon association is one of the busiest periods in the prison day. It is the point when all prisoners are unlocked; able to mingle, chat and socialise freely with other prisoners on their wing for a set window of time (typically 15:30 – 16:45). It is also the sole point in the day when all prisoners, excepting wing workers, can communicate with officers about their sentence plans and life inside. For example, they will often need to follow-up on court dates, release dates, progress with housing or resettlement applications, catalogue orders, incoming correspondence from solicitors, adding telephone numbers to telephone accounts, topping up phone PIN cards, and finding out how much money is available in their ‘spends’ (spending account – explained below). Prisoners may also make use of the wing toilets and showers, call their loved ones, obtain writing materials, and ensure that they have adequate toiletries and toilet paper supplies. They may also choose to clean their cells, for which they need to obtain supplies from the wing workers. During association prisoners must also obtain their prescribed medications from the medicine hatch on each wing, the queue for which can be so long that inmates may dedicate their entire daily period of unlock to obtaining their meds – something that I witnessed on several occasions. For around 30 minutes during this 75-minute association period some prisoners will choose to go outside to the exercise yard. I was able to join prisoners ‘on exercise’ on a few occasions, chatting with them and smoking cigarettes with them. Exercise takes place on one of the fenced-in concrete yards dotted around the prison complex – whichever is most easily accessible to each wing. During exercise prisoners would generally mill around for half an hour. Movement is not regulated, as it was years ago when prisoners would walk in concentric circles<sup>81</sup> around the yard. Recreational facilities are also available on the wings, including pool tables and ping pong tables, and inmates may receive a hair cut from the wing barber. Towards the end of association the evening meal will be served, after which prisoners will return to their cells for the night.

A great deal clearly needs to be accomplished during association; and it is not only prisoners that are busy – officers must also act upon a huge number of prisoner requests for help, and the way in which these are dealt with is highly revealing of the state of staff-prisoner relationships. A relatively

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<sup>81</sup> This practice inspired the term ‘nonce’, a term which an officer in Cardiff explained to me was originally used to denote prisoners “Not On Normal Circular Exercise”, and which is still used to this day in prisons as a derogatory term for a sex offender. Also known as ‘Not On Normal Courtyard Exercise’.

high-ranking officer suggested that I observe how busy individual officers are during association to determine which officers are 'good' and 'bad'. After doing so I noticed a recurring pattern in terms of which officers were approached by prisoners with pleas for help during association, and which were not. The officer that offered this advice, Kiera, remains forefront in my mind when I imagine 'the good prison officer' – caring, empathetic and professional; 'present' and 'straight-talking' when interacting with prisoners, to adopt the terminology of Liebling et al (2011b), Crawley (2004) and Arnold (2016) outlined in chapter two. Kiera was also always extremely busy during association. The qualities that prisoners in HMP Cardiff valued in officers was explored in greater depth in chapter four. For now, it is important to note that prisoners in Cardiff generally agreed with Kiera's assessment that officers are distinguishable by their conduct during association. Across all wings, countless prisoners stated that they 'always go to the same officers' because they 'know who the good ones are' – these are the officers that 'if asked to do something, they'll do it'. Chapters four and six of this thesis have shown that the willingness of officers to help prisoners is key to building positive relationships and to easing the pains of imprisonment.

### **Cell Allocation**

A typical cell is 2 metre x 3 metre, containing a bunk bed, a cupboard, a TV, a sink, a toilet – sometimes shaded by a privacy curtain – and a barred window. Mattresses are around 10cm deep, made from foam with a green, waterproof plastic covering and bed linen consisting of one pillow plus one white sheet and a thin woollen blanket. Each cell door has a small window and a flap that opens from the outside to allow officers to see inside the cell from the landing. Most prisoners have a kettle in their cells, and where they have been able to purchase extra items from the catalogue (explained below), they may also have a duvet, a radio, books, snacks and toiletries. A single cell has the same facilities, but with a single bed as opposed to a bunk bed. Single cells are reserved for long-term and Enhanced-level prisoners, and I noted that these were usually more personalised with posters on the walls and a greater amount of material belongings. Some cells, usually those inhabited by wing workers, contained a stockpile of snacks, soft drinks and fruit. The enhanced material wealth of wing workers was explored in greater depth in chapter seven.

In contrast to wing allocation which is determined primarily by a prisoners' legal and sentence status, cell allocation is decided by practicality, availability of space, formal risk-assessment and, in a large part, officer discretion. There is usually a designated 'movements officer' on each wing – a role that is not formally assigned but taken on by individual officers each day by their own inclination. When a prisoner first enters the jail, he will spend at least one night on the Induction wing unless he has been in Cardiff prison before. The prison aims to empty the Induction wing every morning to ensure that adequate space is available for newcomers, therefore a great proportion of



the day is spent 'de-canting' [moving] prisoners to other cells and other wings. Ideally a prisoner will only be moved off the Induction wing when he is deemed ready to enter the general population on the larger wings – usually A, B or F.

Formally, prisoner placement decisions are informed by the 'Cell Sharing Risk Assessment' (CSRA) interview which is undertaken when a new prisoner arrives in the jail. This interview determines whether the individual is likely to pose a risk to themselves or to others through a series of questions relating to the individuals' state of mind and their offence. If deemed a high risk to others, or *certain* others due to characteristics such as ethnicity, he will be placed in a single cell or a suitable double cell. If an individual appears to be at risk of self-harm they will be placed with a cellmate and 'flagged up' by an ACCT [Assessment, Care in Custody and Teamwork] for extra checks by a dedicated officer patrolling the wings. Similarly, prisoners enduring their first night in the prison will be checked by staff every two hours and their cell door will be clearly marked from the outside. Where possible, prisoners aged under 21 are placed in cells together. Prisoners may also need to be 'de-canted' to another wing due to bullying or victimisation, or they may request to be housed with a friend or relative. It is here that the movements officer can exercise a great deal of discretion. It was explained to me that, where possible, staff will try to meet prisoner requests in terms of cell allocation so as to satisfy prisoners and ultimately contribute to the ordered running of each wing. When staff try to acquiesce to the wishes of prisoners it is with the aim of making things "as pleasant as possible for both staff and prisoners" (Officer, informal conversation).

As in other UK prisons and due to overcrowding, most prisoners in Cardiff share cells. As discussed further in chapter six, cell-sharing was described negatively by most prisoners in Cardiff. Understandably, the quality of a prisoner's relationship with his cellmate can have a huge bearing on their experience of imprisonment. They are, after all, locked in a small space with this person for an inordinate number of hours each day. Due to the high amount of discretion involved in cell allocation decisions there is certainly opportunity for officers to exercise favouritism whilst making their decisions, or to use cell allocations to informally punish prisoners that are not in their favour. On more than one occasion I witnessed prisoners pleading with the movements officer to be moved to a different cell or wing. Cell allocation is yet another area of prison life where 'getting ahead'

### **Mealtimes and Food**

The wing workers manage all aspects of mealtimes on each wing. Taking on the role of 'servery workers', four or five of the wing worker group will collect prepared food from the kitchens and serve each prisoner one by one, supervised by wing staff. One prisoner will take the lead – the head servery worker – and oftentimes this individual is also the 'number one' wing worker. When a

prisoner approaches the servery, they will state their name (if not known to the head servery worker), and their food choice will be read out and served to them by the other wing workers. Dessert and plain sliced bread are also provided, and a breakfast pack<sup>82</sup> for the following morning is given during evening meal. Prisoners will select their meals each Sunday for the upcoming week<sup>83</sup>. Prisoners receive a cold lunch and a hot evening meal Monday – Thursday, and a hot lunch plus cold evening meal on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. There are five main meal options to choose from every day, plus one side of carbohydrates; a side of vegetables; and a dessert of either a sweet or fresh fruit<sup>84</sup>. I was offered a sample of prison food by the wing workers on C wing and whilst I have to say that it was tasty, I observed that portion sizes given to prisoners are quite small, and prisoners informed me that the wing servery often runs out of certain foods at mealtimes. Special dietary requirements are catered for and indicated with symbols such as vegetarian, vegan and Halal on the weekly menu. No further food is available to prisoners unless they can order it through the canteen.

Prisoners can purchase a variety of products via the weekly canteen including food and snacks, sweets, toiletries, tobacco<sup>85</sup>, vaping products, batteries, non-alcoholic drinks, and products for hobbies such as model-making pieces or playing cards. The canteen is managed by a private company and prices are in line with those on the outside. It is also possible to purchase larger or more expensive items such as shavers, hi-fi systems, clothes and trainers; or flowers and cards for family members through the prison ‘catalogue’ on the wing. Prisoners can also place orders from various online and high-street shops. Contraband items include those that come with scissors or products which can connect to the internet. Receipts are filed by the prison to evidence that items have been delivered to prisoners to reduce institutional liability if something is stolen by another prisoner or used in the payment of a debt. Canteen is another particularly busy point in the life of the institution, and a time when the risk of victimisation increases because of the extraordinary material goods on offer. In an attempt to reduce this risk, the establishment has imposed measures such as staggering unlock and requiring the production of prisoner ID cards whilst collecting canteen and catalogue orders.

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<sup>82</sup> The ‘breakfast pack’ given to prisoners with their evening meal includes: a piece of fruit, cereal, tea bags, sugar, a portion of butter, a chocolate biscuit bar, a yoghurt, and some milk.

<sup>83</sup> If prisoners fail to submit their menu options, for example due to entering prison on Sunday night, they will receive the ‘default’ vegetarian option.

<sup>84</sup> To provide some examples of food available, on a day in March 2015 prisoners could choose for lunch either: a ham salad sandwich, a vegan sausage baguette, a hot beef burger, a vegan hummus wrap or a rice salad pot. They could have either crisps or fruit on the side, plus an optional bowl of cream of celery soup. For tea on this same day prisoners could choose either: sausage and fried egg, vegetarian moussaka, chicken leg in spicy coconut sauce, cheese and onion pie, or spicy chicken salad with coleslaw. Sides included chips, jacket potato or spicy Chinese noodles, plus peas and apple sponge and custard or fresh fruit.

<sup>85</sup> Until smoking ban in 2016. Since this point, a wider range of vaping products have become available.

## Money

Any earnings gained through in-prison employment will be deposited directly into a prisoners' 'Spending Account' which can be used to purchase items from the canteen or catalogues. In terms of income provided by the institution, wages for employed prisoners such as wing workers are between £7 and £12 per week (around 30p per hour), with minimum earnings set at £4 per week in prisons in England and Wales (Bath and Edgar 2010: 27). Unemployed prisoners that are willing to work but unable to secure a position due to none being available receive £2.50 per week (HMIP 2016: 5). The amount prisoners can spend clearly varies greatly depending on whether they work and the amount they earn, but it is also affected by their circumstances on the outside. Prisoners are also able to access money from their 'Private Cash' or 'Personal Spends' account which includes money sent in from the outside or in their possession at reception. A proportion of this money can be transferred into the prisoners' Spending Account each week, however the amount of personal cash an individual can access each week is dictated by IEP level. For example, convicted prisoners on Enhanced IEP can access £25.50 per week<sup>86</sup> whilst Basic level prisoners may access just £4 per week.

Arguably, even an employed prisoner earning £10 per week might struggle to maintain regular family contact, with just one 30-minute call to a landline costing on average £2.75 during the working week (HMIP 2016: 7). An unemployed prisoner earning just £2.50 per week would not even be able to afford this one telephone call. Money is also typically spent on renting a television for £1 per week per cell, and on canteen items (HMIP 2016: 8). As outlined above, the prices for canteen items are in line with those on the outside, however wages are considerably lower in prison. For example, if a prisoner wished to purchase some budget deodorant, one tube of economy toothpaste, one stamp and a Mars bar they would be looking to pay £3.64 – above the earnings of unemployed prisoners and a third of the earnings of a full-time employed prisoner alone.

Even in prison, money matters. Being able to purchase items from the canteen can greatly decrease material deprivation, and those prisoners that are on Basic level of the IEP, or those with no family or friends on the outside and no prison employment (of which I met many) are at a significant disadvantage. With little money to spend they are more likely to get into debt with other prisoners and more reliant on the institution to meet their health and personal care needs. Due to slow bureaucratic processes in terms of canteen access<sup>87</sup> and naivety in terms of prison processes, new

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<sup>86</sup> This is the maximum a prisoner may be able to spend per week. However, in practice, this is usually limited to £15.50/week (HMIP 2016: 4)

<sup>87</sup> Canteen is unavailable for the first two weeks of imprisonment.

prisoners are particularly vulnerable to building debts with other prisoners (HMIP 2016: 4), something that is exacerbated by the prominence of ‘double bubble<sup>88</sup>’ deals in prison.

### **Prisoner Employment**

There is a rich body of literature that explores prison work (see, for example, Simon 1999; Piacentini 2002; Pandeli 2015; Vagg and Smartt 2018). It is not within the scope of this thesis to discuss the benefits and risks associated with prison labour beyond noting that if prison work is meaningless, mindless, does not develop transferable skills or if it is poorly paid, it is likely to be exploitative. Yet if the opposite is true, and the work provides meaning and improves post-release prospects, then prison labour may have a rightful place within a humane prison system (Simon 1999; Piacentini 2002).

There are many employment positions available in prisons, based both on and off the wings. The Activities Hub in HMP Cardiff is responsible for allocating all new admissions to work or education activities – a decision that is determined by:

- Sentence length and plan
- Offence
- Education Levels
- Activities Requested
- Alerts (such as risk to females or children, involved in organised crime, ACCT status)
- Previous responses to trust (Release on Temporary Licence (ROTL) / Abscond)
- Adjudication
- Case Notes
- IEP level
- Medical issues

Adapted from HMP Cardiff [Internal] Activity Policy 2015

Administrators in the Activities Hub will liaise with wing officers, the security department, safer custody<sup>89</sup>, healthcare, and workshop instructors to perform a risk assessment using the conditions above. Ultimately, a prisoner will be deemed suitable for either a ‘high-risk’, ‘medium-risk’ or ‘low-risk’ job, with high-risk jobs being the positions which afford the greatest freedoms (Peer Advisors, Off-wing cleaners, Orderlies, Rail and Road Workshops and Waste Management). All other positions are designated as ‘medium-risk’<sup>90</sup> and each position has a corresponding minimum IEP level. Please

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<sup>88</sup> Colloquial term for demanding double the amount of the item loaned in return, particularly tobacco.

<sup>89</sup> Prison department responsible for preventing deaths, violence and self-harm.

<sup>90</sup> One exception to this is the position of Therapeutic (poor-copers) landing worker which is the only ‘low-risk’ job.

see Appendix 7 for a list of all available prisoner activities and their corresponding recruitment criterion.

Several positions are supposedly available to prisoners on Basic level of the IEP, and within the national IEP policy it is stipulated that work, education, and other off-wing activities should be available to *all*<sup>2</sup> prisoners, including those on Basic (PSI 30/2013). Yet my own experiences in HMP Cardiff would suggest that very few Basic level prisoners are able to engage with employment. Indeed, every Basic IEP level prisoner that I encountered informed me that they were locked in their cells for 23 hours per day. It is possible that when the Activities Hub liaise with officers regarding work allocations, any prisoners perceived negatively by wing officers may be at a disadvantage. The most common type of 'constructive activity' offered to prisoners is employment in workshops and education. These prisoners undertake their work in classrooms and work areas off the wing, supervised by their respective workshop or education instructor. Less-commonly, a select few prisoners will be employed in 'trusted positions' which represent the most high-status roles in that they are rare, recruitment criteria are strict, and they provide the inmate with enhanced freedoms.

#### **Trusted Positions**

For the purposes of this discussion, 'trusted' prison employment opportunities have been grouped as Peer Advisors and Listeners, Orderlies, and Wing Workers (see Table 15 below). The purpose of this grouping is to show how wing workers differ from these other groups of 'trusted' workers, providing important contextual information for the empirical chapters in this thesis.

**Table 15 - Types of employment for 'trusted' prisoners**

Position	Job Risk Level	Location of work	Distinguishing features
Peer Advisors and Listeners	High	Residential and non-residential areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NVQ Level 3 qualified</li> <li>• Complete 6-monthly MDT</li> <li>• Access to sensitive information regarding fellow inmates</li> <li>• Less restricted access to material resources<sup>91</sup></li> </ul>
Orderly	High	Non-residential areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment based on officer discretion</li> <li>• Work independently off wing</li> <li>• Less restricted access to material resources</li> <li>• Heavily relied upon by officers</li> </ul>
Wing Workers	Medium	Residential areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment based on officer discretion</li> <li>• Work relatively independently on wing</li> <li>• Less restricted access to material resources</li> <li>• Work closely with, and heavily relied upon by, officers</li> <li>• Ability to control the distribution of goods to other inmates</li> </ul>

Peer Advisors are employed to provide information, advice and guidance to other prisoners on topics ranging from housing and debts to employment and training. The scheme is usually run by the third sector organisation St Giles Trust. These prisoners spend much of their day in the Resettlement area of the prison and are trusted by staff to work there independently, with access to facilities for making their own hot drinks. When carrying out their duties on the wing they are usually stationed at a table at the end of each wing during association so that other prisoners can ask for their help and advice, which naturally allows them to become privy to personal information that is volunteered by other inmates. A related position is that of a Listener who will have been selected and trained by The Samaritans. This small group of individuals are available to other inmates on a 24-hour basis to provide support and a 'listening ear' if fellow inmates are experiencing problems or are in crisis. To delineate these peer support positions from that of a wing worker, these prisoners do not report to wing officers, they work both on and off the wing, and only a handful of inmates will be able to gain these support positions due to the strict recruitment criteria.

<sup>91</sup> Material Resources include tea, coffee, milk, sugar, books, pens, paper.

Orderlies work in areas such as the gym, healthcare, the Centre<sup>92</sup>, Reception and the Chapel, performing various tasks to ensure the smooth daily running of their area. For example, the chapel orderly would assist the chaplain in preparing the chapel for prayers, organising religious books and materials, preparing drinks for the chaplain and worshippers, and cleaning. Of these orderlies there is one individual that occupies the most trusted position of all – the ‘number one orderly’ or ‘red band’. This individual carries out orderly duties in otherwise-restricted areas of the prison such as the prison Centre, working alone and unescorted, however he does not carry keys. The position of orderly is very similar to that of wing worker, however orderlies usually work outside of the residential wings and their jobs appear to be relatively isolating. For example, the job of Reception orderly could be most likened to that of a caretaker – an individual that is seen but not heard, responsibly carrying out his cleaning duties but with minimal interaction with officers and other prisoners. Officers place a great deal of trust in these individuals to follow the rules, complete their duties without direct supervision, with one orderly even being tasked with ‘looking out for me’ during my observatory fieldwork on Reception.

Wing workers, finally, occupy a particularly unique role in the daily life of the prison for they work exclusively on the wings, reporting directly to wing officers. They are relied upon by wing officers and they have a great deal of influence in the lives of other prisoners. In comparison to peer advisors and orderlies, there are comparatively more wing worker positions available and the formal recruitment criteria is ‘officially’ less stringent. They are also highly visible to other inmates and these factors make the position of wing worker highly distinctive, as shown in chapter seven.

### **Wing Workers**

There are usually 6-8 workers on each wing. To provide an idea of the proportion of prisoners in Cardiff that are wing workers, with around 800 prisoners in total in the prison and around 6 wing workers on each of the 6 wings, at least 5% of the prison population are wing workers.

Wing worker duties include:

- Keeping the wing clean daily
- Painting the wing when required
- Providing new prisoners with a basic induction and new kit. For example, on C wing the wing workers would meet new prisoners on arrival and help them to order food using the weekly menu, as well as answering questions about how prison life works. They would then provide new arrivals with a breakfast pack, bedding and clothing as needed
- Cleaning cells when vacated in preparation for new admissions

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<sup>92</sup> The large central circular landing from which several wings radiate.

- Distributing basic provisions to other prisoners such as cleaning materials, toiletries, bed linen and clothing
- Distributing canteen orders on some wings
- Retrieving food from the kitchens
- Serving food to the entire wing
- Cleaning up the servery section after meals
- Providing barbering services for all prisoners on the wing

In performing these duties, wing workers contribute to the daily running of the jail and spend much of their time unlocked from their cells, working closely with wing staff. It shall be seen that by virtue of these responsibilities, cleaners enjoy a variety of extra privileges which make the position highly sought after. There is usually a 'number one' cleaner that manages his team of around 6 workers, delegating tasks and organising the working day. During a typical day in Cardiff this 'number one' was only distinguishable from the rest of the wing worker group during mealtimes when he would oversee the entire meal-serving process, as described in chapter seven. Excluding this time, the wing workers were a homogeneous group, and the 'number one' cleaner is therefore not singled out during this analysis.

Wing workers are distinguished from other prisoners by their appearance – they are provided with a uniform of green trousers, a green top and a green jumper as well as work boots. Whilst working on the servery, they will then adorn a white cover-all apron and hat. I observed that most cleaners in HMP Cardiff were well-known to prison staff due to either serving a longer sentence or, more commonly, due to serving several sentences in Cardiff throughout their lives. They were often white Welsh males aged over 25 serving at least a few months and appeared to be physically fit and have a 'presence' about them. They were usually on first-name terms with officers and their interactions with staff were notably informal. Most wing workers had accumulated material wealth and their position in the prisoner hierarchy was striking. Each of these characteristics, and their possible implications, were scrutinised at length in chapter seven of this thesis.

### **Prisoner Reception**

On entry into the establishment all prisoners must first pass through Reception. Whether being brought in from the police station, from court, or transferred from another prison; all new entrants will arrive at the Reception gate in the centre of the prison complex. The Reception gate is double-locked, like almost all doorways in the prison, with a barred gate and a solid door each requiring the use of a different key. The interior of the Reception area is quite bare, with low ceilings, few windows, and no adornment beyond that which is functionally necessary. The holding cell where prisoners must wait to be processed contains several posters providing information about The Samaritans, PACT (a national charity providing advice for prisoners and their families), the prison no-



violence policy, the IEP scheme, and CARATS (the Counselling Assessment Referral Advice Throughcare service for substance misuse). A wooden bench runs along the wall of the holding room and a toilet is available in a small adjoining room. In the event of an incident or general alarm this room can be locked to detain prisoners.

The prison receives new prisoners Monday through Saturday, and up until early 2015 on Sundays also. Generally, the purpose-built custody vans begin to deliver batches of prisoners after midday and can continue to do so until 10pm. The working hours of staff working in Reception are therefore often unpredictable and unsociable. In Reception there is a large room resembling a warehouse for holding all prisoners' belongings. Individuals can keep up to 3 large bags of belongings as well as small valuable items kept in a safe. Staff explained that it is commonplace for individuals to pack up all of their worldly possessions when arrested by the police with the knowledge that they will likely lose their home whilst incarcerated, resulting in the prison having to store a vast array of items, ranging from musical instruments to carpets. The storage room is comprised of shelf upon shelf of labelled boxes and bags containing all items of monetary, personal and sentimental value to the men living on the wings above. Reception also deals with the release of prisoners. On release a prisoner must sign a document to confirm that he has received his belongings and he must state any grievances or complaints held against the prison. He may then proceed to the waiting custody van for transfer to court or to another establishment, or he will be escorted to the front gate for release back into the world.

Below is a fieldnotes excerpt describing the processing of a prisoner in Reception:

*A loud knock on the Reception gate door signifies the arrival of the first batch of incoming prisoners. The escorting staff must wait to be summoned by officers in Reception and almost ten minutes later the party are allowed in. The five prisoners coming in from court head straight to the holding cell to the right of the Reception gate where they must wait for their surname to be called. Some prisoners have been in Cardiff before and these appear to 'lead the way' to the holding cell. Meanwhile, the escorting staff hand over the belongings, valuables and papers of the newcomers to Cardiff prison staff for filing, labelling, and storing.*

*Just five minutes after entering the holding cell the first prisoner steps up to the desk and is asked a series of questions. He must confirm that he understands his sentence, why he is there, and whether he has any bodily injuries. A smoking pack and PIN credit for the wing telephones are offered and all information is immediately stored on the computer database, alongside his 'mugshot' and fingerprints which are captured during processing. The prisoner*

*will then be called through to a secondary room where he will sit behind a long desk faced by several officers for further questioning and a full-body search. The style of this first interview varies depending upon whether the prisoner is a 'first-timer', and whether he is complicit, aggressive or highly distressed. It is clear that the majority of officers working here are highly attuned to the emotional states of their charges, a necessity for working in Reception where staff must be able to "calm people down when they're up or bring them up if they're down" (Officer, Reception). After answering a series of questions concerning their general well-being it is then time for the strip search. During a full body search the top and bottom clothes are removed separately so the prisoner is not fully without clothes at any one time. If suspected of concealing drugs or contraband the individual must be scanned by a seated x-ray machine to examine his lower body.*

*Following this stage of processing the prisoner then has a consultation with a prison nurse to document any medical needs. He then must shower and will be provided with prison-issue clothing which consists of grey jogging bottoms and a green t-shirt. For some individuals this may be the first access they have had to showering facilities in weeks or days if homeless or if having been held in a police cell. All prisoners may wear their own shoes or choose to wear prison-issue shoes. Prisoners on remand are allowed to wear their own clothes. Any prisoners highlighted as at high risk of attempting to escape are placed on the 'E-Man list' and must wear a dress of brightly coloured yellow and green trousers and top.*

*The prisoner must then engage in a further one-to-one interview with an officer to determine his accommodation needs. During this interview the officer will try to find out more about the background of the individual, whether they have anybody to contact on the outside, if they have any interest in activities, or any requirements in terms of education and disabilities. The prisoner is also given the opportunity to voice any concerns or questions. Full notes are recorded for the prisoners' case-notes, which will accompany him throughout his sentence. At the end of one of these interviews that I observed, the officer reassured the prisoner that he would be in a cell with another prisoner of a similar age and that he could 'watch the football'. He was advised, "don't sit [feeling] sad in your cell all day, come and talk to us" (Officer, Reception). The prisoner left this interview with a promise of a prompt gym induction the next day, something which he was highly enthusiastic about. This interview is clearly an important first step in ensuring the well-being of the prisoner. It is also an opportunity for the interviewing officer to demonstrate an interest in the individual, to reassure, and to offer support.*

Whilst the processing of prisoners is undertaken in an extremely systematic and bureaucratic way; the discretion, experience, training and compassion of officers working in Reception can shape the entire prison experience. It influences prisoner socialisation and their impressions of officers and the prison itself. This description of inmate processing is highly reminiscent of Goffman's description of entry into the total institution, as outlined in chapter two, including the 'transformation of the self' which occurs when inmates are stripped of their possessions, searched, and must submit to their new position within the hierarchy of the institution. After passing through Reception, new inmates will progress up a staircase to the induction wing where they will be met by the wing workers to complete their weekly food menu and receive their bed-pack<sup>93</sup> and some prison-issue toiletries, then shown to their cell. During their first few days in custody they will attend an induction session led by an officer, sign the Custody Compact (see chapter five) and undergo several interviews to assess their risk of self-harm, cell-sharing risk, health, and any other needs that will contribute to their sentence planning.

### **The Seg**

The segregation unit is located underneath A Wing and has an occupational capacity of 9 prisoners, including 7 basic cells, 1 dirty protest cell<sup>94</sup> and 1 safe cell<sup>95</sup>. Three officers work in CSU at all times, and at least two officers are required when unlocking any prisoners within the CSU.

A prisoner may be sent to the 'Care and Separation Unit' (CSU), known informally as 'The Seg' or 'Seg Unit', for many different reasons. Firstly, they may be placed there for reasons of 'Good Order and Discipline' (GOAD) if they are deemed by officers to be disruptive on their wing. Such individuals will stay in CSU for 72 hours until their case is reviewed by a Governor. Prisoners may also be sent to CSU if on a 'Rule 43' – accused of disruptive behaviour on the wings *and* pending adjudication. Prisoners in CSU are under Cellular Confinement (CC) and all cells contain CCTV.

The privileges scheme works slightly differently in CSU – prisoners here do not go to work or to the gym and they are not allowed TVs in their cells. If they display good behaviour, they will be able to have a radio and isolated visits. The prisoners here will have access to showers, phones and exercise but again they must not have contact with any other prisoners, including others in CSU. Upon entering The Seg, prisoners are not automatically taken down to Basic level IEP, however if they are

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<sup>93</sup> The bed-pack consists of sheets, a pillow and pillow case.

<sup>94</sup> A cell designed for prisoners that smear excrement inside the cell in protest of their treatment or situation.

<sup>95</sup> A cell designed to reduce the ability of prisoners to engage in self-harm or suicide. Components of the furniture and any joints with the walls and floor are free of grooves or gaps which may be used as a ligature point (HMPS 2005: 5).

'nicked' [called to an adjudication hearing] they would not be able to stay on Enhanced level any longer. Staff bring meals to prisoners' cell doors and they must use foam bowls as opposed to the usual plastic crockery due to the increased risk of self-harm. Their confinement and separation from the rest of the prison is therefore maintained at all times. Prisoners in CSU are visited by the Chaplain and an IMB [Independent Monitoring Board<sup>96</sup>] representative every day, and their case will be reviewed by a prison governor every month for as long as they are confined there.

Officers must be trained in the use of PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) for use with prisoners residing in the dirty protest cell. If unlocking highly agitated or aggressive prisoners they will adopt full protective riot gear. During my time spent observing The Seg the officers working there reflected upon the hiring process and it appears that they must possess an array of personal qualities for them to be deemed suitable for working in this area of the jail. They must go through a stringent application procedure involving an interview with a CM, a Senior Officer<sup>97</sup> (SO), the prison Governor and a NOMS Psychologist to assess whether they are suitable for the position. They suggested that to work in that area of the prison you must be 'patient', 'able to multi-task', able to 'move from aggression to calm very quickly', and to 'forget incidents quickly'. They explained to me that the situation can change very quickly in CSU, for example in one moment they may be 'shouted and screamed at' by a prisoner or need to exercise physical restraint, and the next they may need to offer comfort, provide food, and interact 'normally' with the same individual (Officer, CSU). Whilst this sudden switch between order and disorder certainly occurs on the main residential wings also, the prisoners contained in CSU are extremely vulnerable and can be highly disruptive and distressed. Officers working in this area are therefore 'hand-picked' and will not be posted elsewhere in the jail, nor will non-CSU-trained officers work this area.

### **Dealing with Disturbances**

Whilst this study is not primarily concerned with the control of major disturbances it is important to understand the processes that are in place to deal with such occurrences. This is because they have the power to influence a prisoners' quality of life, his motivation to follow the prison rules (see chapter five), and even, ultimately, the length of his sentence. In what follows I outline three formal order-maintenance mechanisms that the prison has available, ranging from adjudications to the use of physical restraint, through to the use of riot gear to control widespread disorder.

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<sup>96</sup> The IMB is formed of volunteer members of the public. They independently visit prisons to ensure that proper standards are met in terms of decency and prisoner care.

<sup>97</sup> In 2013 (with the introduction of NWOW – see chapter four) the role of Senior Officer was replaced by two new roles: Supervising Officer and Offender Supervisor. However, in 2015 all officers in HMP Cardiff still habitually used the term 'Senior Officer'.

## Adjudications

When a prisoner breaks the rules, he will either be issued with a warning and/or moved to Basic level of the IEP or, if the offence is deemed to be serious enough or they have previously received two warnings, they will be put on report and must attend an adjudication hearing. Adjudication hearings are conducted in a purpose-built room in the prison which is at odds with other offices in the jail. It is somewhat 'grandeur', containing comfortable chairs, a large wooden desk, and has the unmistakable air of a courtroom. Indeed, an adjudication hearing may best be described as a court case on a smaller scale, and if the alleged offence is sufficiently serious it may be referred to the police for investigation. Adjudication hearings are usually attended by three members of staff escorting the prisoner, plus a representative of the IMB that acts as a neutral party, and a governor-grade officer resides over proceedings. Accusers and witnesses may also be present. To begin, the presiding Governor will ascertain whether the prisoner is 'fit to proceed', whether he understands the case presented, and whether he pleads guilty or not guilty. The charge and any supporting evidence are then read out, and it is the Governor that ultimately dictates the punishment given. A form is completed stating the exact Prison Rule which has been broken, and the standard punishment tariff (PSI 47/2011: 44-50) will be consulted. The prisoner will then receive his fate and be escorted back to the CSU or to the wing, depending upon his punishment.

During the adjudication hearing that I sat in on, a prisoner was being accused of misbehaviour by a civilian staff member working in the kitchens and I was struck by how much a prisoners' past behaviour can weigh heavily in the case. The consideration of a prisoners' case-notes and reports of his general behaviour on the wings, as written by officers, could 'make or break' a case. This is a further aspect of the prison regime where a prisoners' reputation amongst officers can dictate his life inside. The amount of discretion that can be exercised by the presiding governor when deciding on the punishment to be given is also staggering, and the accused has no automatic right to legal representation<sup>98</sup>. Concerns about the prison adjudication procedures have previously been raised regarding the lack of consistency between prisons in terms of punishments awarded (Howard League 2017), and about procedural inaccuracies and insufficient investigations (Prisons and Probation Ombudsman 2013). The extra punishments given to offenders during internal adjudication hearings can significantly increase the intensity of the pains of imprisonment. For example, punishments can include: a caution, loss of privileges for a number of days, exclusion from work, deduction or stoppage of earnings, cellular confinement (for no longer than 21 days<sup>99</sup>), movement to

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<sup>98</sup> Excepting adjudications presided over by an external judge or independent adjudicator.

<sup>99</sup> This can be extended by a further 14 days if the individual breaks further rules.

another wing, or additional days<sup>100</sup> added to the sentence (PSI 47/2011: 44-50). These punishments can limit family contact, increase insecurity, decrease autonomy and increase boredom. There are also a wide range of behaviours that could result in an adjudication hearing, from disobeying a lawful order to fighting (Rule 51, The Prison Rules 1999 no. 728). During the first quarter of 2015 the most common reason for an adjudication being held in Cardiff was 'Possession'. The second most common was 'Disobeys', followed by 'Threatening'<sup>101</sup>.

### **Use of Force**

Another formal tool at officers' disposal during times of unrest is Use of Force (UoF). When justified, any member of staff in an establishment is legally allowed to use force on another person without consent. For the justification to be valid, the use of force must be reasonable, necessary, of an appropriate severity, and proportionate to the seriousness of the circumstances (PSO 1600: 5). Types of force include the use of Personal Safety Techniques, Batons, Ratchet Handcuffs or Control and Restraint (C&R) techniques (PSO 2000: 9-12). All officers are trained in the use of C&R, and some may have completed advanced training. During the first quarter of 2015, the majority of incidents of UoF in HMP Cardiff were initiated in response to spontaneous occurrences as opposed to being planned. UoF was most used in response to 'non-compliance', followed by 'threatening/abusive', 'fighting' and 'assaults on staff'<sup>102</sup>. Non-compliance could include a wide range of behaviours such as not following the Prison Rules or not adhering to the orders of officers.

### **Riots**

Before moving on to explore the geo-cultural context of HMP Cardiff, it is important to include a note on what happens when order does significantly break down. If disturbances occur a prison-wide general alarm will sound throughout the jail. It is standard practice for one or two 'surplus' members of staff to immediately be deployed to the area where the alarm was pressed. One of my own experiences of a general alarm incident is given in chapter five. If the incident continues, staff will then secure their own working area and more officers will be deployed to the area of the general alarm. If the disturbance escalates officers will then retreat, move off the wings, and return heavily equipped with riot gear, most effectively described by Johnny:

***OK, so why then, there are more of you than there are officers, so why don't you turn the place over?***

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<sup>100</sup> Additional days can only be imposed by an independent adjudicator (district judge), not by adjudicating governors.

<sup>101</sup> Data gathered from HMP Cardiff internal statistics, 22 April 2015.

<sup>102</sup> Data gathered from HMP Cardiff internal statistics, 22 April 2015.

*Got to think of the consequences...let me tell you now, they'll come through them doors in fucking riot shields and they will fucking batter you, batter you, and batter you...they use flash bangs and that, they chuck like little grenades in like BOOM. And they come in and they're beating you...[Y]ou know what's going to happen...every officer, there'll be like two officers I think from each landing which run off, so we're all meant to bang up so there's only one officer left on this wing and all them will go where the fucking thing is, so can you imagine, and then when everyone is banging up, if it kicked off, most of the people will just go and bang themselves up because they don't wanna get into trouble. You start a little riot or something like that, there's only going to be so many who stick with it, especially when it starts getting mad, people think fucking hell.*

- Johnny

As demonstrated by Johnny's words and explored in depth in chapter five, this underlying and obstinate threat of force is never far from prisoners' consciousnesses, something that assists in maintaining mundane order.

### **Rules and Rituals**

This appendix has provided a solid understanding of how the prison 'works' on a daily basis. It has provided a comprehensive description of various aspects of prison life, from the regime, to cells, food, and the punishment system – each of which have a fundamental bearing on the way that imprisonment is experienced.

In terms of prison order, officers and prisoners in HMP Cardiff placed great stock in the peace-keeping function of the prison regime:

*Most prisoners follow the rules because they've been in jail before. They know what's expected of them, they want some normality, they want to live in an ordered society, if there were no rules there would be anarchy and there would be huge disruption.*

- Officer Andy

Officer Andy believes that the rituals, rules and customs that come together to form mundane prison life help to prevent disorder and increase feelings of security amongst prisoners. As introduced in chapter two and returned to in chapter five, Eamonn Carrabine's notion of the 'dull compulsion' of the prison regime aligns quite well with Officer Andy's assessment of order preservation in HMP Cardiff. Every aspect of prison life is highly regimented – from the cells in which prisoners sleep to how they receive their meals – and this helps to provide a semblance of 'normality' for prisoners,

but also a sense of inevitability of the prisoners' predicament. The severity of measures available to deal with disturbances outlined above, and the awareness of such measures shown by Johnny, would support Crewe's (2011a) observation that the 'firm smack' of government remains poised to severely punish. Importantly however, this description of daily life in HMP Cardiff has shown that the way that the regime is delivered, and particularly the way it is experienced by prisoners, rests in a large part upon officer conduct and their discretionary decisions.