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# Half in/half out: exploring the experiences of the families of prisoners in a Scottish prison visitors' centre

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# Abstract

The research upon which this thesis is based aims to build on a rich and growing body of work about how imprisonment affects, is practiced by, and structures families with a loved one in prison. It aims to do this by contributing to knowledge on the lived experiences of prison visiting for the families of prisoners, who were until recently largely overlooked in prisons scholarship. In turn, this thesis aims to shed light on families' overall experience of the imprisonment of a loved one(s).

The research underpinning this thesis involved eliciting the experiences of families, through carrying out ethnographic observation and qualitative interviews in a unique field-site, the Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh, over a nine-month period (during 2014-2015). This thesis builds on the literature that documents the many negative effects of imprisonment for the families of those confined, particularly through its exploration of how imprisonment alters the space and time of families. This thesis notes that these myriad negative impacts require considered attention and action.

Yet, this thesis also makes a key and critical argument that the experience of imprisonment for many families should be considered within the broader context of their lives. These families' lives are often characterised by not only imprisonment(s), but by structural disadvantage, and by the presence and experience of varied and intrusive state interventions. This thesis argues that each of these too are often experienced as imprisoning, and in turn questions whether a focus exclusively on the pains specific to familial imprisonment- in scholarship, policy, and practice- risks encouraging a continuing focus on the prison as both the only cause of, and main site for finding solutions, to family difficulties.

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# Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank all of you family members who so openly shared your views and experiences of imprisonment, without which this research would not have been possible. Thanks also go to all of you, members of staff at the Visitors' Centre, for sharing your views and experiences too, and for being so supportive of my presence in the Centre for many months- particular thanks to Teeny, Susan, Nicola and Kerry. It was great getting to you know you all.

Thank you to you, the Salvation Army, for kindly allowing me research access to the Centre- I am very appreciative of the opportunity to conduct the research in this unique space. I am very fortunate to have received full funding for this PhD from the Dawes Trust. I would like to thank you, the trustees, and advisors of the trust, for believing in the value of the research, and for fully funding it; without your generosity, this PhD would not have been embarked upon.

In addition to the help offered by my University of Glasgow supervisors Dr Sarah Armstrong and Professor Michele Burman at the stage of applying for a place and for funding, I am very grateful for the advice and supported offered by members of staff at Edinburgh Law School, specifically to you: Dr Richard Jones, Dr Anna Souhami, and Dr Leonidas Cheliotis. Your very helpful insights and feedback on my proposal was critical to securing a university place and funding, and I am grateful for your individual and collective inputs. Particular thanks go to you Dr Lynne Copson for your sound advice, reassurance and encouragement to my panicked email sent during my final undergraduate exams when I rather belatedly realised I didn't want to be a lawyer and I didn't know what else I wanted to do. Your support and advice led to my MSc and to this PhD and I'm very grateful to you for this- who'd have known it back in that fateful Gender and Justice class!

My supervisors, Dr Sarah Armstrong, and Professor Michele Burman, have offered valuable insights, wise advice, and unfailing professional and pastoral support from the very beginning and throughout the course of this PhD; I am very grateful to you for all the support you have given me.

Thank you to you- Ivy Lodge's current and past residents, staff, and students- for creating such a supportive and intellectually stimulating research community to learn and work in. Thanks to you all for making Glasgow such a great place to study- I'm sorry I didn't make it through more!

Thank you to my office mates (including next door, upstairs and honorary) and now friends- Annie, Annemiek, Debbie, Meg, Emiline, Anna, Laura, Caitlin, Maureen, and Sarah. I would like to thank you all for the many chats, cups of tea, texts and emails, lunches, dinners and drinks, hugs, and laughs. One of the best bits about doing this PhD has been getting to know you all.

As always, my friends and wider family have been great. You have always been there and have continued to offer your encouragement, particularly in the final stretch of writing up. Thank you to you all for keeping me going!

Huge thanks are due to my husband Simon. You've been a source of endless support and patience throughout, but particularly in these last few months. Thank you for your encouragement and for all your practical help with cooking dinner and doing the dishes. Thanks for putting up with the PhD, a little bit of PhD related moaning, and me- I love you.

And lastly, to you Mum and Dad- thank you for all your love and support all my life, and for all that you have done and continue to do for me- the list is endless. But particular thanks to you Mum for being the best Mum- for your advice, for always saying the right thing, and being on my side; and particular thanks to you Dad, the cleverest person I know, for being the best Dad, and for encouraging my love of learning from the beginning, which has ultimately led to this PhD (I'm sorry my interests are less mathematically oriented than yours though!). Mum and Dad- this is for you.

# Author's Declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Signature: _____

Printed name: _____

# List of acronyms, terms, and names

## Acronyms

APVU: Assisted Prisons Visits Unit

EU: European Union

FCO: Family Contact Officer

HDC: Home Detention Curfew

HMP: Her Majesty's Prison

HMPYOI: Her Majesty's Prison and Young Offenders' Institution

HMYOI: Her Majesty's Young Offenders' Institution

ICM: Integrated Case Management

LGBTI: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex [people]

NPVCSG: National Prison Visitors' Centre Steering Group

NHS: National Health Service

OLR: Order for Lifelong Restriction

PPC: Prisoner's Personal Cash

SIMD: Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

SORN: Sex Offender Registration and Notification (USA only)

SPS: Scottish Prison Service

WRVS: Women's Royal Voluntary Service.

## Terms and names

Beast/Beastie/Beastie Feasty: Often used in the prison context, this is a pejorative term for an individual convicted of a sexual offence

Junkies: Drug users or addicts

Pass/passing: Prison slang; term used to describe the passing of prison contraband (for example, illegal drugs) between visitors and prisoners, and between prisoners themselves

Saughton: HMP Edinburgh

Screws: Prison officers

The Open Prison/the Castle/Open: HMP Castle Huntly

The Polis: The Police.

Source: Various

**Note**

Where I have considered explanation of these to be necessary for the reader's understanding, the acronyms, terms, and names are explained more fully in the relevant sections of this thesis. A glossary of Scottish dialect referenced in this thesis is provided at the end of this thesis. Both lists have aimed to be as comprehensive as possible. However, it is possible that some acronyms, terms, names, and Scottish dialect that warrant inclusion within these, have been inadvertently overlooked.

# Chapter 1: Introduction to thesis

## Overview

The research upon which this thesis is based aims to build on a rich body of work about how the families of prisoners experience the incarceration of a loved one, including how imprisonment is practiced by and structures families. It aims to do this by contributing to the growing amount of knowledge on the lived experiences of prison visiting from the unique perspective of the families of prisoners, who were historically overlooked in prisons scholarship. In turn, it also aims to offer insights into their overall experience of the incarceration of a loved one(s).

The research involved eliciting the experiences of families, through ethnographic observation over a nine-month period (during 2014-2015) at the Visitors' Centre (the Centre) at HMP Edinburgh. The Centre, which sits outside of the security perimeter of the prison, but is not quite an open, public space, is a pre-visit locale for families: a place to wait, eat, mingle (or not) before they enter the prison and its visit room. I supplemented ethnographic observation with qualitative interviews with adult family members and members of staff employed at the Centre. To bring in the neglected and under researched perspectives of children, I employed a specific element of research using a drawing and talking activity I developed.

In addition to adding nuance and depth to existing literature, importantly, this thesis aims to provide an original contribution by focusing on a unique space of visiting- the Centre; and by including a range of perspectives and experiences, including those of children. The spatial dimension's importance to the research, which was not something that I identified going into the project and had not considered in selecting the field-site (my serendipitous journey leading to the research is charted in Chapter 4), emerged only as I was underway in my fieldwork. Yet space turned out to have powerful implications for my understanding of the social and structural dynamics of families affected by imprisonment, and enabled me to draw connections between families' experiences of imprisonment and their wider experiences in their everyday lives.

The thesis lends support to literature in documenting the many negative effects of imprisonment for the families of those confined, and notes that these must be addressed.

However, this thesis also makes a key and critical argument that the experience of imprisonment for many families should be situated within the broader context of their lives, which are often characterised by not only imprisonment(s), but by structural disadvantage and by the presence and experience of varied and intrusive state interventions. I argue that these share features with the prison (features which may be considered synonymous with, or exclusive to, the prison) and that these may also be experienced as imprisoning by the families who encounter them. I argue that a focus exclusively on the pains caused by the imprisonment of a family member, across a range of spheres including the academy, policy and practice, risks perpetuating and cementing a persistent focus on prison as the only cause of, and only solution to, the problems experienced by families.

**Aims of the study**

The study was fundamentally exploratory in nature. It sought to uncover how the families of prisoners' experience prison visiting, at a particular field-site of the Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh. Visitors' Centres vary considerably in their structure, format, and purposes (as will be explored in Chapter 3), but in essence they are the designated areas in which visiting families wait prior to, and after, visiting an imprisoned loved one. The Centre at HMP Edinburgh, which will be properly introduced in Chapter 3, operates independently of the prison (and is run by a voluntary sector organisation) but works in close partnership with the prison, primarily through the booking in of all visiting family and friends it undertakes on its behalf.

This study sought to uncover how the dynamics of prison visiting including its spatial, temporal, and affective dimensions were experienced by a wide range of family members and families. Despite its exploratory orientation, key points of inquiry helped to structure the empirical work. These included:

- What effects or dynamics of prison visiting does something unique like a visitors' centre produce, in contrast to traditional waiting areas or corridors for family members?
- What role (or otherwise) does the Visitors' Centre have in supporting families, or in mitigating some of the negative impacts of imprisonment?

- What are families' interactions like with other families and with staff in the visitors' centre and in prison? Does the visitors' centre foster, even impliedly, certain types of social interaction?
- How does the inclusion of a range of familial voices, cross cutting age, gender, and other demographic characteristics, and beyond those traditionally the focus of research attention[1], contribute to our understanding of the experience of visiting for families?

Importantly, what emerged was an in depth and nuanced picture, of not only families' experience of visiting, but of their wider experience of the imprisonment of a family member, and of everyday life.

**Outline of thesis arguments**

In this chapter (Chapter 1) I briefly introduce the research upon which this thesis is based, outlining the context, the aims of the study, the structure and key arguments presented, and the original contribution this thesis makes to the field.

I begin Chapter 2 by introducing the field of prisoners' families research, and set this against the context of high rates of imprisonment at both national and international levels. I then provide a critical overview of the key themes contained in the rich body of literature on imprisonment's effects for the families of prisoners. This includes discussion of families' experiences of prison visiting. I point out that a strong tendency of this literature is to portray imprisonment as being experienced as a highly *negative event* in the lives of families, and that the language of trauma tends to accompany discussion of imprisonment's effects, and begin to offer my critical analysis of this approach.

In Chapter 3 I provide context to the research upon which this thesis is based. I discuss the visiting entitlements for prisoners in Scotland, and the evolution of prison visitors' centres in the UK. I then provide detailed discussion of HMP Edinburgh, the Centre at HMP Edinburgh and the visiting process for families. One of the particularly notable features of the prison where this research was located, and in contradistinction to much research on

[1] This will be discussed in Chapter 2, but traditionally the focus of research attention in this area are the women partners of male prisoners, and the children of imprisoned parents.

families' experiences, is its diverse population. HMP Edinburgh contains just about all categories of prisoner: men and women, remand and sentenced, those convicted of sex offences and other serious offences, and those convicted for less serious offences. It also holds not only prisoners who may be serving long sentences, but a group which often is treated as a characteristic population of Scottish prisons: those imprisoned for short periods of time, but who come back repeatedly.

Chapter 4 focuses on the methods of research but is also broader in charting my journey to and through the research. In it, I discuss the process of how I captured the views and experiences of families and members of staff working within the Centre. I discuss the reasons underlying and my experience of using three distinct qualitative methods for this research: qualitative interviews; ethnographic observation and creative methods with children. I aim to offer a frank and reflexive account of my experience of using these methods, and of my journey into the doctoral project.

Chapters 5 to 8 share the findings which emerged from my research. In Chapter 5, I show empirically how burdensome visiting often is for families. Visiting demands time, financial resources, and emotional labour from families. When visiting, families are compelled to obey numerous rules which they often perceive as being superfluous or overly stringent; prison officers may treat families disrespectfully; families experience institutional surveillance through being watched, with movements carefully controlled and constrained; and by virtue of the environment, families can experience fake and stifled interactions with their imprisoned loved ones. These experiences echo those contained in much research as will be charted in Chapter 2, but perhaps resonate particularly with Megan Comfort's US based ethnographic study with the wives and partners of men incarcerated in California's San Quentin prison. Comfort (2008) argued that families were also prisonised (drawing on Donald Clemmer's (1958) neologism), coining the term 'secondary prisonisation'. I adopt this lens to conceptualise families' experiences of visiting the prison; this lens allows us to see how families become 'quasi prisoners' in the institutional environment of the prison.

Yet however problematic visiting can be for families, it is also vitally important to families, for a range of reasons. The practice in Scotland, of specially designated and separate 'children's visits', [2] is especially important, particularly to the children

[2] These are outlined in Chapter 3, but for ease of understanding here, children's visits are family oriented, involve the provision of activities for families to engage with, and allow free movement and less constrained physical contact between prisoners and their families.

themselves. This may be a product of these visits' informal and relaxed nature, which bear greater resemblance to family life than do normal prison visits which are, alternatively, highly controlled. Families value having a designated area to wait in the form of a visitors' centre. They benefit from the informal and formal support offered by staff in the Centre, and they also benefit from the informal support networks and friendships that they share with other families. However, not all require support, from families or from staff, or require it at all times. Moreover, not all the support between families is freely or universally given. For example, the families of sex offenders' self-segregate and form their own groups, developing their own moral community (Sykes, 2007 [1958]). Across all families, families often form friendships which facilitate the giving and receiving of mutual support. Nonetheless, visiting, and other methods of keeping in touch (for example, phone calls and letters) are demonstrative of the way in which the prison exercises power and control over families, with its active (re)shaping of family life.

This leads me to another critical argument that I put forward in Chapter 6. This is that the prison alters the space and time of families: specifically, the sites in which family is performed and how family time is divided up and spent, not only in relation to the prisoner, but in other parts of their lives. Other scholars have applied this claim to the experiences of prisoners, for example through the notion of the 'total institution' (Goffman, 1991[1961]) and some have begun considering the altered time and space of prisoners' and their families through concepts like liminality (for example Moran, 2013a, 2014). While both lines of inquiry offer important insights, I argue that these accounts nevertheless are flawed- or have some limitations- because they remain wedded to a particular and primarily literally bounded space of 'the prison'. My research on prisoners' families alternatively exposes the prison as more fluid (a term used by Sarah Armstrong and Andrew Jefferson, 2017) moving into and out of lives, just as lives move into and out of it. I show this movement and fluidity empirically by discussing in detail the nature and experience of the prison's spatial and temporal re-arrangement of family life. I discuss how the prison creates new *spaces* for families in which to practice or '*do family'*, such as in the visitors' centre and in the visit room itself. However, I also discuss how the prison alters and re arranges family *time*, which includes exploring this through the diverse forms of waiting families encounter, which takes time away from families. For example, to accommodate the prison visiting timetable, families re-arrange teatime and after school activities, and spend time getting to the visit, waiting for the visit, and returning home after the visit. Yet for many, the prison's spatial and temporal reorganisation of family life is experienced 'outside' through, and in combination with, other forms of state intervention

in their lives. These share similarities to the institution of the prison and may also be experienced as imprisoning; with common experiences of, for example, powerlessness, moralising treatment, intrusive surveillance, and changing, stringent and superfluous demands; this is a theme I take up again in Chapter 8.

Chapter 7 and 8 are companion chapters, both addressing the familial pains of imprisonment. More than fifty years ago, Gresham Sykes identified the 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes, 2007 [1958]: 63); a frame of understanding that continues to organise research on prison's effects. Sykes' focus was on men in maximum security confinement, whose experience he divided into five pains common to serving a custodial sentence, though the extent to which each were experienced varied between prisoners. These pains are: the deprivation of liberty; the deprivation of heterosexual relationships; the deprivation of autonomy; the deprivation of security and the deprivation of goods and services (Sykes, 2007 [1958]). Sykes observed that while modern prisons are no longer as physically brutal (claiming for example, that prisoner beatings inflicted by officers are no longer a feature of prison life), they are no less psychologically brutal than they were in these earlier forms (Sykes, 2007 [1958]: 64). Since Sykes' seminal text, prison sociologists have continued to use the lens of pains to explore the penal experience, encompassing both custodial and non-custodial settings[3], in contemporary times.[4] However, as will be discussed in this thesis, the pains associated with imprisonment for the families of prisoners (which I term the familial pains) are different from the pains that Sykes outlines. Families instead experience their own unique, familial pains, brought by the imprisonment of a family member. The nature of these pains and families' experiences of them are explored in detail throughout this thesis.

Chapter 7 offers findings from the research which in many ways build on established conclusions about the negative impacts or familial pains of imprisonment for families, while Chapter 8 offers a potentially provocative challenge to the dominant narrative of familial pains (of acute negative effects), as induced by imprisonment. Specifically, in Chapter 7, I argue that imprisonment imposes many pains on families in addition to the well-documented pains and inconveniences attached to keeping in touch with a loved one

[3] Including non-custodial pains of punishment, e.g. Nugent and Schinkel. (2016) The pains of desistance.
[4] Crewe has suggested that twenty first century penal practice has created new pains which include: the pains of indeterminate sentences, the pains of psychological assessment and the pains of self-government (Crewe, 2011). There is also growing recognition that the pains of imprisonment can and do go beyond the time served within the prison, and can impact prisoners' lives (long) after release. Indeed, Warr discusses how the pains "pursue the prisoner into their outside life" and can be as burdensome outside as inside (Warr, 2016: 586).

in prison, which I explore in Chapters 5 and 6. These additional pains vary considerably in their extent and nature across families, and across different family members. The voices and experiences of children affected by the imprisonment of a family member offered a crucial means of accessing these distinctive effects. While the children of prisoners, like adult family members, may experience emotional distress triggered by imprisonment, I note how children often are confused about what has happened and are given incomplete or false explanations for the absence of the family member. This can cause further emotional distress where the fiction of a parent's fate conceals the fact of their imprisonment. I consider how children experience the absence brought by the imprisonment, and how an impact of this may result in misbehaviour at school. I then discuss the stigma associated with imprisonment (and its relationship with mass media coverage), and the particular stigma and pains experienced by the families of those convicted of a sexual offence. I conclude Chapter 7 by discussing some of the more general pains experienced by families that impact on daily lives, such as taking on care-work and experiencing strains and pressures on their relationships both with the prisoner and with other family members.

This thesis lends extensive support to the literature which documents the many adverse effects of imprisonment for the families of prisoners. Given stubbornly high rates of imprisonment in Scotland, the rest of the UK and on a global scale, many families in Scotland, the UK, and the rest of the world experience these pains. However, rates of imprisonment are not evenly distributed across demographic characteristics. It is often acknowledged that it is chiefly society's poorest and most marginalised groups who disproportionately experience imprisonment (Houchin, 2005). This brings me to one of the most important findings to emerge from this research.

A central theme of this thesis is the diversity of families and their experiences of imprisonment. Consequently, in building on the data and arguments presented in Chapter 5-7, in Chapter 8 I argue that the negative effects, or familial pains of imprisonment, are felt differently by different families, and by different members within families. Part of this picture is that discussion solely focused on pains does not properly capture the experiences of imprisonment for all families.

I argue that there are three key, and closely overlapping, reasons for this. The first reason is that prison is normal and routine for some families and family members; families have been affected by imprisonment for years, even generations, and their friends and acquaintances in communities have been also. These families experience "persistent punishment" (Armstrong and Weaver, 2013) vicariously. For example, it may be normal

for a woman in a family to have experienced the imprisonment of her dad and brother as a child and young person, to then experience the imprisonment of a partner and then even to experience the imprisonment of her sons. This is not the case for all families, and the experience of imprisonment may involve more distant kin connections. For these families, the imprisonment does not come as a shock, and it is not experienced as traumatic. It is instead normal and routine. This deviates from the tenor of much of the literature which promotes a narrative of imprisonment as a traumatic (or other equivalent synonym for conveying profound negative effects) experience for all families in one way or another. Instead I argue that while this authentically represents the experience for many, it does not authentically capture the experience for all.

The second argument I make to question the applicability of the narrative of acute negative effects for families, is that for many families, including a substantial portion of those I got to know, life can also be difficult anyway. Life can involve struggling to make ends meet, being stigmatised, and living in poor housing. It may not involve all forms of structural disadvantage or involve experiencing structural disadvantage at all times, but for most of those I spent time with, it entailed some forms of this, or multiple forms, at a given juncture. This builds to my larger claim that disadvantaged families experience over inclusion of the state in their lives, which has been triggered by their basic circumstance of disadvantage. The prison, through visiting their loved ones, becomes just one more mechanism which allows the state to reach into their lives. In all these state interventions, including imprisonment, families are monitored, watched, treated disrespectfully and subject to wider societal stigma as if they are to blame for these interventions in their lives.

Lastly and linking with discussion presented in previous chapters, the third argument I advance, is that these state interventions may also be prison like and be experienced as imprisoning, even if *the* prison represents and remains the most concentrated form of the state's power.

Yet as observed, the literature tends to portray prisoners' families as experiencing imprisonment as a traumatic event, and portrays this as being the experience for all families (albeit with some exceptions and with some caveats). I argue that this is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it treats imprisonment as indeed a single event, when in fact, imprisonment may be a prominent or regular feature in a family member or family's life. Secondly, it underestimates a family member or family's resilience in dealing with imprisonment's effects. Thirdly, it re victimises and stereotypes families through the language employed, which may also be paternalistic and patronising.

Fourthly, it fails to authentically represent the experience of many families. It focuses on the experiences of families who *do* experience the imprisonment as traumatic and treats their experiences as representing all families' experiences, if not purposely by overlooking these other narratives. Yet, these may be families who do not experience structural disadvantage (or do not experience it to the same extent or so frequently) and those who *do* experience imprisonment as a traumatic event because it is either a rare occurrence, or even an isolated incident.

I reflect that this narrative of trauma may be related to the dominance of the literal prison within criminology. This occurs despite repeated acknowledgements of the disadvantage experienced by many prisoners and their families, and despite connections between these having been drawn by some scholars (for example, by Wacquant (2001a)). There is much more to explore on how the experience of imprisonment and of disadvantage interact with and shape the experience of the other. A key finding from this study is that the experience of existing disadvantage (and associated state intervention) shapes how imprisonment, and its pains, are experienced.

Moreover, I reflect that this narrative may be partly attributed to a tendency within criminology to apply perhaps inadvertently, binaries to prison research. There is discussion of pre, and post imprisonment lives; of inside and outside; of re-entry into society, with assumptions that an exit occurred and that a prisoner was a fully integrated member of society (based on the experience of sometimes entrenched social exclusion, there is perhaps room to interrogate this last point). As discussed, these binaries are tied to an implicit and persistent but sometimes mistaken assumption that people who are affected by imprisonment *necessarily* experience imprisonment as a distinct temporal and spatial chapter in life. For many prisoners and their families, I argue that this is an artificial separation. It is separation that is imposed on families rather than one which families themselves necessarily create. Instead, periods of imprisonment become accommodated, often quite straightforwardly, into lives. For many, precisely because there are periods of imprisonment and there is not a single period of imprisonment, imprisonment becomes *part of* life. In addition, the state interventions which are also part of many families' lives share many characteristics with the prison.

In summary, across all chapters, this thesis argues that there are many negative effects or pains of imprisonment for the families of prisoners, which may be far reaching and lasting. This thesis lends support to the rich body of work that documents imprisonment's pains for the families of prisoners. It also lends support to arguments calling for the high rates of

imprisonment to be reduced, and suggests that based on the scale of these harms, these rates must be reduced substantially and swiftly. These pains are encountered by many families because imprisonment itself is painful and this pain extends beyond the prison boundary and beyond the person incarcerated. However, this thesis contends that different families differently experience these pains. Specifically, it argues that not all families or family members experience the imprisonment of a family member as a painful or traumatic 'event' or distinct chapter in lives. Instead, for many families' imprisonment is normal, routine, and familiar, and part of life, perhaps for a long time. Moreover, the experience of imprisonment shares parallels with the experience of other state institutions and interventions. Further, the experience of imprisonment may be experienced as simply another pain to deal with in a life where structural disadvantage is equally normal, routine, and familiar.

Distilled to a single sentence, the overall message of this thesis is that there are many pains of imprisonment felt by the families of prisoners, but also that many families affected by imprisonment also experience simultaneously structural disadvantage and varied and intrusive state intervention, and that these may also be experienced as imprisoning; families' experiences of imprisonment should be situated and understood within the broader contexts of their lives.

**Contribution of thesis**

This thesis aims to make several original contributions to the field which are outlined below:

- It is unique in situating a study entirely in a prison visitors' centre and offers an in-depth account of families' experience of being in and using this space.
- It is unique in exploring prison-induced alterations to the space and time of the families of prisoners, and the resulting effects of these.
- It is unique in capturing a very diverse range of family members and a very diverse range of familial relationships within a single study. The family members who were part of this study were visiting loved ones confined who were equally diverse: men and women; young and old; and those imprisoned for varying lengths of time for various offences, from 'lower level' offending to serious sexual and violent offending. In line with other research studies, partners and children were key

participants in this study. However, those with different connections to prisoners also shared their experiences with me. I interviewed the daughters, step sons and nieces of prisoners (all children). I interviewed the partners, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters of prisoners (all adults). Over the course of fieldwork, I also chatted to friends, acquaintances, aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as in laws and step relations.

- It is unique in critically rethinking the pains of imprisonment for the families of those confined. Firstly, by countering the narrative that imprisonment is necessarily experienced as a traumatic experience, and secondly by connecting the experience of imprisonment to wider, interconnected, experiences of imprisoning circumstances and institutions. It argues that the experience of imprisonment for many families should be considered within the broader context of their lives, which are often characterised by not only imprisonment(s), but by structural disadvantage and by varied and intrusive state intervention, which may also be experienced as imprisoning.

The following chapter (Chapter 2) puts the impacts of imprisonment into the context of high rates of imprisonment in Scotland, the UK and world-wide. This includes consideration of how these rates are unevenly distributed across sections of the population. It then provides a critical overview of the literature on the effects of imprisonment on the families of prisoners.

# Chapter 2: Families and the Pains of Imprisonment: a critical review of the literature

## Chapter outline

This chapter puts the research field outlined in Chapter 1 into the context of high rates of imprisonment worldwide. It then provides a critical overview of the literature on imprisonment's effects for the families of prisoners, which includes discussion of families' experiences of prison visiting. It begins to make the case for an alternative conceptualisation of prisoners' families and their experiences of imprisonment, and sets out the argument that the tendency of the literature on familial imprisonment to focus on the experience of families as being a traumatic event (whether through this exact choice of language or through language with an equivalent emphasis), is problematic for several reasons, but chiefly, since it does not capture the experiences for all families.

## Rates of imprisonment

As will shortly be discussed, we are living in what has been called the age of imprisonment. Yet for the many millions around the world who are physically incarcerated, and the many millions under some form of other penal control (for example, probation or electronic monitoring), there is a magnified number by a factor of three, four or more of people affected by incarceration: the families and loved ones of those in custody.

These "collateral consequences" (Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999: title) or "ripple effects" (Travis and Waul, 2003: 4) of imprisonment inflicted on a global scale are drawn sharply into focus when one considers that since the millennium the world prison population total has increased by 20%; this is faster than (albeit very close to) growth in the general world population which stands at 18% (Walmsley, 2016). There is considerable variation between countries and territories, and comparability issues emerge when attempting to draw cross nation comparisons; in spite of this, there is broad consensus that the use of

prison as a sanction has been increasing over the last twenty years (Drake, 2016).[5] Often highlighted when imprisonment rates are discussed, the USA's world-breaking imprisonment rate of approximately 698 per 100,000 population is demonstrative of the 'mass imprisonment' (to draw on David Garland's terminology), trend it has become infamous for; albeit latterly there have been encouraging signs that this has been losing its legitimacy, from both the perspective of legislators and the public (Simon and Sparks, 2013: 14). The United Nations' estimate of national prison population rates worldwide is 144 per 100,000. Scotland's rate of 143 per 100, 000[6] is marginally lower than this, but it, along with England and Wales is out of kilter with rates in other European countries (Walmsley, 2016). Indeed, Scotland has one of the highest rates of imprisonment of pre-accession European Union member states (Scottish Prisons Commission, 2008: 2). Despite claims of a commitment to reduce Scotland's prison population, particularly the female prison population (Scottish Government, 2015a), and despite slight decreases in rates since 2008 (World Prison Brief, 2017), rates of imprisonment for both sexes remain stubbornly high (Scottish Prison Service, 2017b).

Closer inspection of imprisonment rates reveals that they are not evenly distributed across socio-economic statuses, age, gender, and race. To draw on two of these characteristics here, the racialised dimension of imprisonment rates is perhaps nowhere more documented than in the USA (Wacquant, 2001a; Codd, 2007; Wildeman and Western, 2010), leading Wacquant to argue that mass incarceration, at least in the US context, is more specifically the *hyper* incarceration of poor African American men from the USA's rapidly expanding ghettos (Wacquant, 2010). Prisoners and their families are also often poor (see, e.g. Murray, 2007; Breen, 2008). This has been decided as the 'penalisation of poverty', to draw on Loic Wacquant's (2001b) thesis and is a trend observable in many nations. This, in effect, warehousing of the poor has led Victor Ruggiero to observe, simply: "it would be an act of honesty to rename prison institutions as houses for the poor" (Ruggiero, 2016: 375).

Despite demonstrating some evidence of a commitment to penal welfarism (McAra, 2005)[7], Scotland has not been immune to these trends; as with other jurisdictions, Scotland's prison population is largely drawn from its most disadvantaged communities. A 2005 study (Roger Houchin) found that the imprisoned population of Scotland came

[5] Explanations for this are beyond the parameters of this thesis- for an overview of some of the political and social drivers underlying prison expansionism, see for example, Drake (2016).
[6] This figure fluctuates.
[7] For example, in the welfarist principles underpinning Scotland's unique Children's Hearings System.

disproportionately from the most deprived communities in the country; these are those which score highly on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).[8] To convey this in numerical terms, the imprisonment rate for men across Scotland was 237, per 100, 000 (the overall rate of imprisonment in 2005 was 130 per 100,000[9]; men were 24 times more likely to be in prison than women). The imprisonment rate for men from the 27 most deprived wards (those with SIMD scores of less than 70) was 953 per 100,000. The imprisonment rate for 23-year-old men from the 27 most deprived wards was 3, 427 per 100,000 (Houchin, 2005: 77). However, "it is not simply that the most deprived are most at risk of imprisonment, it is that, at all levels of prosperity, the probability of imprisonment increases with increasing deprivation" (Houchin, 2005: 17). Therefore, although deprivation is not a "necessary or sufficient correlate of imprisonment", there is a close relationship between deprivation and imprisonment (Houchin, 2005: 21). [10]

***How many families?***

Determining the exact number of family members affected by imprisonment in a jurisdiction is a very difficult exercise; official records of family members impacted often do not exist or data are not publicly available. Where calculations have been able to be made, they have tended to centre on numbers of affected children. On that note, Families Outside[11] estimates that there are currently 27, 000 children in Scotland affected by parental imprisonment specifically (notably, this excludes children affected by the imprisonment of other family members). The charity notes that this means that the number of children affected by parental imprisonment in Scotland is greater than the number affected by parental divorce or separation. In England and Wales, more than 200,000

[8] The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). The SIMD identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across the whole of Scotland in a consistent way, and ranks small areas (called 'data zones') from the least deprived to the most deprived (Scottish Government, 2016a). The deprivations measured are: income deprivation; employment deprivation; heath deprivation and disability; education, skills, and training deprivation; and geographical access to services.

[9] In January 2017, this figure was higher at approximately 138 per 100,000 population; though this marks a recent downward trend in prison populations, following a marked upward trend since 2000 (World Prison Brief, 2017). As outlined in a previous footnote, these figures fluctuate.

[10] However, as Armstrong highlights, Houchin's complex report requires closer scrutiny. For example, rates of imprisonment and deprivation are scattered across Scotland; there are differences between Edinburgh and Glasgow in levels of both deprivation and imprisonment. In addition, imprisonment is not as concentrated in Edinburgh in the areas of highest deprivation, as it is in Glasgow in these same areas. This raises questions. As Armstrong suggests, these findings urge us to consider the ways in which cities and neighbourhoods shape these trends (Armstrong, 2014: 37). There is a central argument in this thesis that it is chiefly the poor who are punished, but the nuance of this (which poor, in which areas of Scotland?) is borne in mind.

[11] Families Outside is Scotland's national charity which supports families affected by imprisonment.

children are estimated to be affected by parental imprisonment (Barnardo's, 2014). Across the EU, it is estimated that this figure reaches 800,000 (Scharff-Smith, 2014). The impacts of imprisonment which will be discussed in detail in this thesis, are then drawn sharply into focus by the numbers of affected children alone.

Given the numbers involved, it is not surprising that there has been a recent boom in research exploring not only how *prisoners* experience imprisonment, but on how it is experienced by the families of prisoners and by the communities particularly impacted by high rates of imprisonment. It is against this backdrop of high rates of imprisonment on a global scale, that imprisonment's far reaching effects in Scotland were explored in my research, and are now discussed in this thesis. While the central focus of this thesis is how imprisonment affects the families of those confined, it is also important to point out that there are impacts too on communities, particularly on disadvantaged communities which are disproportionately impacted by imprisonment as outlined.

## The families of prisoners

### *Prisoners' families: no longer forgotten*

For a very long time, the families of prisoners were the "forgotten" (Light and Campbell, 2007)[12] victims of punishment. The children of prisoners were more obscured still (Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999; Cunningham, 2001), with Shaw for example describing prisoners' children as the "Cinderella of penology" (1987: 3). Despite this, a handful of studies conducted in the latter half of the twentieth century succeeded in exposing imprisonment's effects for families. Pauline Morris' study in 1965 (Morris, 1965), credited as the "first systematic study of prisoners' families" (Light and Campbell, 2007), explored the experiences of imprisonment for wives by interviewing 588 prisoners' wives. After a hiatus following Morris' study, prisoners' families received increased research attention in the UK from the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the late 1980s, Roger Shaw conducted a systematic study of imprisonment's effects on children (the first of its kind). His focus was specifically on the effects of *paternal* imprisonment (Shaw, 1987).

[12] In 1983 Jill Matthews first referred to prisoners' families as the "forgotten victims" of punishment. Since then, this phrase has been widely used in the literature.

Perhaps a product of its rapidly increasing imprisonment rates in the past few decades, the USA has seen growing scholarship in this area of research into the effects on and experiences of the families of prisoners (for example, through the works of Laura Fishman (e.g. 1981, 1988, 1991), John Hagan and Ronit Dinovitzer (1999), and Joyce Arditti (e.g. 2003, 2005). A recent well-known, US-based qualitative study was conducted by Megan Comfort who, like Morris and others, explored how the imprisonment of male partners affected the women partners outside. Comfort documented the lives of the wives, partners and girlfriends of prisoners housed in San Quentin State Prison in California (2008).

My own work is strongly sympathetic of the approach Comfort adopted and others such as Rachel Condry (2011 [2007]) and Cara Jardine (2015)[13] have also taken- an approach that is qualitative, ethnographic, immersive, and open minded in its orientation. These approaches are contrasted with approaches that are oriented somewhat differently, if not in methodological approach, but through a conceptualisation of the effects of imprisonment in more quantitative terms or 'outcome' focused terms. For example, with discussion of the intergenerational transmission of offending, or anti-social behaviour as an outcome for the children of imprisoned parents (for example, Murray et al., 2009). While this work in particular was quick to both contextualise findings with pre-existing circumstances, and to emphasise that correlation does not equal causation, ideas about undesirable and negative outcomes for children affected by imprisonment (presented almost as a foregone conclusion) gained currency, as problematised by Knudsen (2016). I do not wish to dwell on this here, but I have flagged these other approaches to help position my approach within the growing body of literature, and to emphasise the qualitative and exploratory focus of my own study.

However, to continue with this positioning, briefly, as I will explore in this thesis, much of the literature in the field of prisoners' families tends to to portray imprisonment as a wholly *negative event* or "monolithically negative force" (to use Comfort's expression, 2008: 9) in the lives of families; this is reinforced through the language employed- for example, through the language of trauma, or via similar adjectives and terms. As I will discuss, these messages shape and may in turn be echoed by discourse in other spheres. Further, as I will explore, my own work builds on and extends the, alternatively, *nuanced* conceptualisation of experiences offered by Morris in 1965, and then by Comfort in 2008. These works importantly demonstrate: a recognition of the diversity of families'

[13] UK scholars whose work I will shortly introduce and draw from throughout this thesis.

experiences; a resistance to assuming imprisonment is necessarily or always experienced as wholly negative, and a reluctance to isolate the experiences of imprisonment from pre-existing circumstances.

My study shares similarities with Comfort's (2008) particularly through a focus on families' experiences of visiting their incarcerated loved ones, and through its qualitative, ethnographic approach. However, there are key substantive differences in our approach and in resulting findings. One key difference is through my inclusion of a diverse range of familial voices, including but not exclusively so, the voices of the female partners of male prisoners. Comfort's focus entirely on the women partners of male prisoners led to her rich analysis of for example, relationship strain; the romanticising of relationships, and the performance of home in ways afforded by the specific context of her research- for example, through conjugal visits at San Quentin. While findings from my own research yielded some similar insights (as will discussed in Chapters 5-8), through my inclusion of a diverse range of familial voices, diverse and rich insights were gained into how imprisonment structures, is practiced and experienced by different family members, within and across different families, which I analyse and present in this thesis.

To return to discussion of the evolution of literature in the area, research on familial effects and experiences of imprisonment has burgeoned again in the UK, in last ten to fifteen years. There are now a number of UK based academics who have explored families' experiences (for example, Helen Codd (e.g. 2002, 2003); Condry (2011 [2007]) and there have been a number of doctoral projects (for example, Jardine (e.g. 2015), Marie Hutton (2016)) which have focussed exclusively on the effects of imprisonment on families, from various perspectives. Moreover, given the direct policy implications of the field, extensive research has been conducted by voluntary sector organisations, too; specifically, those working to support prisoners' families and those aiming to raise the profile of the issue. These include Families Outside, Barnardo's and the Prison Reform Trust. While this thesis draws heavily and primarily from academic scholarship, it also draws on research studies conducted and produced by these organisations and others like them.

Regarding scholarship on prison visiting specifically, there has been a growing body of work exploring experiences from the perspective of visiting families, albeit scholarship has trailed behind that which explores overall experiences of incarceration for families. Further, certain dimensions of the visiting experience, such as experiences of prison visitors' centres, remain under-researched (as I will explore in Chapter 3). However, there have been some exceptions that have responded to the scarcity of work on experiences of

prison visiting. One of the earlier studies to address this gap, through focusing specifically on the visit room, Joseph Kotarba's (1979) study of the visiting process in a US county jail[14] explored how families seek to accomplish intimacy with their imprisoned loved ones within the public, and highly regulated, environment of the visit room. More recently, Johnna Christian (2005) conducted a qualitative study exploring families' experiences' of visiting, which was centred on two New York prisons. She documented the numerous burdens associated with visiting that potentially undermine the maintenance of family ties. Comfort (2008) explored women's experiences of prison visiting through the lens of 'secondary prisonisation', a variant of Clemmer's (1958) neologism, and Kathryn Sharratt (2014) researched the unique experiences of children visitors specifically across four EU countries (the UK, Germany, Romania, and Sweden). She observed how varied the barriers to visiting were across these EU member states, including the variability of the environments visits take place in; she in turn interrogated the implications of these obstacles for family contact.

To turn to Scotland, given the Scottish orientation of this research, over the past twenty years, there have been several small-scale studies exploring experiences of visiting and imprisonment in general, within the Scottish context, which have helped to build a more local picture. These include research on: children and young people's experiences of visiting (Buist, 1997); the effects of imprisonment on young people (McCulloch and Morrison, 2001); and the role, and potential, of visitors' centres (Loucks, 2002; Families Outside, 2010).

Across jurisdictions, familial imprisonment research has broadly taken place: within prisons where prisoners specifically are interviewed about family; in prison visit rooms where family visits take place; or outside prisons where family members are interviewed, surveyed, or observed. With growing recognition that visiting can be difficult for families, and with the associated development of new spaces for families (for example, the emergence of prison visitors' centres[15]), new sites have emerged in which to conduct research with families. Indeed, the site of research upon which thesis is based- the Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh- has itself become a popular site for research, though these projects have had different orientations and emphases to my own. The Centre has been

[14] In the USA, 'jail' and 'prison' refer to different types of penal establishment. Jails hold remanded prisoners and those serving sentences of less than one year, and are operated at a county and city level. The Department of Corrections of each state runs state prisons. These prisons contain felons serving more than one year as well as those who have violated parole. Federal prisons are controlled by the Federal Bureau of Prisons and house offenders who have been convicted of federal crimes (all Comfort, 2008: 5).
[15] These will be introduced and discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

evaluated in three surveys: two were conducted by Families Outside (2006, 2009) and one was conducted by an independent researcher (Ceesay, 2013). The Salvation Army's own annual reports also have a self-evaluative function. The Centre was also a field-site for Jardine (2015) in her doctoral research on the effects of imprisonment on family relationships, which involved her drawing from the perspective of family members at this site, and of prisoners at another prison in Scotland.

This has provided a very brief run through (and as such by no means comprehensive) of the evolution of prisoners' families research, and has noted how latterly prisoners' families have begun to receive greater, and more in depth, research attention. The following section will probe the explanations for this- explanations which are important to understanding how prisoners' families are viewed- as well as discuss the imbalances of research attention across families with different characteristics to those encapsulated in traditional representations of family, and across different kin relationships.

***Prisoners' families: instrumental to (male) prisoners' outcomes***

I now wish to interrogate the possible explanations for the increased attention given to prisoners' families, before then considering the nature and distribution of this attention.

Research has often highlighted the role of supportive family ties in improving the mental health of prisoners; for example, in decreasing the risk of suicide and self-harm (Scott and Codd, 2010). However, it has also pointed out the role of these ties in fostering the desistance process for a prisoner upon release (Hairston, 1991; Jardine, 2014; Families Outside, 2010).[16] Recognition of a connection between family ties and prisoner wellbeing and reduced offending gained currency, and resulted in prisoners' families beginning to receive their long overdue attention (Codd, 2007). For example, twenty-five years ago Hairston described how in the US context strengthening family ties had started to be promoted as a "correctional treatment strategy" (Hairston, 1991: 87), but this followed an observation made by Sack and Seidler, again in the US context, of how a "consistently positive correlation" had been identified between parole success and the maintainance of

[16] As Weaver and McNeill (2007) point out in their policy oriented paper, desistance is not an easily defined term but it is broadly considered to be the "ceasing and refraining of offending" (2007:2). They also summarise how strong and supportive family ties can foster the desistance process: namely, in the ways they can enable the offender to look beyond his or her label as prisoner or offender.

family ties while in prison (1979: 261), helping to explain the origin of this correctional approach. Another explanation for the increased attention given to families is that in conjunction with the deepening of understanding of imprisonment's wider effects (for example, in limiting an offender's employment prospects after release), there was increasing recognition of the adverse effects of imprisonment on families specifically (Comfort, 2007). Wherever the origins of this new attention lie, prisoners' families are, broadly speaking, no longer hidden or invisible. However, as will be discussed, while this increased attention is in many respects a welcome development, a closer examination of it exposes issues. Firstly, attention is not evenly distributed across all families. Secondly, while the attention may be associated with benefits (such as the offering of practical and emotional support), neither the attention nor these benefits are necessarily freely given. Thirdly and relatedly, the offenders remain the focus of attention; for example, attention is paid primarily (or entirely) in relation to improving *offender* outcomes upon release.

As Scott and Codd stress, rather than viewing families as deserving recipients of support in themselves, families have become part of the "penal machinery" and are "co-opted as tools" to help prevent re-offending (Scott and Codd, 2010: 152). Families have "great expectations" placed on them (Mills, 2005). They are expected to ensure the offender desists and in so doing, they are, impliedly, expected to increase the effectiveness of the criminal justice system (Light and Campbell, 2007). Essentially there is an offloading of responsibility from the state to families (Codd, 2007). Yet as will be discussed, families are sometimes only minimally supported themselves or are even poorly treated by criminal justice institutions (which includes representation of these institutions), making their support of a prisoner more difficult (and in some cases, impossible) to provide, or provide with consistency.

Another problem is that these expectations of family support are also often gendered. This may be easily explained by drawing on rates of imprisonment since men have universally and significantly higher than rates for women (Houchin, 2005; World Prison Brief, 2016). However, across jurisdictions and even where the prisoner is a woman (thus opening the possibility of a male partner taking on the bulk of care-giving), the burden of caring for prisoners overwhelmingly falls on women (Codd, 2007; Condry, 2011 [2007]; Jardine, 2015). It has been suggested that pervasive gender norms which see care-giving as a 'natural role' for women, mean that women are expected to take on this work (Scheyett and Pettus, 2012). Further, gendered patterns in the division of paid labour enable or impliedly encourage its reproduction (Condry, 2011 [2007]). Therefore, while the

increasing attention given to families is, broadly, a welcome development, it has come with particular expectations placed on families; ones that rely on highly gendered and heteronormative constructions of family. This thesis picks up themes of constructing family life and gendering (albeit the latter to a lesser degree) and keeps it in the frame throughout the analysis.

Moreover, this attention is not evenly distributed across all types of families and relationships; some types of family and types of familial relationships are given, inadvertently, privileged focus, to the detriment of others. In contemporary Scotland, families are increasingly more diverse, complex and fluid than is suggested by the idea of the 'nuclear family', consisting of two parents and their small number of dependent children (National Records of Scotland, 2014). As Jardine (2013) highlights, prisoners may be less likely than other social groups to come from nuclear families; and, they tend to disproportionately experience family conflict, parental imprisonment, and institutional care. These experiences lead to different kinds of family formations in which extended family relatives (aunts, uncles, grandparents) and others (friends, teachers, social workers, foster parents) come to play core roles as care givers and linkages. Yet the idea of the nuclear family is persistent (Scott and Codd, 2010); this may even be considered a bias (Bockneck and Sanderson, 2009), against which families lacking this structure are seen as flawed, weak and dysfunctional. The varied compositions of families mean that a wider network of family members (beyond partners/parents and children) are also vulnerable to being affected by imprisonment, whether directly or indirectly. In addition, as Scott and Codd stress (2010: 146), prisoners, like non prisoners, have a range of significant relationships "across a web of connections" which family may form part of, but by no means necessarily completes; other relationships including significant friendships may be at least equally important, if not more important.[17] Lastly, there is much fluidity in the relationships between prisoners and families (and arguably in relationships in general); there can be a "variety of factors" which may explain the "degree of connectedness" and the changeability of relationships over a period of time (Christian, 2005: 46).

[17] All of the individuals who were interviewed in this study had relationships with prisoners which could be considered familial. However, my conceptualisation of 'the family' was intentionally broad and aimed to be non-prescriptive. In the Centre leaflet (see Appendix 1), I wrote: "I am looking at what it's like visiting family member (or someone close to you) in prison." In so doing, I invited families to share their experiences of visiting not only close relatives but also more distant relatives or friends, and aimed to be inclusive of broader conceptualisations of family.

Nonetheless, the persistence of the idea (or ideal) of the nuclear family in society is reflected in the uneven distribution of attention across different familial relationships. This concern has been expressed for some time (for example, this was flagged by Paylor and Smith in 1994), and only recent work has attempted to address this imbalance by extending attention to other kin relationships and other family compositions (see Jardine, 2017 for a recent call to move away from scholarship wedded to nuclear models of family). The experiences of prisoners' partners, specifically, *women* partners of *male* prisoners have tended to dominate the literature (Murray, 2005). Perhaps a logical by-product of focusing on nuclear families, or due to a "particular concern for the welfare of children", the children of prisoners have also been given extensive attention (Paylor and Smith, 1994: 131). This focus has meant the experiences of other family members, such as parents, prisoners' adult children, and particular sub groups such as the experience of LGBTI prisoners and their partners (Codd, 2007) or the experience of non-white families (Light, 1995) are consistently overlooked. This study, based at a prison holding all genders and sentence lengths of prisoners, responds to, and aims to redress this imbalance, capturing the experience of visiting and imprisonment for a broad range of families and familial relationships. In so doing, it also documents how varied families' experiences are, and how different families' experiences of other (negative) life circumstances, influences their experience of familial imprisonment.

## The effects of imprisonment on prisoners' families

The large body of literature exploring families' experiences catalogues many negative impacts of imprisonment. However, it is important to emphasise, as acknowledged by Murray, that there is, rightly, "growing appreciation" that prisoners' families are not a "homogeneous" group. He also notes that the effects of imprisonment on family members are likely to differ "according to prior relationships, offence types, social support systems and other socio-demographic factors" (Murray, 2005: 445). Relatedly, there is recognition that *children* too are not a homogeneous group, and that their experiences and needs are distinctive to those of adults (Flynn, 2014; Knudsen, 2016). Indeed, the diversity of families and the diversity of their experiences is a theme woven throughout this thesis.

### *Financial strain*

It is difficult to disentangle prison induced financial stresses from existing financial stresses and general socio-economic disadvantage (Murray, 2007: 57).[18] For families who experience existing financial disadvantage, imprisonment tends to worsen and even entrench it (Breen, 2008). However, imprisonment tends to financially impact all families, even those who may be considered relatively prosperous, or at least not financially precarious, prior to the imprisonment. If the imprisoned family member contributed to the household financially before being imprisoned, the custodial sentence results in the decrease of household income (Murray, 2005). This of course applies even if the financial contribution was generated by involvement in illegitimate activities (Scott and Codd, 2010). If the prisoner was the breadwinner, the effects may be felt even more acutely; according to Dixey and Woodall this may felt as a "catastrophic occurrence" (2012: 30). Light and Campbell (2007) suggest that these financial troubles may be exacerbated by the fact that the outside family member may have a lack of experience in dealing with household affairs, or may be traumatised by the arrest, trial, and imprisonment, thus rendering them incapable of managing these affairs. Imprisonment can also worsen a family's financial situation through causing an exit from paid employment, or a reduction in hours, in order to take on caring responsibilities previously undertaken by the prisoner (Smith et al., 2007). Moreover, it can trigger a re-assessment of welfare benefits, which can be damaging to household finances (Smith et al., 2007).

Imprisonment also increases family expenditure. Families spend money on keeping in touch via visits, letters, and phone calls, and spend money by handing in money and items of personal property to the prisoner (Fishman, 1991; Murray, 2005; Christian, Mellow and Thomas, 2006; and Wildeman and Western, 2010). Further, these costs are in addition to any legal costs associated with trial and defence.

***Emotional distress***

[18] This may be more difficult still for families who have been affected by multiple imprisonments. This will be discussed in Chapter 8. The financial considerations associated with keeping in contact with prisoners, particularly through visiting, will be explored in Chapter 5.

Light and Campbell comment on the emotional difficulties that can arise from every stage of the criminal justice process from arrest and trial, describing it in terms of the "trauma" of having a family member sent to prison, to the suffering caused by separation (2007: 303). Cunningham echoes the language of trauma, and suggests that it is "certain that parents and children are dramatically and traumatically affected by arrest, judicial process and imprisonment" (2001: 36). Fishman identifies four "points of crisis" which represent periods of "great stress and difficulty" for families experiencing the "loss" brought by the imprisonment of a loved one: these are the stages of pre-sentencing, sentencing, incarceration and release (Fishman, 1981: 372).

Indeed, for most families[19], separation brings with it undesirable and negative effects. For example, it can place strain on relationships, resulting in some breaking down entirely (Light and Campbell, 2007). Separation also creates feelings of loss. Some scholars have likened the loss brought by the separation to the experience of bereavement, with associated feelings of grief (Arditti, 2005; Condry, 2011 [2007]). However, the grief experienced by these families is "disenfranchised" because it is not "openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported" given the stigma of imprisonment (Arditti, 2005: 253). The negative social interactions which follow, or the fact that this loss is kept hidden, compounds the pain already experienced.

I draw attention to the language of trauma and crisis (and other adjectives and expressions that convey profound negative effects) because it is common in much of the literature on familial imprisonment as well as in the representations of relevant support and advocacy organisations, not solely in relation to the emotional distress experienced by families, but across various aspects of the experience; representation I discuss more fully in Chapter 8. As I will discuss in Chapter 4, this frame of trauma was one I adopted in approaching the research, but which unravelled at moments of spending increasing time with some family members. This is an issue, therefore, which I note is crucial both as reflecting a dominant stance of the research and one which my own research has led me to have a warier attitude of employing it as the default lens of understanding families' experiences of the imprisonment of a loved one.

[19] Chapter 8 briefly outlines a handful of scenarios in which the imprisonment of a family member alternatively conveys respite or benefit.

***Alteration to roles and responsibilities***

Families may bear an increased burden in relation to care giving, caring for both prisoners and others in their family (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, and Joest, 2003). Families care for prisoners through providing emotional support (for example, during visits), or through handing in money or personal belongings to assist the prisoner financially and to provide him or her with some (prison approved) home comforts. Yet some comforts, being dependent on families providing them, may be lost if this becomes too burdensome for the family. Families may also be required to take on additional care-work or household responsibilities in the wake of the prisoner's departure, (assuming the prisoner contributed to the household via caring or practical responsibilities), in addition to having to fulfil the financial responsibilities already discussed that bring their own difficulties.

If children are part of the household, the prisoner's absence imposes temporary single parenthood on the non-imprisoned parent but this happens at a "particularly vulnerable time" (Murray, 2005: 445), adding to difficulties. Arditti, Lambert-Shute and Joest suggest that while "outcomes" for children in lone parent households are not always negative, this does present "additional challenges" for the parent, which may negatively impact children (2003: 202) because, for example, parents have less time to give to and spend with their children.

While families as units take on these burdens of imprisonment, this burden is often, as noted, experienced as gendered. Given women's traditional dominance in the domestic sphere (Scott, 2009) and given the disproportionate number of men incarcerated, it is often female family members who are expected to take on this care work when family members (of both sexes) are imprisoned, and who do indeed take this on (Condry, 2011 [2007]; Scheyett and Pettus, 2012).

***Stigma***

Erving Goffman famously developed the concept of stigma in his influential text *Asylums* (1991 [1961]). One dimension of stigma is 'courtesy stigma'; the idea that due to a relationship with the stigmatised individual, wider society treats both individuals "in some respects as one", meaning that this non-stigmatised individual becomes stigmatised also

(Goffman, 1986 [1963]: 30). Many scholars of familial imprisonment have actively taken on the idea of courtesy stigma in their discussion of how stigma attaches to the prisoner (Mauer, 2005) and extends to his or her family (see for example, Lopoo and Western, 2005; Breen, 2008; Phillips and Gates, 2011; Massoglia, Remster, and King, 2011): families are seen to be "guilty by association" (Cunningham, 2001) or are perceived to have been contaminated or tainted in some way by the deeds of the offender (Arditti, Lambert-Shute, and Joest, 2003, Cunningham, 2001).

Stigma manifests in different ways but can take the form of receiving unwanted media or community attention on the family, and its emotional and practical impacts are varied and may be far reaching (Cunningham, 2001). Stigma may be particularly pronounced where the offences are considered very serious in both legal terms (reflected by the severity of the sentence) and in how they are socially viewed. These include murder and sexual offences; the experiences of the families of serious offenders were richly explored in Condry's study, (2011 [2007]). Finally, many families *fear* experiencing stigma, and might endure its pains in this way, or it may alter their behaviour even if they have no direct experience of it. Morris noted in her 1965 study that: "we believe wives often *fear* gossip rather than experience actual hostility, and they start by being ashamed of what people will say" (Morris, 1965: 108), though this was more reflective of the experiences of 'first time offenders' rather than the wives of repeat offenders; in any event, fear in itself may be distressing. As with all of these impacts, I will tease the nuances that emerged in my own work, in subsequent chapters (specifically in regard to stigma, in Chapter 7), but what is important to note here is that there is scholarly recognition that families often experience stigma by virtue of their loved one's incarceration, as well as that flowing from the offence or offences which may have been responsible for the resulting incarceration.

### *Effects and strategies around children*

Children, like adults, experience emotional distress following separation from a loved one (Murray, 2005). This is likely to be more pronounced depending on whether or not it is the primary caregiver who is imprisoned (Cunningham, 2001). The loss of a parent can be considered a "traumatic event", which has various adverse effects including the diversion of energy from developmental tasks (Travis and Waul, 2003: 16). What complicates the issue for the children affected by parental absence triggered by *imprisonment* is that the

absence is not socially approved; conversely, socially approved absences (for example, military service, work) influences the social and emotional development of children less negatively than “disapproved absence” (Nijnatten, 1997: 48). Parents have an important role in being a role model to a child, and in safe guarding and protecting them (amongst other roles of course); the imprisonment of a parent makes these difficult to fulfil (by both parents), and children are likely to be impacted by this (Sheehy, 2010), even, as Travis and Waul (2003) suggest at a development level.

In order to shield children from unwanted side effects, research has found that parents are often not fully honest with their children about their imprisoned family member’s whereabouts, a phenomenon which has long been observed (for example, Sack and Seidler made this observation in their work published in 1978). The extent to which children are told the truth tends to relate to age (Shaw 1987). In order to explain absence, children are often told that their dad, for example, is away working or in hospital, and when children visit, they are told that they are visiting their father in these alternative locations (Buist, 1997), presumably as a means of making the absence more sociallly approved, as Nijatten (1997) describes. However, as Shaw points out, often the imprisonment is discussed in the presence of a child, and the child may begin to piece the information together and consequently arrive at the conclusion that his or her father is imprisoned. Yet “if the reason for the father’s imprisonment is not explained and discussed with the child, as it frequently is not, the child is left to dwell on it. He wonders what terrible deed his father has done to bring down on him the most severe penalty open to the State” (Shaw, 1987: 42). In the absence of an age appropriate explanation about the legal and criminal justice system, children may be left very confused and distressed (Cunningham, 2001; Light and Campbell, 2007). Yet, it is important to emphasise that parents and family members make the decision not to reveal the full story in an attempt to *circumvent* this and are thus entirely well intentioned in their decision to deceive.

On other occasions, children *are* told the truth (the fact of imprisonment), but as Shaw notes, the truth can take many forms. In some cases, this ‘truth’ involves telling the children that their father has been wrongly taken away by the police (Shaw, 1987: 40). Research highlights that this falsehood can undermine a child’s sense of safety and security with resulting fears that ‘no-one is safe’ (Mazza, 2002: 524) and can exacerbate often

already poor relationships with the Police. [20] Moreover, Travis and Waul suggest children can find it difficult to cope in situations of uncertainty (2003). Therefore, even the ways that imprisonment is communicated to a child can be a source of distress itself, and may worsen distress already felt.

According to Light and Campbell, as a response to the upset caused by the imprisonment, coupled with any distress stemming from this confusion, children can exhibit a range of problematic behaviours which include: lack of concentration, bed wetting, poor performance in school, truancy and even anti-social behaviour (2007: 304). Finally, children can also experience courtesy stigma, though its manifestation may be different than for adults: for example, it may involve being bullied at school by peers (Breen, 1995).

**Families' experiences of prison visiting**

Given the focus of attention in my study, it is important to outline some of key themes in relation to prison visiting specifically, as identified by this literature.

Of all the forms of prisoner-family contact (phone, voicemail, Skype, letters and the 'email a prisoner' scheme[21]), visiting is often seen to be the most important and the most meaningful, from the perspective of prisoners, the prison, and families. Indeed, it has been described as the "major form of contact" between prisoners and their families (Fishman, 1988: 55), and as an "important lifeline for the maintenance of family relationships" (Light and Campbell, 2007: 299).

This is partly due to a consensus (or assumption) that visiting confers benefit to both prisoner and family (and the prison); as mentioned, one of the most commonly cited benefits is that it helps to maintain strong family bonds, which in turn increases the likelihood of successful resettlement and reintegration upon release. However, the literature documents the extensive and "inherent obstacles" families encounter when visiting (Tewksbury and DeMichele, 2005: 308).

[20] The negative relationships between the police and families affected by imprisonment, or families who are affected by involvement in the wider criminal justice system, underlies the Centre's 'Meet the Police' initiative. This initiative will be introduced and discussed in Chapter 3.

[21] The extent to which each of these forms of communication are offered varies between prisons both in Scotland and elsewhere. The 'Email a Prisoner' scheme involves a family member emailing the prisoner via a website of the same name. The email is sent to the specific prison, where it is printed out and distributed in the daily mail delivery to accommodation halls (Scottish Prison Service, 2016e).

For the new or unfamiliar visitor, the entire process of entry may be bewildering, which may be compounded by a lack of clear information explaining the procedure; an issue long observed (for example, Kotarba, 1979). The procedure for booking a visit can be a source of frustration (Light and Campbell, 2007). Visitors often face long and costly journeys to prison (Sheehy, 2010). Tewksbury, DeMichele and Golder's (2004) comment that visiting brings expense even if it does not involve a night away from home, is a reminder that accommodation costs may be another burden families may have to bear, albeit to a lesser extent than in the USA (the context of their study). The visiting times can be inconvenient and restrictive (Light and Campbell, 2007). Visitors can find the wait for the visit long and boring (Sturges, 2002). They can experience negative interactions with prison staff. Specifically, staff are perceived to be indifferent to their needs as visitors (Kotarba, 1979); staff treat them though they too have offended (Sturges, 2002; Reeves and Heptinstall, 2011); or staff treat them generally with contempt (Hutton, 2016). Dixey and Woodall note that visits are often "traumatic and unsettling" for families, and part of this is due to the strain of seeing an incarcerated loved one in an "unfamiliar and daunting" setting (Dixey and Woodall, 2012: 35); such feelings may be most pronounced for first or new visitors who are unfamiliar with the prison setting, or a particular prison's setting (as I will discuss in Chapter 3, all prisons are different, even those under the same management, such as the Scottish Prison Service).

Being subject to the attendant "institutional scrutiny" in the form of searches, enforcement of strict dress codes and rules surrounding permitted belonging is a "significant barrier" for many visitors (Tewksbury, DeMichele, and Golder, 2004: 103). Given this unrelaxed atmosphere, coupled with the "starkly contrasting circumstances of the inmate and the family", the interactions between prisoners and their families can be somewhat artificial (Light and Campbell, 2007: 300).

Given the importance attached to visits, there can be a build up of expectation and anticipation. If the visit fails to meet these high expectations for either prisoner or family member, or both, this is likely to be upsetting. It is no exaggeration to say that visiting can be emotionally charged, with feelings of "excitement, anticipation, joy…and sadness" (Christian, 2005: 33) all in the mix. Therefore, the literature conveys clearly both that visiting is important to families but also that its concomitant logistical and other issues, are burdensome.

***Children's experiences of visiting***

The distinctive experiences of prison visiting for children have latterly received research attention (for example, Ronay, 2011; Sharratt, 2014; Flynn, 2014). However, until quite recently, what was known about children's experiences was largely derived from the "opinions and experiences of the children's parents and their carers" (Flynn, 2014: 178). As Sharratt notes, visits can offer children an "invaluable opportunity" (Sharratt, 2014: 763) for children to have face to face contact with their imprisoned parent, which is reflected in a phenomenon as simple as the "excitability and hyperactivity" children tend to demonstrate immediately prior to visits (Clopton and East, 2008: 196). Others also highlight how visits offer children the opportunity to continue their relationship with their imprisoned parent or family member in a meaningful way, and can provide reassurance about his or safety in the prison, or can correct misconceptions about prison life (Sims, 2000; Hardy and Snowden, 2010). While this contact can allay anxieties about a prisoner's welfare and wellbeing and in turn improve their own wellbeing through this allaying of fears, visiting is not without its problems for child visitors (Sharratt, 2014: 763).

Although it makes intuitive sense, it is important to point out that the transport and financial considerations attendant with prison visiting also affect children, and may in turn affect the frequency of their visits, even if children are close by; an observation made by Flynn (2014) in the Australian context of her study. Children can be daunted by features of the prison environment, such as the process of entry to the prison, the search procedure, unfriendly prison staff and noisy and crowded visiting rooms (Sims, 2000; Sharratt, 2014). Children must also accept the (relative) brevity of visits (Ronay, 2011). Given that the passage of time is arguably experienced differently for children than by adults, this may be a particular challenge, and possible source of distress for children; children's experiences of time in relation to prison induced waiting in my own study, will be reflected upon in Chapter 6.

In addition, the rules which govern the visiting experience may affect how the child perceives his or her imprisoned parent (Barnardo's, 2014). Mazza (2002) refers to the universal prison rule that prisoners are not allowed to touch money, or to move freely, resulting in children often having more relative freedom or power than their imprisoned parent; for example, children are permitted to use a vending machine to bring his or her (imprisoned) parent a snack. Mazza suggests that this "parentification of children" can be "quite confusing", with children often sensing that they hold more power than their incarcerated parents (Mazza, 2002: 523). Mazza also suggests that children often "sense

the imbalance of power between their father and correctional officers" (2002: 524), and can also "read" their father's body language towards the correctional officers, and may internalise the emotions their father has displayed inadvertently, and this may then shape their own attitudes towards correctional officers, and figures of authority, more generally (2002: 524). Restrictions placed on physical contact with their imprisoned parent (in conventional visits), and the resulting quite artificial interaction with them can be source of distress for children (Buist, 1997; Sharratt, 2014), particularly for young children (Barnardo's, 2014). Comfort comments that when children behave badly in visiting rooms (perhaps due to an amalgamation of these issues), prison officers tell them and their parents off, which disrupts conversation and negatively impacts the experience of the visit. As she observes, the tension and frustration which follows are not compatible with quality family time (Comfort, 2007). This offers some tangible detail about how the prison's attempt to support family ties is also a moment of disciplining (poor) families and potentially even creating quite dysfunctional or artificial relations within families. This is a theme I take up more fully in later chapters. Therefore, as with families' more generally, children can find the visiting experience unpleasant, but visits also provide children with the important and enjoyable opportunity to have face to face contact, and may provide reassurance if they are concerned about the prisoner's welfare.

## Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the literature on prisoners' families, set against an international backdrop of high rates of imprisonment, outlined at the start of this chapter. It has provided an overview of this literature on families' experiences of imprisonment, including their experiences of prison visiting.

What should be clear from this introduction is that there is a consensus in the literature that imprisonment is a highly negative experience for affected families, causing many adverse impacts. As a way of communicating this, the imprisonment of a family member is often referred to as a 'traumatic event', or through the adoption of similar language. This narrative of trauma (I use this as a shorthand to explain this way of framing experiences, but which encompasses all similar or associated language) is one which I re-visit fully in Chapter 8, when I will argue that while this narrative of trauma authentically represents the experiences of many families (this is emphasised), it does not represent the experience of *all* families, for complex and overlapping reasons.

This chapter has shown how the imprisonment of a loved one is responsible for causing numerous and varied pains for families. These include but are not limited to: the creation or exacerbation of financial strain; stigma; the emotional effects caused by the absence; the hassles associated with prison visiting, and the pernicious effects of imprisonment for affected children. While this body of work has been given in some respects cursory consideration in this chapter, it is discussed and drawn from throughout this thesis, in combination with other literature; specifically, this rich body of work undergirds discussion throughout this thesis of how the families in my own study experienced the familial pains, or negative effects, of imprisonment.

Next, Chapter 3 will ‘set the scene’ to the research underpinning this thesis through providing important, and in depth, context.

# Chapter 3: Setting the scene: Some Context of Visiting Prison and of Prison Visitors' Centres

## Chapter outline

This chapter provides the context to the research upon which this thesis is based. It discusses the visiting entitlements for prisoners in Scotland, and the evolution of prison visitors' centres in the UK. It then provides detailed discussion of HMP Edinburgh, the Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh and the visiting process for families visiting loved ones confined within it. This discussion is important to break down popular or cultural representations of prisons, as well as to highlight the idiosyncrasies of this prison and field-site which is likely to shape families' overall experiences. Further, this discussion also raises points relevant to the analysis presented in this thesis, such as flagging the numerous sequential waits families experience in each visit, and of how the activities offered within prison visits shape family life.

## Visiting entitlement

A prisoner's legal entitlement to visits depends on his or her conviction status: prisoners on remand are entitled to a thirty-minute visit per day, excluding Sundays. Prisoners on remand are those who are awaiting trial following submission of a not-guilty plea, or who are awaiting sentencing; they are said to be 'remanded in custody'. Convicted prisoners are entitled to either at least thirty minutes in any period of seven consecutive days, or at least two hours in any period of twenty-eight consecutive days (Scottish Prison Service, 2016c). [22] While these entitlements seem quite restrictive, the reality is that, at least at HMP Edinburgh many prisoners receive visits two or three times per week, and remand prisoners often make use of their daily visit entitlement. At HMP Edinburgh, all visits are forty-five minutes long, except for children's visits (which will be discussed); these are one hour to one hour and thirty minutes long.

[22] These are in accordance with the Prison and Young Offenders Institutions (Scotland) Rules 2011 (Part 8: Visits).

**An introduction to prison visit rooms and prison visitors' centres**

Although there is jurisdictional variation, in general, prison visits take place in designated 'visit rooms' within prisons. While visiting spaces "vary enormously" (Moran, 2013b: 180), common to all is their provision of tables and chairs for visitors and prisoners to be seated at for the duration of the visit. Although, it is also worth pointing out that there is even variation in the type of table offered. Some visit rooms have café style tables while others have coffee tables (HMP Edinburgh has the latter). While this has not been explored in this research or in the work of others, it seems appropriate to briefly reflect on how the style of table may help to foster certain types of interaction and may create different levels of (dis)comfort. Indeed, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, the tables were a common source of complaint for families. Many visit rooms offer refreshments via vending machines or small tuck shops. Some visit rooms are also equipped with designated children's play areas.

Visitors' *centres* are areas distinct from prisons and rooms within prisons such as the prison visit room. Visitors' centres aim to improve the visiting experience of visiting families and to offer support to these families (Loucks, 2002). The first visitors' centre in the UK was established at HMP Pentonville in England more than forty years ago,[23] through the active involvement of Baroness Linklater of Butterstone (Hansard, 2002). Its creation was prompted by the Baroness' concerns about the queues of women and children she saw waiting outside the prison in all weathers. The evolution and increasing prominence of visitors' centres in the UK will be discussed shortly, but first a brief introduction to these spaces.

Visitors' centres tend to be found in separate buildings from the prison they are associated with, but located in close proximity to them. Families Outside (2010) suggest this is best practice so that families have their own space, or 'neutral territory' prior to visiting the prison itself. Centres offer visiting families a designated place to wait prior to their visit, and a space for visitors to stow personal belongings prohibited from entry to the prison.

[23] The exact date is unknown.

They also offer families spaces where they may relax after their visit (Families Outside, 2010).

Visitors' centres vary hugely: "visitor centres, where they exist at all, mean different things to different people" (Barry, 2009: 3). They vary in terms of funding, practices and the facilities offered (Loucks, 2002). Some are little more than 'add-ons' to prisons both in terms of their architecture and their role; some simply offer a waiting space free from the elements, while others also carry out basic administrative functions, as required by the prison they serve such as booking in visitors (Mills and Codd, 2007; Woodall, Dixey, and Kinsella, 2012). Others, like the Centre at HMP Edinburgh, are purpose-built, aiming to provide an array of supportive services to visitors (Loucks, 2002; Mills and Codd, 2007).

In the UK, visitors' centres tend to be run by voluntary sector organisations, often those that specifically support prisoners' families. For example, 'Pact', a national charity which supports those affected by imprisonment, manages the visitors' centre for five prisons in England and Wales. Staffing arrangements differ between visitors' centres; centres each have different compositions of paid staff and volunteers (Families Outside, 2010). Operational budgets for centres also vary considerably (Mills and Codd, 2007).

In England and Wales, good practice guidance for visitors' centres was formulated in 1998 by HM Prison Service in collaboration with voluntary sector organisations, but had no implementation plan (Hansard, 2002), or enforcement mechanism given its guidance only status. More recently, Action for Prisoners' Families produced a revised evaluation toolkit (2011); this provides guidance on how visitors' centres can evaluate the delivery of their services and their impact. There is a requirement in England and Wales for all newly built or contracted out establishments to be equipped with a visitors' centre (Home Office, 2004), though this is the extent of obligatory provision.

In Scotland, the Scottish Government holds devolved responsibility for all aspects of Scotland's criminal justice system including its prisons. In 2015, the Scottish Government established the National Prison Visitor Centre Steering Group (NPVCSG). The NPVCSG's purpose is to develop a strategy for the establishment and support of a visitors' centre for all prisons in Scotland. Further, in November 2015, the Scottish Government awarded £1.8m to visitors' centres in Scotland to support their work (Scottish Government, 2015b).

While this is a welcome development, currently there is no formal or legal commitment to ensure that all existing or planned prisons in Scotland are provided with a visitors' centre.

Progressive developments in visitors' centre provision may be partly explained by the fact that their potential to support families both through the imprisonment of a loved one, and in other ways (for example, via signposting to relevant services) is now increasingly recognised (Loucks, 2002). In 2004, the Home Office outlined that visitors' centres have an "important role to play" in helping to keep families together and in helping to foster the rehabilitation process (Home Office, 2004: 37). Indeed, with prison visits considered the "lynchpin of continued contact" (Scott and Codd, 2010: 153) between prisoners and their families, visitors' centres are credited with helping to ensure that this contact is positive, not only from the perspective of families' but also from the perspective of prisoners and prison staff (Woodall et al., 2009).[24]

To turn to the Scottish context, currently, seven of Scotland's fifteen prisons have a visitors' centre. These prisons are: HMPs Edinburgh, Barlinnie[25], Perth, Grampian, Addiewell; HMPYOI Cornton Vale and HMYOI Polmont. All centres based at these prisons are managed by voluntary sector organisations, who work in partnership with the Scottish Prison Service (SPS).[26] Given that all are managed by different organisations and are associated with different prisons, each visitors' centre works differently. With some exceptions, the research on prison visitors' centres in general has, to date, been rather piecemeal. This can be explained by the fact that, as noted, centres are relatively recent additions to prison buildings and they do not yet dot the prison landscape in Scotland or in other jurisdictions. Recognition of their potential to support families in various ways (consideration beyond merely the services they offer), has also historically lagged. As outlined in Chapter 1, my doctoral research aimed to explore how these services are received, including an exploration of any benefits gleaned. Nonetheless, it also aimed to uncover how the space itself was experienced, including its affective dimensions, and to

[24] According to this study (Woodall et al., 2009), prisoners benefitted from the visitors' centre because they were aware that visiting could be stressful for families, but also knew that the visitors' centre improved the overall experience for their family. Prison staff benefitted from the visitors' centre because it absorbed queries and requests from families that they would otherwise have to respond to, and because it helped to create a positive atmosphere for visiting.

[25] Unlike the other visitors' centres which have proximity to their respective prisons until recently the visitors' centre at HMP Barlinnie 'The Croft' was located approximately 10 minutes (on foot) away from HMP Barlinnie in a separate building (and out with the prison complex). It has since been relocated to the 'Atrium and Family Information Hub' of HMP Barlinnie.

[26] With the slight exception of the Families Outside run centre at HMP Addiewell, since Addiewell is run by a private sector company that is under contract to the SPS.

consider if even the existence of a designated space could confer benefit to visiting families.

**HMP Edinburgh- the Research Site**

Of the fifteen prisons in Scotland, thirteen are managed by the SPS and two (HMP Addiewell and HMP Kilmarnock) are managed by private sector companies under contract to the SPS.

HMP Edinburgh ('Edinburgh Prison') is located to the West of Edinburgh city centre in the Saughton area of the city, giving rise to its local name 'Saughton'. It is a large prison (the second largest in Scotland); it has a design capacity of 870 but tends to house approximately 900 prisoners each day (Scottish Prison Service, 2016c). It accommodates prisoners primarily from the local authority areas of the City of Edinburgh, the Lothians (Midlothian, East Lothian, and West Lothian), the Scottish Borders and Fife, though this does not preclude those from other areas being accommodated. Indeed, prisoners and their families can come from all over Scotland. Figure 1 (below), a map of Scotland, marks the local authority catchment of HMP Edinburgh in light green.

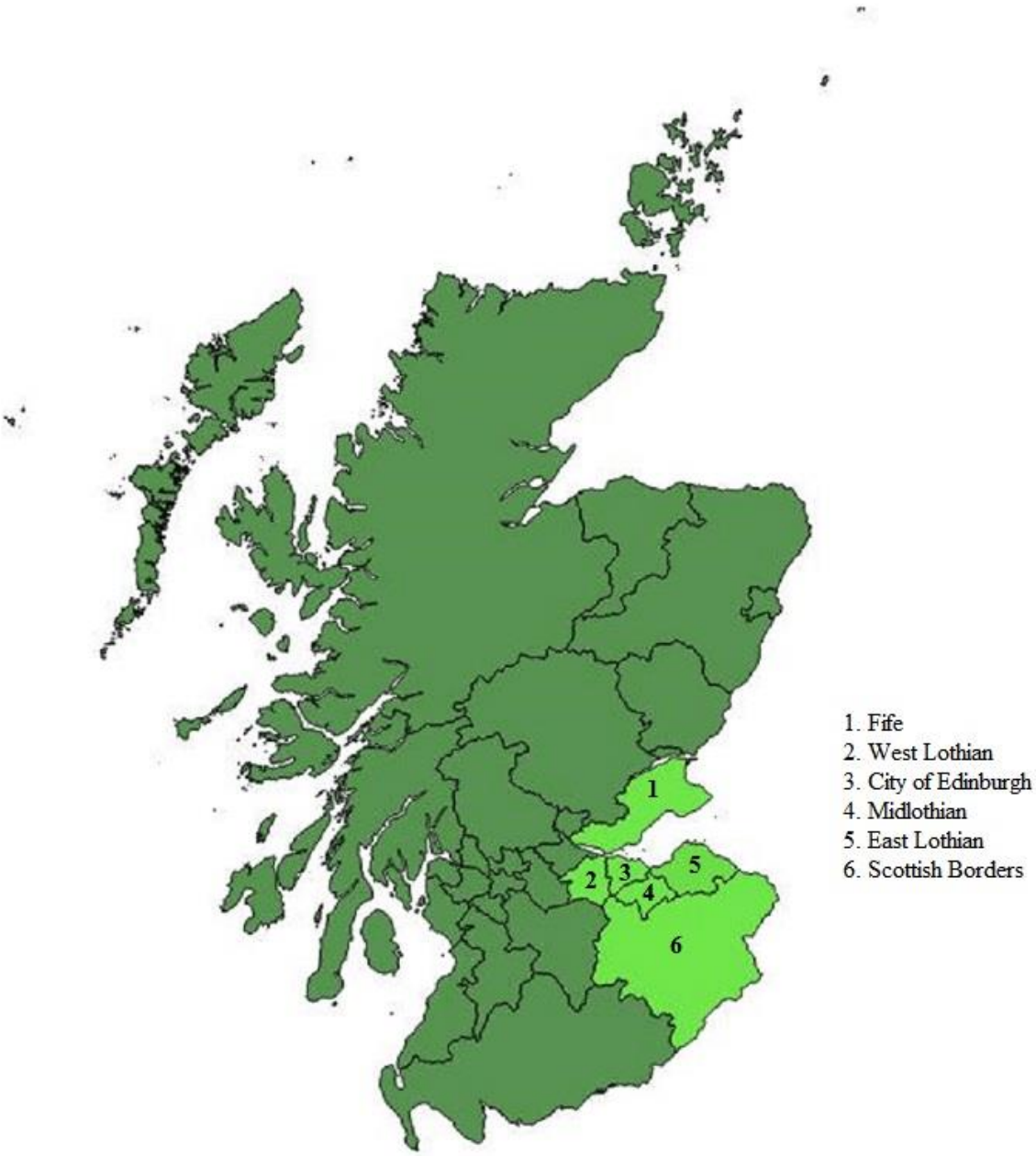


Figure 1: Map of Scotland with highlighted local authorities

Source: Data from the Ordnance Survey (contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0). Image created by Simon Strain, on request.

Edinburgh Prison largely comprises of convicted and remanded adult men but also accommodates a small number of adult women (approximately 85, though this figure fluctuates). At the time of this research, although most women prisoners in Scotland were housed in HMPYOI Corntonvale, Scotland's only all-women facility, women were also

housed in smaller units at HMPs Edinburgh, Greenock, Grampian, and Inverness.[27] Adult prisoners in Scotland are defined as those aged 21 years and over; those aged below 21 years are classed as young offenders.

The lengths of prisoners' sentences at HMP Edinburgh vary considerably. The prison holds those serving long term (including life) and short term sentences; serving life sentences and there are some who are serving Orders for Life Long Restriction (OLRs) (Scottish Prison Service, 2016c). Long term sentences are custodial sentences of four years and over. Short term sentences are custodial sentences of fewer than four years. An OLR constitutes a sentence of imprisonment, plus a post sentencing discretionary period of detention, for an indeterminate period (Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 Section 210F). OLRs are imposed for those offenders deemed to be very 'high risk' due to their conviction for serious violent or sexual offences. In effect, the order constitutes a lifelong restriction of liberty: if the prisoner is released into the community, he or she will be subject to lifelong supervision and management.

The prison comprises of a number of buildings which include several accommodation halls. Long term prisoners and 'prisoners on protection', 'protections' prisoners', or simply 'protections' (as they are colloquially referred to as by staff at HMP Edinburgh and the Visitors' Centre) are housed in Ingliston Hall (Ingliston). Remand prisoners are housed in Glenesk Hall (Glenesk); short term prisoners are housed in Hermiston Hall (Hermiston); and women prisoners are housed in Ratho Hall (Ratho). Protection prisoners are prisoners who are accommodated in a separate wing from the 'mainstream' prison population because it has been identified that they may be vulnerable to physical attacks by other prisoners. Many of these require protection due to the nature of the offence they have been imprisoned for; these prisoners are called 'offence related protections prisoners'. The offences these prisoners have been convicted of are predominantly sexual offences, but also include terrorism related offences. Others are protected for reasons unrelated to their offence- for example, due to gang rivalry; these prisoners are called 'non-offence related protections prisoners'. Ingliston Hall is made up of four floors: levels one and two house offence related protections prisoners; level three houses non-offence related protections

[27] In February 2015, it was announced that as part of the Scottish Government's revised approach to dealing with women offenders, HMPYOI Cornton Vale would be closed. A smaller national prison is to be built on the site of HMPYOI Cornton Vale, alongside five smaller regional units located across Scotland (Scottish Government, 2015a).

prisoners; level four houses prisoners sentenced for four years or more (and who are not convicted of an offence or having characteristics warranting protection).

Visits for each hall take place at different times, though there are exceptions. On Friday evenings women prisoners share a visit with those prisoners and visitors having children's visits. On the Sunday afternoon children's visits, all hall visits are put together, excluding Glenesk (the remand hall). All prisoners in Ingliston have their visit at the same time; this means that those on protection (both offence related and non-offence related) share their visits with all the other prisoners within Ingliston.

Although prisoners can wear their own (approved) clothes in their respective halls, when visiting they are required to wear prison regulation jumpers or T-shirts. Each hall has a different colour of jumper or T-shirt. This easy identification is intended to make the transfer process, of prisoners from the visit room to their respective hall by officers, straightforward. Prisoners in Hermiston wear grey; prisoners in Ratho wear purple; prisoners in Glenesk wear blue. Ingliston prisoners, including non-offence related protections prisoners, wear green. Offence related protections prisoners within Ingliston were two different colours; those convicted of a sexual offence wear maroon, and those convicted of another offence (for example, for a terrorism related offence) wear red.

Yet this dress code also signals to families (at least on visits where halls are mixed), that prisoners are categorised in some way; families often quickly work out (or are informed) that categorisation relates to the prisoner's hall. This in turn gives family members an indication about the offence for which the prisoner is imprisoned for, though it constitutes little more than an indication given the breadth of offences prisoners are and can be convicted of perpetrating. While this is generally not an issue, it becomes more of an issue when those convicted of sexual offences are considered: the maroon jumper or T-shirt reveals to both other prisoners and to family members that its wearer has been convicted of a sexual offence. As will be discussed in Chapter 7, sexual offences carry a particular stigma; this, tied to the knowledge that an individual has been convicted of perpetrating one (even though the spectrum of offences for which people can be convicted for and subsequently imprisoned is very broad), can shape the interactions which take place among families. More broadly, the 'colour coding' of prisoners is visible to all, including visiting children. It is perhaps notable that the style of this prison uniform is very like the style of many children's primary school uniforms, and as such is a (not so) subtle denigrator.

In sum, HMP Edinburgh's population is among the most diverse in Scottish prisons. This is due to the variation in: nature and length of custodial sentence, the demographic characteristics of its prisoners and the numbers of prisoners housed. A logical by product of this is that its visiting population is similarly diverse. As a researcher, this enabled me to gain these rich and varied insights into prison visiting, from the perspective of a wide range of families and family members. However, while the diversity of HMP Edinburgh is noted, it is important to also note that this fits with the SPS' overall approach to having 'community facing prisons' within its estate; as such this diversity is not necessarily exceptional. This approach aims to "provide regional and local alignment between prison rehabilitation and reintegration services and those offered within the communities to which prisoners will return at the end of their custodial sentence" (Scottish Prison Service, 2013: 165). A natural consequence of housing prisoners near their local communities is that the prison population within a given prison is diverse: by grouping prisoners on the basis solely of their geographical location, it is likely that the prison population will comprise of offenders serving varying lengths of sentences for a wide range of offences. Therefore, HMP Edinburgh's diversity is by no means exceptional in theory, but on the other hand, this diversity *has* translated into its operational practice; a translation that may not have occurred in other prisons despite official policy outlining this direction.

***The Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh***

The Centre at HMP Edinburgh was the first purpose built centre for prison visitors in Scotland (Families Outside, 2006). It is owned by the Onward Trust, which holds a lease until 2035 from Scottish Government Ministers. The lease is for the purpose of providing a visitors' centre for visitors to HMP Edinburgh (Salvation Army, 2013). The WRVS held the contract with the Onward Trust between 2000 and 2004, and in 2004 the Salvation Army took over management. In January 2016, Barnardo's took over the management of the Centre, while retaining all members of Salvation Army staff. Since all fieldwork was undertaken when the Centre was managed by the Salvation Army, discussion of the Salvation Army's management of the Centre in this thesis uses the present tense. One would assume that the ethos and aims of the management is likely to shape the operation of the Centre and how in turn families experience it, however minimally or meaningfully. Therefore, the Centre discussed in this thesis may be one which differs, even if only

slightly, from the Centre that currently operates at HMP Edinburgh; this is important to bear in mind.

The Centre is open 363 days of the year, seven days a week; the Centre is closed on Christmas Day and New Year's Day. Between Monday and Friday, the Centre is open from 9am until 9pm; on Saturday, it is open from 9am until 4pm, and on Sunday from 12pm until 4pm.

The Centre is located within the prison environs; it sits directly in front of the prison and next to the car park, but it is a geographically separate building from the prison, with no corridor to connect the buildings. Hoskins Architects designed the Centre. Their brief requested a "comfortable welcoming building located out-with the prison gates where visitors (mostly women and children) could prepare for and recover from their visits" (Hoskins Architects, 2016). The architects note that in order to make the independence of the Centre clear, there had to be a distinction between these two spaces; the implication being that architectural design could help facilitate, even ensure this. The building was designed to maximise daylight while minimising views of the prison (Hoskins Architects, 2016). The Centre is built largely with wood, has a distinctive triangular copper roof, and a curved tower next to the entrance (see Figure 2 below).

Figure 2: Photograph of exterior of HMP Edinburgh and the Visitors' Centre

As regards the Centre's interior, the environment is spacious, bright and open-plan. The Children's Corner, an area specifically created for children to relax and play, is located at one end of the Centre, the end closest to the entrance (it is located in the curved tower pictured in Figure 2). It is decorated with the children's own art work and educational posters, and has child size tables and chairs and children's books. This area is aimed for use by primary school aged children. At the opposite end of the Centre there is a children's soft play area (though it has long been dis-used for health and safety reasons) and a large office, used by Centre staff, Families Outside staff and for meetings. In the middle of the Centre, located next to the canteen, there are numerous adult sized tables and chairs. At one side of the Centre (the side closest to the entrance), next to each window, are comfortable, cushioned seats, which are joined together. These are high backed, and are surrounded by information boards. The high backing separates one area of window seats from the next set of window seats, effectively offering a degree of sound proofing and therefore affording visitors some privacy. At the other end (furthest from the entrance) of the Centre is the children's playroom. This is aimed for use by younger children including

babies: there are lots of cushions, soft toys, bouncer chairs and a play kitchen with plastic food and appliances. Next to the playroom is an outdoor children's play area where there is a large climbing frame. It can be accessed from the play room and from a door in the Centre.

Although the Centre is managed by the Salvation Army which has its own aims (which I will shortly discuss), its staff work in partnership with SPS staff. Centre staff are employed by the Salvation Army and work with SPS officers based at the reception desk in the entrance way of the prison, which is colloquially referred to as 'the Bubble' by staff from both the Centre and prison. Centre staff also work with SPS Family Contact Officers (FCO's).[28] FCOs are prison officers whose role is to encourage and maintain links with families (Scottish Prison Service, 2016b). They do this via offering advice and information, support and signposting to relevant services and agencies. They are also responsible for overseeing a visit when it is session.

***The Visiting Process***

At HMP Edinburgh, prisoners' (both remand and convicted) are required to book visits with their families. This policy varies between prisons in Scotland, and sometimes depends on the conviction status of the prisoner; for example, in some prisons convicted prisoners book whereas for prisoners on remand, families book, whereas in other prisons again, families book visits irrespective of the conviction status of the prisoner (Scottish Prison Service, 2017). At HMP Edinburgh, visitors are asked to report to the Centre at least thirty minutes before the official start time of their visit. In theory, the visitors wait in the Centre or in their cars in the car park for around fifteen minutes, and then wait in a queue in the prison for another fifteen minutes. The reality is that most visitors wait in the Centre (often significantly) longer than this, largely due to arriving early. There are numerous reasons for their early arrival, which include the fact that most visitors to HMP Edinburgh rely on forms of transport which may be experienced as burdensome or unreliable; for example, on local or national bus services (Families Outside, 2009). The experiences of (enforced) waiting for families will be discussed in detail in this thesis, particularly in Chapter 6. The rationale for waiting time is that it is required by the prison in order to allow sufficient time

[28] These were previously named 'Family Contact Development Officers' (FCDOs). For a detailed discussion of the origin and evolution of FCDOs/FCOs, see Loucks (2005).

for visitors' details to be processed, and for visitors to go through the security process and make the short walk to the visit room. The length of waiting time a visitor is expected to wait varies between prisons across Scotland, but all prisons impose a waiting period.

When visitors greet reception staff in the Centre, a member of staff checks that they are on the list for the particular visit. If they are, they are free to wait in the Centre or in the surrounding area-for example, in their car in the visitors' car park as a number do, which I will reflect on in Chapter 6. If they are not on the list, a member of staff contacts prison staff based at the reception desk to query this. It is not uncommon for the lists of expected visitors received by the Centre and by the prison to differ; a visitor may be on the prison's list but not the Centre's list and vice versa. In most cases, Centre staff will work with prison staff to ensure that the visitor(s) gets a visit, but this is not always possible. In these cases, the visitor does not get his or her visit. Shortly before visitors are called through to the prison for the visit, Centre staff relay the information from the list, confirming which visitors are attending, to prison staff at the reception desk of the prison. Fifteen minutes prior to the start time of the visit, visitors are invited to go to the prison for the visit via a tannoy announcement. In this tannoy announcement, a member of Centre staff communicates what visitors are and are not permitted to take into the prison with them.

Visitors are only allowed to take into the prison: up to £10 in cash (in any denomination) to buy refreshments from the tuck shop in the visit room, and two approved forms identification (ID). One of these approved forms must be photographic, and the other must prove address. The approved forms of photographic ID are a: valid passport; photographic driving licence; citizen/validate UK card; senior citizens bus pass; workplace photo ID card; photographic bank card, and another official photo ID i.e. a membership card. For visitors who do not have any suitable ID, the Centre provides application forms for visitors to apply for Citizen cards. These cards cost £15 and are therefore considered more affordable than some other forms of ID, particularly a passport or driving licence. Included within the accepted proof of address IDs are: utility bills; council tax bills; a benefit book; a bank statement; and a letter from an official source. These must be less than three months old. Visitors can request to be 'on the system' at HMP Edinburgh, which involves prison staff taking their photograph and details. By doing this, they are technically no longer required to bring their two forms of ID. However, Centre staff recommend that visitors continue to bring their IDs even when they have been logged onto the computer system, in the event that the visitor's information is lost and he or she is no longer recognised on it or

if the computer system malfunctions, thus risking not being allowed into a visit. Visitors must store all their other belongings either in their car or in lockers provided in the Centre. Collectively, these requirements are demonstrative of the huge amount of surveillance (and by virtue of this, data) captured of families; this relates closely to discussion of systems of control which were introduced earlier in this thesis but will be explored in more detail in Chapter 8.

When visitors enter the prison via the main entrance, they queue to give their name and show their ID to the prison officer who checks their name off the list. They first go through an electronic turn-style, and then through a metal detector. If a visitor sets off the detector alarm, he or she will be given a 'rub down' by a prison officer of the same sex as them. Drug detection dogs (sniffer dogs) carry out random searches, but are not always present.

After being searched, visitors then proceed to a waiting area. This is the also the area where visitors hand in personal property and money for the prisoner (discussed below). A locked door connects this area to a separate and second waiting area. Visitors wait in this second waiting area until prison staff from the visit room communicate to prison staff that they can proceed. The entrance way and waiting areas were renovated in 2014. The areas are clean, painted white, well-lit and fitted with air conditioning and heating. The second waiting area is decorated with large photographic murals of Edinburgh at night.

Visitors then make their way down a small corridor. The corridor is lined with doors to toilets and offices. It is decorated with informational posters and with canvases painted by the children who have attended the children's visits. At the end of the corridor is a locked door to the visit room. A prison officer opens this door when they are notified by the FCO to do so.

When visitors enter the visit room, they give their name to the FCO based at a FCO desk, situated at the right-hand side of the door. The FCO tells them the number of the table they have been designated to sit at for this particular visit session; this changes each time they visit. However, visitors or prisoners who are considered to be suspicious (based on intelligence) will generally be seated at the tables nearest to the entrance and therefore closest to where most of the officers stand while monitoring the visit and where the FCO desk is located. The visitors are the first to be seated. They wait for the prisoners to arrive with their respective hall mates, and then families can greet one another. A brief hug and

kiss between each family member and prisoner is permitted at the start and end of the visit, but for the duration of the visit, prisoners remain physically separated from their families by the coffee-style table described.

These waits are drawn attention to here since the temporal dimensions of visiting for families- specifically families' experience of *waiting*- will be discussed in Chapter 6. However, it seems helpful here too, to convey in visual terms, the multiple waits families experience each time they visit their imprisoned family member, and how families experience these, across several interim spaces (see Figure 3). Even if these individual waits are not lengthy, the cumulative wait for each visit may be; notwithstanding the fact that family members are often regular visitors.

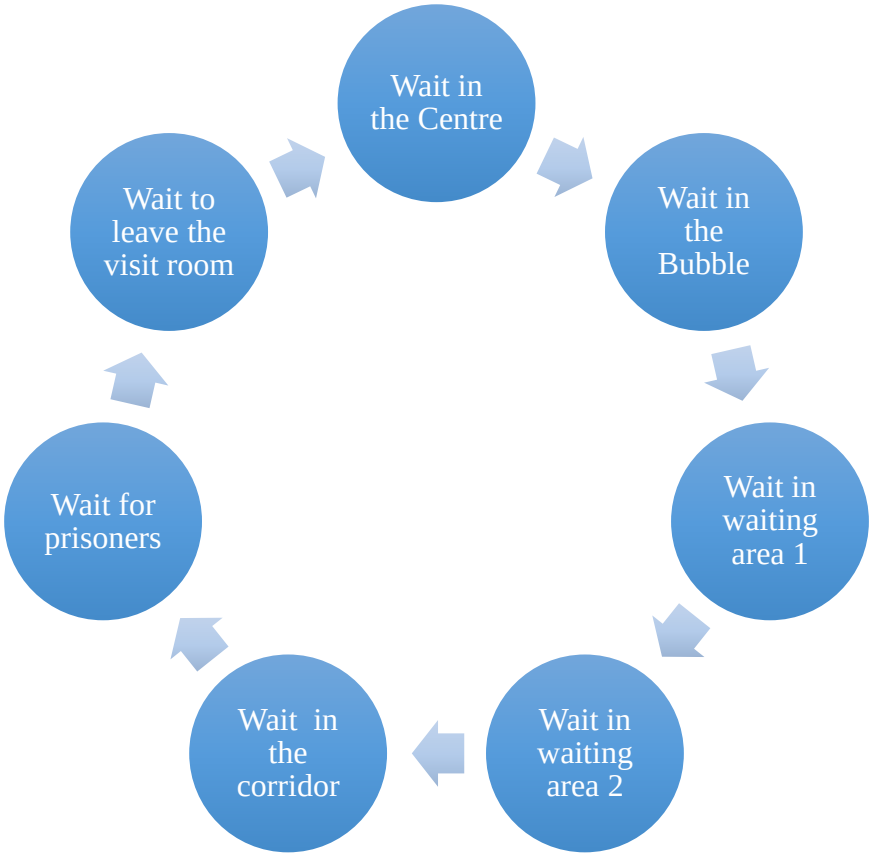


Figure 3: Diagram of visit waits

Lastly on this aspect of the visiting process, the visit room is very large and is filled with tables and chairs. At the end of the visit room (furthest from its entrance) is a children's area. To the left of the entrance of the visit room, there is a small café which serves refreshments. Friends of Edinburgh Prison volunteers operate the café. The walls of the

visit room are decorated with boards displaying the children's artwork and stickers of nursery rhymes, numbers, and letters. In 2016, the children's area was re-painted with various Disney illustrations, painted by a prisoner dad. In the children's area, there are child size tables and chairs, books, toys, and a small soft play area. It is in this area of the visit room where the children's evening visits activities take place. [29]

**The Centre in focus**

Moving back outside the prison proper, the Centre is a multi-use space. Some use the Centre's facilities as they are visiting the prison to hand in money to be deposited into the prisoner's personal cash account, commonly referred to as a prisoner's 'PPC'. Prisoners make phone calls through a credit based system. In order to pay for these phone calls, a prisoner's PPC needs to be topped up. The PPC can be topped up: by families handing in money to them; by prisoners adding their own savings to it; or by having their wages from work in prison added to it. The amount of money a prisoner is entitled to depends on his or her conviction status (i.e. if they are remanded or convicted) and on their level of privilege (Scottish Prison Service, 2016e). Others use the Centre's facilities when they are handing in property to a prisoner. In order to receive personal items, a prisoner must complete a 'proform'. The proform outlines the items which a prisoner is allowed to receive. The completed proform must then be approved by prison staff. The proform can either be posted out to the family member or its information can be communicated to the family member via a phone call. These family members who hand in property and/or money may be unaccompanied, but they often bring other family members or friends with them too, who also then spend time in the Centre.

In its provision of accessible toilets and affordable food and drink, the Centre is also used by many other individuals and organisations who are involved with the prison. These include: SPS staff; criminal defence lawyers; NHS employees; social workers; voluntary sector workers; and visiting speakers. As will shortly be discussed, many other individuals or organisations also use the space. Therefore, although the Centre was created and built as

[29] Here I have provided my own overview of the process of entry for families, as informed by my fieldwork, conversations with Centre staff and my own research into the process, which I then go onto discuss in detail and from the perspective of the families who shared these with me, in Chapter 5. However, for an important, personal, short, and first-hand account of the process of visiting (for example, the security process) from the perspective of a visiting mother (albeit at an unidentified Scottish prison), see her account published in the 2013 December edition of *Scottish Justice Matters* (see List of References).

an area for families (perhaps with an implication of the exclusive use by families), it is often alternatively used, even if only very briefly, by a very wide range of actors from various organisations, who use the Centre for various purposes. This research did not seek to uncover the implications of this, but what is clear is that it helps create a sense of business and movement in the Centre. Moreover, of course it is acknowledged that the coming and going on these numerous actors may alter the sociality of this space.

***Centre aims***

The Centre's main aim is to provide support to family members visiting someone imprisoned at HMP Edinburgh. As outlined in its Mission Statement for the Centre (displayed on a board near the Centre's entrance), the Salvation Army aims to provide a "supportive, friendly, and non-judgemental environment" for those visiting the prison, and to support visitors at "their point of need."

Underpinning all work at the Centre is a 'community development approach' which aims to respond to the needs directly of visiting families. It aims to achieve this through engaging with the families themselves who express their needs and share their experiences (Salvation Army, 2013). The idea is that the families themselves have direct input into the services and activities offered by the Centre. When the development worker (who later became the Co-ordinator of the Centre) came to the Centre, she had three key objectives: to improve the health and wellbeing of visitors via improving the quality and breadth of food and drink on offer at the Centre; to improve facilities for children to improve their overall experience of visiting; and to improve the information and support offered by the Centre.

As regards health promotion, the Centre previously only offered sugary soft drinks and snacks with a high salt, sugar and/or fat content to visiting families. In consultation with families it emerged that families wanted more wholesome and filling food such as soup, baked potatoes, and toasties and paninis. The provision of these small meals is now available, giving families the option of eating dinner at the Centre, which may lessen the time pressure on families for visits after school and work.

A "major objective" of the Centre is to "provide support and information to all visitors to the prison". Much of the information concerns the prison and criminal justice system: for

example, families ask about prison healthcare, integrated case management (ICM)[30], information about the parents and children's support project and referrals to external agencies, including Families Outside (Salvation Army, 2013: 9). While there are information boards dotted around the Centre which convey this information, Centre staff tend to convey this information orally, often while visitors are at the reception desk.

***Family focused activities***

Since 2012, the Salvation Army have contracted Edinburgh based child-care agency 'Super Mums' to provide child care workers to provide arts and crafts activities for children three times per week. As will be outlined in the Chapter 4 of this thesis, it is through my work in this capacity that I became familiar with the Centre and it is from this work that the idea for this doctoral project originated. Structured activities such as making masks, door signs or lanterns are offered, but children are also free to draw, paint and use the materials as they wish. The arts and crafts activities offered in these sessions are very popular with children.

The Centre also invites a worker from the Dogs Trust[31], every couple of months to deliver an educational but fun session to children on responsible dog ownership. The worker offers the children fun activities: for example, brushing the soft toy dog to 'look for fleas'; playing pairs to match dogs looking for a new home to suitable owners; colouring in worksheets and completing quizzes. These sessions are aimed at raising children's awareness of the needs of dogs and how they can help look after their own dog if they have one, with a broader aim of developing children's sense and application of responsibility.

The Centre works in partnership with NHS Lothian Public Health Promotion to offer the 'Childsmile' Initiative within the Centre. Childsmile is a national programme aimed at improving the oral health of children in Scotland, and to reduce inequalities in relation to access of services and treatment. Approximately every six weeks, an Oral Health Promotion Worker visits the Centre, offering information and advice to families, as well as

[30] ICM is the process by which the SPS works with other agencies to help and support prisoners throughout their sentence. The process begins when the prisoner arrives at the prisoner and continues until release. The tailored help and support provided is intended to help reduce the likelihood of a prisoner re-offending (and in turn from being re-imprisoned) after release. If prisoners wish family members to attend these meetings, family members may be invited to attend them (Scottish Prison Service, 2016d).

[31] The Dogs Trust is the UK's largest dog welfare charity. Among other things, it re-homes dogs and engages in education and outreach activities.

free toothbrushes, toothpaste, weaning cups and products for dentures (Salvation Army, 2013: 27). Centre staff chat to the worker and take the 'freebies', and encourage anyone else present in the Centre to do likewise.

As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, children are often confused about imprisonment. They are often not told the full truth, and may get some of their information about prison life from TV depictions of the prison or from gossip; this information is likely to be exaggerated and may paint a (more) sinister picture of prison life than its reality, which is likely to be distressing for children. Staff at the Centre identified that a resource could be produced which would dispel the myths and offer information and reassurance to children about prison life, written in child-friendly language. The resource could then be used by parents if they decided that they wanted their child to know the truth about the imprisonment. The Parents and Children's worker is an employee of the Salvation Army whose role is to provide support, information, and educational opportunities to families. This worker, in collaboration with children visitors, produced three booklets entitled 'Visiting Mum', 'Visiting Dad' and 'A Parent's Guide'. Each of these featured the children's own drawings as well as a systematic guide to the visiting process and to features of prison life, including cells, work and leisure time. 'Visiting Mum' and 'Visiting Dad' are written in accessible, child-friendly language (and include quotations from the children themselves) and 'A Parent's Guide' offers suggestions to parents about how to discuss imprisonment with their children. The booklets were well received at their public launch, which was attended by, among others, Colin McConnell, then and current Chief Executive of the SPS and then Minister for Children and Young People, Aileen Campbell MSP (Salvation Army, 2014).

In 2013 the Centre established the 'Meet the Police' initiative. For this, Centre staff invite police officers to visit the Centre for a morning or afternoon every couple of months, to take part in a participative session with visiting children. Police officers show the children what their jobs involve interactively; for example, children are invited into police cars and to switch on the blue lights and siren; to sit on the motorbike; to meet police dogs and to try on police hats. Police officers also help children participate in activities that are aimed at improving children's understanding of police work. These activities include: completing worksheets; drawing police officers and their dogs and equipment; decorating home baking (for example, icing and decorating cup-cakes) and face painting. While the event is marketed as a 'family fun' event, it is "intrinsically educational in its objectives"

(Edinburgh Prison Visitors' Centre, 2016). The rationale underpinning the initiative is that the children of prisoners and their families often have negative perceptions and experiences of the police: for example, a child and their parent may have witnessed a traumatic arrest, or a father's absence may be explained to the child as being due to the 'police officer taking daddy away for no reason', as outlined in the Chapter 2. The Centre has received positive feedback for this initiative from families, particularly from parents. The initiative has been nominated for a Butler Trust Award, a scheme which recognises good practice in UK prisons.

During the Meet the Police sessions, it became clear to Centre staff that children had a range of questions about the criminal justice process, particularly around arrest: for example, 'Why did the police take daddy away?'[32] As a response to this, staff at the Centre decided to work with the police and with prisoner dads to develop a resource for children aimed at answering these questions. The Parents and Children's Worker at the Centre and a police officer based at the prison shared weekly focus group discussions with prisoner dads over a six-month period. In the early stages, prisoners shared their own negative experiences of the police, but all were agreed that they wanted their children to have a positive perception of the police, with the hope that they would be comfortable asking the police for help if they needed it. The prisoners also expressed that they wanted to find a way of answering their children's questions about the criminal justice process in a way that they would understand (Edinburgh Prison Visitors' Centre, 2016). This process culminated in the publication of a booklet entitled 'My Daddy and the Police'. The prisoners were the authors, and wrote this from the perspective of a child asking their dad these difficult questions. It was illustrated with drawings from the prisoners' own children as well as drawings from children at Stenhouse Primary School (in Edinburgh) as part of a drawing competition. The booklets were launched in August 2016 at HMP Edinburgh with representatives from Police Scotland, SPS and the Scottish Government all in attendance. The booklets were widely praised and I am aware (anecdotally) that the SPS intends to offer these booklets across all prisons in Scotland.

Therefore, there are many initiatives and services offered to families in the Centre, which are often in partnership with other agencies. This brief overview has not provided an

[32] Of course, as outlined in Chapter 2, and as will be discussed further in this thesis (see Chapter 7 specifically), not all children or all ages of children are told the truth about their family member's whereabouts, meaning these questions about the criminal justice process are unlikely to be asked.

exhaustive list of all of those that are currently offered or have ever been offered at the Centre; instead it gives an insight into the workings of the Centre. In addition, much support offered and received in the Centre is informal: this support is offered and received between families and staff, and also between families themselves. I will discuss this in detail in Chapter 7.

**Family contact at HMP Edinburgh**

Given the emphasis of this thesis on families, it is fitting to briefly discuss the family activities offered either in or by the prison. The Bookbug programme, part of the Scottish Book Trust, is available to prisoner dads. It is a multi-faceted programme which encourages parents to share stories, songs, and rhymes with their infant children. One of its strands is training prison officers or (more commonly) voluntary sector practitioners to lead Bookbug sessions within prisons. In Scotland, these have thus far been offered at HMPs Shotts, Edinburgh and Dumfries and Grampian, and HMPYOI Polmont. Sessions typically take place during visits, but as part of this prison based version of Bookbug, imprisoned parents (mostly fathers), are encouraged to record their own song or story on CD for their children, to play at home.[33] A mother mentioned Bookbug to me and said that it was "great" because she can leave her son in his bedroom and "he can listen to his dad on a CD telling him a story".

There are a number of visits specifically intended for children that are offered at Edinburgh Prison. The evening visits on Monday and Wednesdays are 'children's visits' and are led by Visitors' Centre staff. 'Bonding visits', also children's visits, are held every week day morning, and these are led by FCOs. Given the time of day in which they are held, bonding visits are tailored towards younger children who are not yet in school. These visits are informal: prisoners and their families are permitted to move around freely and physical contact between family members is allowed throughout the visit. FCOs supply toys to families to use if they wish but visits are otherwise unstructured and non-prescriptive.

The children's visits in the evenings are intended for school age children. Centre staff and volunteers lead them[34], but prison staff are still present in the visit room, monitoring

[33]All information was provided via a phone call discussion I had with a Scottish Book Trust employee.
[34] After I completed fieldwork, I began volunteering at the Centre and helped once a week in these children's visits.

security. These visits follow a structured programme devised by the Centre's Parents and Children's Worker. Each week involves the children undertaking or participating in an activity, which aims to be both fun and educational, and also allows families to share food and drink together.

For these visits, families are allowed to purchase food and drink from the Centre for the whole family (including the prisoner). These items are collected and put into named bags. A member of Centre staff takes these bags to the reception desk, where they are put into boxes to go through the scanner. The bags are then taken to the visit room and given to the FCO where they are placed at the arrival desk. Upon arrival into the visit room, families then collect their bag and take it to their designated seats. While families are encouraged to participate in the activity for at least part of the session (for the benefit of the children), they are also encouraged to use the visit time in other ways that they wish: for example, chatting, free playing and consuming this food and drink.

The activities offered in these visits are varied. During my involvement in the Centre families: were involved in arts and crafts (for example, children made African masks and necklaces and made tartan placemats for Burn's night); celebrated Christmas through a child-led Nativity and Nativity display; made smoothies; decorated pancakes for Shrove Tuesday; had a New York food themed night where hot dogs, bagels and pretzels were tried and tested; and participated in educational and interactive visits led by various organisations including Gorgie City Farm, Brew Lab, Party Animal Encounters (each of these involved the families getting to meet live animals) and the Edinburgh Samba School. Around once every six months, there are also meal nights where families can share meals together (for example, an Indian and Italian meal night have been held to date); the hot food is cooked and provided by prisoner chefs. Centre staff receive very positive feedback from parents and children about these visits and these visits are nearly always full.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the context to the research upon which this thesis is based and has offered insights into the workings of the prison environment, often obscured from public view. This discussion helps to break down popular or cultural representations of prisons, and serves to challenge any assumption that prisons, even within Scotland, operate in a uniform way. However, this discussion has also raised key points that are relevant to

the analysis discussed in this thesis: for example, it has highlighted the multiple waits families experience when visiting (and as such the temporal burdens borne), and it has also introduced the various activities offered within the visits which in turn shape family life. Lastly, this detailed, and, truthfully, a little tedious sequential run-through of the visiting process for families, also helps to convey how burdensome, and tedious, the process can be for the families who visit.

The following chapter, Chapter 4, discusses my journey into this doctoral project, and the qualitative methods employed in the research underpinning this thesis.

# Chapter 4: Methodology

## Introduction

In academic publications, it is common for accounts of empirical research to be polished, and for these to gloss over the messiness that comes with empirical work. This chapter responds to this criticism and aims to offer a frank and reflexive account; it therefore includes some discussion of my own experience of this messiness. To elicit families' experiences, I employed three qualitative methods: ethnographic observation; qualitative interviews with adult family members and Centre staff; and a creative method with children. This chapter begins by providing a brief overview of the methods employed, and then provides a detailed timeline of how I came to this doctoral project. It then outlines my epistemological stance; my ethnographic approach; the limitations of the research; and introduces the family members interviewed. It then discusses in detail the ethical and practical considerations posed by the research and chosen methods. This includes a discussion of why these methods were chosen; how they were used; and how they worked in this setting. The latter part of this chapter gives detailed consideration to the reasons underlying drawing as my chosen method, and reflects on how this worked in practice.

## Overview of methods

To capture the diversity of the visiting population, I spent time in the Centre on a variety of times and days, including at evenings and weekends. For this research, in total I spent approximately 450 hours in the Centre.[35] I also interviewed 27 people which comprised: 7 children, 7 members of staff and 6 adult family members. I have 10 drawings from the 7 children who produced them. I interviewed a number of family members more than once. In all but two cases, I had repeated informal interactions and conversations with all the family members interviewed, including the children. As will be discussed, this helped me capture an evolving narrative for each family member.

[35] This excludes the many hours spent during my MSc dissertation fieldwork and the hours in which I worked in the Centre as an arts and crafts worker. While these are rightly not counted here, it seems important to acknowledge that these many hours spent are likely to have shaped my thinking. Indeed, I reflect on this later in this chapter.

Likely a product of the function of this particular prison (as outlined in Chapter 3), a key contribution of this study is that it captures the visiting experience for various family members and various types of familial relationship. While partners and children were key participants in this study (and as discussed in Chapter 2, they are often the focus of research attention), those with different connections to prisoners also shared their experiences with me. I interviewed the daughters, step sons and nieces of prisoners (all children). I interviewed the partners, fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers and sisters of prisoners (all adults). Over the course of fieldwork, I also chatted to friends, acquaintances, aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as in laws and step relations.

**Timeline**

Before delving into detailed discussion of methods, it seems fitting to chart my quite serendipitous journey to the doctoral project and this thesis. However, in doing so, I also explore how over the course of this journey, my conceptualisation of families' experiences evolved and reflect on how this evolution occurred.

During my MSc (in Criminology and Criminal Justice) year, I deliberated about pursuing doctoral research in Criminology, but I found it difficult to narrow what were rather broad research interests. I arranged a meeting with Dr Richard Jones at the University of Edinburgh (where I was undertaking my MSc) who asked me to come prepared with a few ideas of what *really* interested me. He very impressively and helpfully concluded that even within this list of seemingly unconnected aspects of Criminology, common to all was an interest in families, relationships, and justice, particularly punishment. Moreover, these interests had not suddenly manifested: they were in fact long held, albeit they had morphed slightly: for example, my favourite subjects during my undergraduate degree were Family Law and Criminal Law, and my voluntary work throughout university was reflective of these interests.

At the time of this meeting and of the generation of these ideas (January 2013), I had been working at the Centre at HMP Edinburgh for three months (starting in October 2012). I worked there in my capacity as an arts and crafts sessional worker, as part of my part time work for Edinburgh based child care agency 'Super Mums'. I worked for Super Mums on a part-time, ad hoc basis. The work involved providing child-care and babysitting services in various settings, such as in nurseries, crèches, hotels, and private residences. The position

at the Centre arose, and given these interests, I applied for it without hesitation and fortunately was successful. I held this as a regular position, and it involved working one or two short shifts per week (each shift lasting 2.5-3 hours), leading arts and crafts activities in the Children's Corner for children with another worker. The Parents and Children's Worker (whose role was introduced in Chapter 3) provided us with a structured programme of suggested activities. These were themed either around calendar events and festivals, or themed around an area of interest: for example, dinosaurs, space, the rainforest, and the ocean. However, children were also free to use the materials as they wished and 'free' draw, paint or create.

Working in the Centre with the children and meeting their parents, and learning about their lives and experiences, fuelled these interests, and powerfully cut across each of these. It was also evident, and importantly explicitly pointed out by Professor Richard Sparks, that in addition to being the inspiration for a doctoral project, the Centre could also be a unique field-site in which to conduct research with prisoners' families. Professor Sparks also introduced me to Comfort's work, which my work shares parallels with as outlined; including how our "stepping stones" (2007: 3) to conducting research were our existing involvements in our respective visitors' centres.

At the stage of drafting the proposal for the PhD, I spoke in detail about it with Centre staff, who were supportive of the proposed research. This then led to more focused work on formulating and finalising the resulting PhD proposal. There is no question that this existing involvement in the Centre helped me to establish rapport with both members of staff and some family members too; this greatly assisted the recruitment process, and of course facilitated access, subject to the ethical approval process via the Salvation Army Headquarters (which I will discuss shortly). Although, it is important to point out, that, given how imprisonment is often experienced in the lives of families, many of the family members who I knew well were no longer visiting by the time I started fieldwork, due to their loved one's release. Yet others had also seen their loved ones released, and then seen them re-convicted or recalled. These family members were then visiting again by the time I started fieldwork. Others again left during the fieldwork period and returned when I had started volunteering in the children's visits. This lived experience of the so called 'revolving door' phenomenon will be discussed in Chapter 8. As mentioned, I continued to work in the Centre in this capacity throughout the course of fieldwork; how I negotiated this dual role will be discussed shortly. Here it is important to point out how my work in

the Centre was central to the PhD's development and helped establish rapport and connections, but also that this was indeed primarily a stepping stone given the families' vicarious experience of the revolving door.

At the time of applying for the PhD place and for funding, and then at the time of being offered these, I was at the respective stages in my MSc where I had to suggest some ideas for a dissertation, and then begin work on the dissertation. With the advice of course staff at the University of Edinburgh, I was advised that running a small-scale pilot study at the Centre would be of benefit to the PhD, or otherwise useful empirical experience if I was unsuccessful with my PhD application. Consequently, in the summer of 2013, I spent 3 weeks undertaking participant observation at the Centre. For my MSc I sought to uncover how the Centre mediated the pains of imprisonment, or in other words, how the Centre supported families in various emotional and practical ways. The intention had been to supplement this observation with a handful of informal interviews with adult family members, but the Salvation Army did not provide approval for this, meaning I was reliant solely on participant observation. [36] While this was a very small-scale pilot and therefore limited in scope, some early insights into the Centre and into the experiences of families were nonetheless gained, some of which were interrogated and developed in this doctoral project, and are explored in this thesis. These included the subtle supportive interactions that take place between staff and families; the hints of the informal support networks families that develop in the Centre; and the idea of the Centre as a liminal or in-between space (Foster, 2013).

This MSc year was therefore important in providing me with the opportunity to develop rapport with Centre staff; to spend more time working in the Centre, and slowly immerse myself in it; and, to provide time and space to think about the site as a space, and more broadly about imprisonment and the experiences of families of prisoners, sparked by these initial insights. By the time I started doctoral fieldwork (June 2014), I had been working at the Centre for twenty months, albeit on a (very) part time basis, and I had already completed a pilot study within the site.

[36] I was not provided with an explanation for the permission to only conduct observational research. However, given that I was later successful in securing approval to conduct research for my PhD which involved interviews (including with children), I suspect that my lack of research experience may have played a part in only receiving approval to conduct observational research. In addition, my PhD application was a far more thoughtful and robust application, which I suspect is likely to have better reassured the Salvation Army's ethics committee of my intended approach.

On the latter point, both the time spent and time elapsed were critical in the development of my research approach for the doctoral project. This approach involved utilising more methods than that proposed in the MSc project, but also involved a more critical analytical take on the area; one which has continued to develop over the course of the PhD. As part of this more critical approach, I began to appreciate (beyond paying lip service) how *varied* both the lived experiences of imprisonment and the daily lives of the families of prisoners are. As will be explored, this led me to interrogate the extent to which the narrative of the trauma that is often applied to familial imprisonment (as was introduced in Chapter 2), can be applied in a uniform way to families. As noted in Chapter 2, this is a pervasive narrative and is one which I too (unquestioningly) adopted and continued to hold as I worked in the Centre, and during the course of the MSc year, including during the pilot project for my dissertation. Yet this began to, albeit gradually, unravel as I spent more time in the field, and began the PhD. The pace of the unravelling then quickened as I was undertaking fieldwork; or in other words, as I invested more time in the Centre and spent more time interacting with the families who were also spending (sometimes a great deal of) time in this space. Explanations for this narrative and its pervasiveness will be proposed in Chapter 8, but in the spirit of documenting the messiness of empirical research, it is important to acknowledge here how my own thinking has changed, quite markedly, over the course of this doctoral project.

**Epistemological Stance**

My methodological approach is rooted in constructionist or constructivist (I use these terms inter-changeably) tradition. This approach allows for different interpretations of the same event because it expects people to "see somewhat different things, examine them through distinct lenses, and come to see somewhat different conclusions" (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 27). This flows from the constructivists' rejection of the notion of an objective (universal) reality; they instead take the view that the researcher's goal is to "understand the multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge" (Martens, 2010: 18). In simpler terms, this is an approach which challenges assumptions that certain acts, phenomena, and experiences deemed to be 'natural', are in fact (socially) constructed by social actors and institutions, and associated processes.

This perspective relies on seeking out the perceptions of a "variety of persons" to garner these multiple realities (Martens, 2010: 20). Qualitative methods are neat methodological fits for researchers who adopt this paradigm, because these researchers attempt to "elicit the interviewee's views of their worlds, their work, and the events they have experienced or observed (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 28). This is precisely the kind of information I was seeking for this exploratory study, and indeed through these three qualitative methods, these multiple realities experienced by different individuals emerged, and were emphasised in the data. The constructionist perspective enables these different experiences to sit alongside one another, but it also in my case enabled and encouraged a challenge of a dominant narrative; one which also tends to be presented as representing the experiences of all families. As discussed, over the course of the PhD, and simultaneously as I invested more time in the field talking with the families directly affected, I was encouraged to challenge this narrative, as well as to challenge my own assumptions about how families may experience imprisonment, although this was already part of my reflexive approach. In adopting a constructionist frame, these other narratives emerged; narratives which I will argue should be considered alongside, rather than be dominated by, this 'one' narrative, a narrative which has effectively become the default way of conceptualising and presenting families' experiences of the confinement of a loved one.

**Ethnographic fieldwork**

To continue with the chronicling of my journey into this research, after enrolling in Advanced Qualitative Methods at the University of Glasgow in the first year of my PhD (academic year 2013-2014), myself and another PhD student from the School of Social and Political Sciences (re)established the Ethnography Research Group at the university. [37] We wanted to offer interested staff and students within the school a space in which to discuss ethnography, with a focus on *doing* ethnography, discussing the practicalities and challenges of conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Meetings were held monthly and involved discussing a topic relating to ethnography which included: 'insider'/'outsider' ethnography; ethical issues; multi-site ethnography and the process of writing ethnographic fieldnotes.

[37]As it transpired, this was a re-establishment of a similar group that had existed a few years previously but had disbanded.

The rich discussions we shared deepened my understanding of ethnography and of ethnographic observation and fieldwork more broadly. Originating in anthropology, ethnography and ethnographic methods are constantly evolving, with ideas of what they encompass far from static (Hammersley, 2006); this is partly because the particular culture or sub culture that an ethnography endeavours to explore and then represent in written form, is also in constant flux (Van Maanen, 2011). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) outline some of the key features of ethnography, which include the study of people in their everyday worlds; the generation of data from varied sources, but primarily from observation and informal conversations; and an exploratory, unstructured approach to data collection (or generation). As I will outline, such features were also found in, and central to, my approach. This project was influenced by and is rooted in the ethnographic tradition and a central part of it involved conducting ethnographic observation within the field-site; immersing myself in and actively engaging with the site and those in it, as fully as possible. As Bengtsson points out, ethnographic data does not exist 'out there', waiting to be collected and analysed; it is created through an active research process involving the researcher and the participants (2014: 730).

However, there were clearly defined parameters to the field and my so-called immersion and engagement within it: the field-site operated business opening hours (as set out in Chapter 3), with a clearly defined start and end to the day, preventing total immersion in the field, and in turn limiting engagement. While total immersion is in some cases problematic (for example, with concerns flowing from 'going native'), my approach could not be characterised as total immersion in this sense and therefore I do not conceptualise my approach as an ethnography 'proper'; however, this is due partly due my immersion being rather short in the temporal sense. Of course, there are ongoing and unanswered questions in the field; as Bryman points out, the definition of a project as either involving ethnographic observation or being *an ethnography* in the traditional sense may simply be "a matter of degree" (2016: 461). In addition, as Ugelvik observes, while visiting the prison in order to write about it "is not the same as actually living or working in it", if visits are regular enough then the researcher is able to carve him or herself out a position as a participant in the field (Ugelvik, 2014: 471), suggesting some fluidity. These critical questions also do not emerge in a vacuum, and they relate to the social contexts in which empirical research is undertaken, which includes recent but growing pressure within the academy for shorter research contracts (Hammersley, 2006), inexorably constraining the time able to be invested in the field.

I will not wrestle with these questions any further here; but now highlight the *ethnographic orientations* of this project, even if I would not conceptualise my work as being an ethnography 'proper'. Most importantly, the observations and interactions which emerged from my fieldwork are referred to and drawn from throughout the thesis. Further, this ethnographic observation was critical to the early formation and then development of the critical arguments presented in this thesis. I will shortly discuss my reflections of employing this method, including practical aspects such as making and writing up field notes, and later consider how this approach led to the development of central arguments.

The reasons for employing an ethnographic approach in this project were two-fold. Firstly, this approach was essential to the generation of data which could not have been yielded by any other method. I wished to uncover how families used the space, and how they interacted with both other families and members of staff within it. Employing an ethnographic approach was the ideal means of uncovering this, and having this multi-sensory engagement with the field over an extended period (albeit within the parameters outlined) led to these insightful observations and conversations, which are presented in this thesis (see Appendix 9 for the form I created to guide my fieldwork observations).

Secondly, I also employed an ethnographic approach for more instrumental reasons. I hoped that the informal interactions I had with some family members would lead to a more focussed and in depth conversation with them at a later stage. Indeed, as Hammersley suggests, lengthy periods of participant observation can lead to conducting "relatively open ended interviews designed to understand people's perspectives" (2006: 3). I was very open about this with people and always 'left the door open' for further conversations about their experiences. Indeed, the vast majority of the interviewees came to be recruited via fieldwork, although as will be discussed, two were recruited via the Centre leaflet (see Appendix 1), and one via my wider networks; networks which developed over the course of the PhD.

**Limitations of research**

First, some limitations of the research. I was interested in exploring in detail the dynamics of one visitors' centre in situ, but consequently all the data generated is likely to be highly shaped by this context. As outlined in Chapter 3, the Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh is

different from all other visitors' centres in Scotland, and HMP Edinburgh is different from all other prisons in Scotland, and elsewhere. Indeed, as Dominique Moran notes, prisons develop in context (2013a: 341); and by extension, so do the spaces connected to prisons, such as visitors' centres.

The findings from this qualitative small-scale study are from the vantage point of the families and staff who visited and who worked (respectively) in the Centre during the nine-month study period. [38] The voices of those confined in HMP Edinburgh and those who work within it are noticeably absent. While I had, and continue to have a research interest in how prisoners' themselves experience imprisonment, my work in the Centre during my MSc year sparked an interest in the experiences of the families of prisoners. Further, as noted in Chapter 2, the experiences of families are comparatively under researched, and I felt motivated to help redress this imbalance.

Further, given the research setting, I only met and spoke with families who visited their family members in prison. It is often noted that not all prisoners receive visits from family members. There are many complex reasons for this, which include a feeling, from the perspective of the prisoner that it is easier to 'do time' if they distance themselves from the outside world, or that it is simply too painful to be reminded of the world they are missing (Dixey and Woodall, 2012: 38). From the perspective of the family, the burdens associated with keeping in contact may be too great, leading to the deliberate severance of family ties (Christian, 2005). As will be discussed in Chapter 5, some families shared some of their reservations about visiting, or revealed that other individuals in their family did not visit and provided reasons underlying this decision. However, this is in no way a comprehensive insight into the reasons behind a decision *not* to visit. Lastly, as mentioned there was no inclusion of prisoners' views. This meant that their views on and experiences of visiting are not known; this is important for this context given that, as noted in Chapter 3, at HMP Edinburgh (as with some other prisons in Scotland) the onus is on the prisoner to book a visit. In addition to these limitations, I will also outline later in this chapter some instances where the methods I employed did not work quite as successfully as I hoped.

**Introduction to the family members interviewed**

[38] There is one exception: I met Zena through an event on criminal justice at a university event. Zena offered to share her own experiences of familial imprisonment with me via an interview at a later date, which I conducted in a cafe. Zena's brother did serve part of his sentence at HMP Edinburgh and she and her family visited him there. However, her brother served the majority of his sentence at another prison.

While the circumstances of the family members interviewed are given a brief introduction when their individual experiences are shared at various points of this thesis, it seems fitting to introduce these family members here, and for this to be used as a more detailed reference point should introductions be lacking in scope or clarity in later sections. As is indicated below, a diverse range of family members and a diverse range of experiences were captured in the research, and are drawn from in this thesis. I interviewed: both men and women, and children and adults of varying ages[39]; family members who were visiting loved ones encompassing a wide range of familial connections; family members who had prior experience of imprisonment and those who did not; family members visiting loved ones on remand, those serving short term and long term sentences, those given offence related protections, and those with no foreseeable prospect of release; and family members convicted of less serious offences, very serious offences and levels of seriousness in between.

However, it is important to note that the information provided below is based on details that were disclosed to me by the family member (or, where indicated, which I was informed of by Centre staff). Therefore, this is unlikely to provide a complete picture of a family member's circumstances and experiences of imprisonment or wider criminal justice system:

***Jane***

I interviewed Jane once. Jane, aged between 20 and 30 visited her mum who was a first-time offender, serving a short-term sentence. Jane had never been affected by familial imprisonment before. Jane's mother was convicted of a white-collar crime.

***Jake***

I interviewed Jake once but spoke with him many times in the Centre. He was over 50, and was visiting his son. Jake's son was convicted for a domestic abuse related offence.

***Bob***

[39] I did not ask the adult family members for their age, so the age bracket provided is based solely on my estimation of their age. The children's ages provided are, however, exact.

I interviewed Bob three times but spoke with him on various other occasions in the Centre. He was between 30 and 40 and was visiting his father. Bob had not experienced familial imprisonment before. Bob's father was convicted of a sexual offence.

***Serenity***

I interviewed Serenity twice on her own and once with Jamie, and had continued interactions with her in the Centre. Serenity was a woman aged between 20 and 30. She was visiting her partner (Paul), and later her new partner's brother (Steve)[40], both of which were convicted of sexual offences. Serenity's father, brother, and previous partners had been imprisoned.

***Jamie***

I interviewed Jamie once in a joint interview with Serenity, and had continued interactions with him. He was aged between 20 and 30 who was visiting his father convicted of a sexual offence. Jamie's father had been imprisoned before.

***Samantha***

I interviewed Samantha once. She was a woman aged between 30 and 40 who was visiting her partner on remand. She had visited previous partners and friends in prison before.

***Katie (the Reid family)***

I interviewed Katie once, and she was also present in my interview with her children. I also had continued interactions with her in the Centre. Katie, aged between 30 and 40, was visiting her partner convicted of a drugs-related offence and serving a short-term sentence. Katie had visited her partner in different prisons and during different sentences. Katie met her partner through a prisoner letter writing scheme. Katie has four children; three daughters ***Amy, Britney*** (who participated in my research), Elsa and a baby son. At the

[40] My flexible methodological approach extended to the families' naming of their imprisoned family members. Where imprisoned (and other) family members have been named, this was the decision of the family member to select a pseudonym for them too; this decision was usually made because he or she referred to these other individuals extensively by their real name. However, I decided to identify Serenity's current partner, Steve, with a pseudonym (which I selected) to make it easy to distinguish between him and her previous partner, Paul. I also choose a name on Keira's behalf: she referred to her uncle by name. Finally, I selected a pseudonym for Jake's wife (Teresa), as I felt describing her as 'Jake's wife' repeatedly was distracting from the narrative (see Chapter 4). This should clarify why sometimes family members' imprisoned loved ones are named (via pseudonyms) and why others are only identified in terms of their relationship to the family member- for example, as 'Zoe's partner'.

time of the research, Amy was 10 and Britney was seven, and they each produced a drawing.

***Sophie***

I interviewed Sophie once and had continued interactions with her. She was aged between 30 and 40 and was visiting her partner on remand. Sophie had visited a previous partner in prison and had also been imprisoned herself.

***Zoe***

I interviewed Zoe once and spoke with her a couple of times in the Centre. She was aged between 20 and 30 and was visiting her partner who was remanded. She had visited her partner previously at HMP Edinburgh during a different sentence, and before that, when he was a young offender in HMYOI Polmont.

***Judy***

I interviewed Judy once and had continued interactions with her in the Centre. She was aged between 30 and 40 and was visiting her partner (Patrick) convicted of a serious offence and in receipt of an OLR. Judy had experienced familial imprisonment before, through her brother's imprisonment.

***Dee***

I interviewed Dee once and had continued interactions with her. She was over 50 and was visiting her partner (Tommy) convicted of a drugs related offence and serving a short-term sentence. She had previously visited her son (Robin) in prison, who tragically committed suicide while in prison.

***Zena***

I interviewed Zena once. She was aged between 20 and 30, and as a teenager had visited her brother in various prisons including HMP Edinburgh. Zena's brother had been convicted of a serious assault and served a long-term sentence for this.

***Pryha, Pandora, Annabella, and Paisley (the Finnegan family)***

I led two drawing sessions with Pryha, Pandora and Annabella are three sisters whose mother is Paisley. Pryha was 12, Pandora was eight and Annabella was 14. Pryha and Pandora each produced three drawings and Annabella contributed to the discussions

verbally. The three sisters were visiting their father who was serving a short-term sentence (the offence was not disclosed to me). They had previously visited their father in other prisons in Scotland, including HMP Barlinnie. Paisley's cousin had been in prison before.

***Douglas***

I led one drawing session with Douglas, aged 11. Douglas visited his brother (but sometimes just waited in the Centre with his great aunt as his mum visited) and had previously visited his step-father in prison. His brother's offence was not known, but he was serving a short-term sentence.

***Keira***

I led two drawing sessions with Keira, aged eight. She was visiting her uncle (Trevor), convicted of a sexual offence, and serving a long-term sentence. It was not known if she herself had visited other family members in prison, but I was informed by Centre staff that most of the men in her family had served prison sentences at some stage.

All the family members I interviewed were White, and the majority were Scottish. Katie's family (the Reid family) and Paisley's (the Finnegan family) families were White Gypsy/Travellers.

**Research process, ethical and practical issues, and reflections**

By way of background, for this research, I followed the ethical guidance from the University of Glasgow and from the Economic and Social Research Council (Framework for Research Ethics). I sought and received full ethical approval for the research from both the University of Glasgow and from the Salvation Army. Due to my arts and crafts and voluntary work, I was a member of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups scheme and was therefore legally protected to work with children. However, while ethical codes and guidelines such as these offer an important starting point, they of course are just that (a starting point); social research demands an approach to ethics that is sensitive and adaptable to the situation and context (Clark, 2012), an approach I adopted and closely followed.

***Recruitment***

I distributed a leaflet around the Centre with the purpose of informing visitors of my presence (see Appendix 1). The leaflet also invited visitors to participate in the research more actively via an interview. This leaflet was blue-tacked to the wall in two high traffic locations (next to the entrance and near the toilets). I also distributed this on tables, and re distributed it when families took copies away, or where copies were inadvertently recycled. This approach seemed to work successfully both in terms of providing the requisite information, while minimising disruption and intrusion. I will shortly discuss how I ensured I gained informed consent from visitors and from interviewees.

When a family member was interested in speaking to me, I arranged an interview. However, not all interviews were arranged for a future date: often interviews were conducted immediately after my suggestion, since visitors had time there and then. I do not doubt that for some, the interview offered a useful time killing opportunity; how families wait in the Centre will be discussed in Chapter 6. The Centre was the default location for all interviews.[41] Within the Centre, I asked interviewees to select an area of their choosing. As discussed in Chapter 3, in the Centre there are several quiet areas which are cocooned and virtually soundproof. These areas were natural choices in which to conduct interviews. Though I suggested these, not all families felt it necessary to be in quite so private a space; while the reason for this cannot be known, it may be the case the these family members simply felt comfortable sharing their experiences, or it may be that the supportive environment inclined them to share these more openly and vocally.

It was important for this research that Centre staff had the opportunity to share their views, and share their experiences of working with families. A number had worked with families daily in the Centre for years, giving them extensive experience which I was keen to draw from. Though at the start of fieldwork I did not envisage all staff members being interested in participating, in the end all members of staff at the Centre were interviewed, albeit some of the interviews were very brief. I attribute this willingness to participate to the rapport established during my Super Mums work, which continued to be developed over the fieldwork period.

[41] There were two exceptions to this. Zena, described above, was one exception. The other was Dee whose husband Tommy had been transferred to another prison by the time we had arranged an interview. I interviewed both Zena and Dee in a café (separate locations).

Underpinning my approach to the research was a belief that it should be flexible and adaptable to the needs and wishes of individual family members and staff. I invited families to be interviewed on more than one occasion if they wished; I will discuss this later in the chapter. I also invited them to be interviewed in groups, pairs or in their family units, so that interviews could develop from naturally forming social settings. Some took up this invitation: one set of friends who were visiting separate people (Serenity and Jamie) were interviewed together; staff members' D and F were interviewed together; and when I interviewed the children, two sets of sisters were interviewed together. The different ways I chose to name family members (self-selected pseudonyms) and staff (letters) is discussed later in this chapter.

***Dual role***

My work as an arts and crafts worker provided me with some unique insights into the issues families may face. It equipped me with practical experience of responding to these issues sensitively and appropriately: for example, ensuring that I did not disclose information about parental imprisonment to an unknowing child. Moreover, as discussed, it allowed me to establish rapport with both families and staff. As Rubin and Rubin comment, people are "usually more willing" to talk to you as part of an interview, if they know you already, in some capacity (Rubin and Rubin, 2005: 89). Developing positive relationships with those in the field is also "inevitable and desirable" for an ethnographer (Coffey, 1999: 39), or by extension, a researcher employing ethnographic observation.

Nonetheless, this dual role in the Centre also posed ethical challenges. It could have been confusing for visitors and staff as to which capacity was I working in on a given day. I managed this by informing staff and visitors: 'This is my crafts day' or 'this is my researcher day' on the respective days.[42] My role on a given day was also implied by whether another worker and the arts and crafts trolley accompanied me; or whether alternatively I was alone with a notebook and pen. I made clear to both staff and families that the research was separate from my arts and crafts work. I stressed to families that either their participation or non-participation would not affect the services they received at

[42] Indeed, I piloted this approach during my MSc research when I conducted participant observation at the Centre over a three-week period. It seemed to be successful in terms of generating data while minimising intrusion to visitors.

the Centre, and that participation would inform knowledge in the area only. I reassured staff that my research and my work would be kept strictly separate.

It was particularly important that this separateness was communicated clearly to children and that children understood this. On various occasions, children bounded up to me expectantly, and asked where my trolley was. However, I found children understood that I had 'two jobs' quite easily. When I was about to interview Jake, one of the children who I know from my arts and crafts work asked, quite amusingly: "Who is that man? Is he your dad? What are you doing?" I then explained and the child seemed satisfied with my explanation.

***Sensitivities***

Given the disadvantages and difficulties faced by some families, some family members, particularly children, could be considered vulnerable. I drew upon my experience and formal training in working with vulnerable groups to inform a sensitive research design. I have previously volunteered for Family Mediation Lothian (as a Contact Centre volunteer) and Victim Support Scotland, supporting victims of crime. For both I undertook comprehensive training. For this project, I also undertook the Centre for Research on Families and Relationships' training course entitled 'Involving Children and Young People in Research', for which I completed the accreditation. This course involved considering the ethical issues involved in conducting research with children via group discussion and via assessed written work. This experience and training also developed my skills in responding to emotional issues or situations sensitively. Moreover, as outlined in my interview schedule (see Appendices 7 and 8 for a sample of these), the interview focus was on families' experiences of visiting; I was not seeking out details that were more obviously likely to be, or would be expected to be, distressing: relating to for example, arrest or prison life. It was the choice of the family members to share these other aspects and impacts of imprisonment. While the interviews sometimes conjured emotions, interviewees were not visibly distressed. There was one exception to this. When I interviewed Jake, the intention had been to interview Jake and his wife Teresa together. Teresa described visiting as being "unpleasant, demeaning…just horrible". She then started to cry and told me that Jake would explain. I attempted to comfort her but she said that she was ok. She explained that she wanted to go into another booth and be left alone. Jake was happy to continue with the interview and said that Teresa would be fine. At the end of the interview, we both went

to see Teresa who assured us that she was fine, and she (needlessly) apologised for her outburst.

While I also was never visibly distressed to the interviewees, it was of course impossible not be affected by some of the experiences families shared with me, given the inherent emotions involved in any research, not least in the prison environment (Liebling, 1999), or in my case the broader prison environment. Fortunately, my existing involvement in the Centre had helped to build my emotional resilience which I suspect assisted me with fieldwork; further, I was and am fortunate to have support networks in family and friends. The experiences I was privileged to be informed about also revealed difficulties not only brought by imprisonment but by other struggles they encountered in their day to day lives. I was emotionally affected by these too. This tended to manifest in me often thinking about how families' dealt with not just imprisonment, but on how they (were forced to) deal with numerous other challenges; and also how these difficult experiences fitted together.

***Informed Consent***

Throughout fieldwork I was fully transparent about the research to Centre users. I sat in various areas of the Centre with my notebook and took notes of my observation; of what I saw and what I heard. However, I was also part of, and engaged in the field, chatting with staff and visitors. When I had my notebook, I always explained why I was in the Centre to visitors who were sitting near me. This explanation often prompted visitors to share their experiences and views. In these instances, I asked visitors if they were happy for me to write this down in my notebook and all agreed. On other occasions, as I was talking to visitors, they invited me to write down their responses in my notebook.

If I was spending time in the Centre without my notebook and I spoke with visitors, at the start of any conversation, I outlined that as well as being an arts and crafts worker (if this was known to the individual) I was also conducting research. This helped to ensure that if family members had not read my information leaflet distributed around the Centre, or had forgotten about it, they were informed about the research. Indeed, as Alderson and Morrow note, it is "important not to assume that people read or remember the leaflets" (2011: 86). I produced various tailored information sheets and consent forms for: members of staff; adult family members; young people; children; and the parents of participating children

(see Appendices 2-6 for a sample). How I sought and obtained consent for children (those under 16 years old) will be discussed later in this chapter.

***Recording, transcription, and analysis***

Atkinson et al. (2001: 354) note that some ethnographers, or those employing ethnographic methods, consider fieldnotes "to be writings that record both what they learn and observe about the activities of others, and their own actions, questions and reflections". I fell into this category. I did add my own observations, thoughts, and feelings into my fieldnotes when these were typed up, given their importance to the formation of the ethnographic narrative (Lumsden, 2009), but the contemporaneous fieldnotes were largely accounts of what I had observed in the field or the conversations I had with visitors. When I typed up the fieldnotes, I added my own thoughts and reflections which I coloured in blue, in order to differentiate them from observations. In this way, I aimed to balance incorporating auto ethnographic elements with my observations and conversations from the field. I aimed to maintain the "close proximity to the field" by typing these notes up at the end of each field day (Atkinson et al., 2001: 353), which I succeeded in doing on the majority of occasions.[43] This also meant that the "copious fieldnotes" I took as all ethnographers, or those employing ethnographically informed methods do, were not overwhelming in quantity at any stage (Walford, 2009: 117).

With consent, I recorded interviews with my Sony Digital Voice Recorder. This was to ensure I obtained an accurate record of the interviewees' accounts, as well as to maintain the natural flow of conversation, without the interruption of note-taking. Some interviewees did not wish to be recorded. In these instances, I took detailed verbatim notes as they were speaking, again with interviewees' consent. I uploaded all audio recordings onto a secure file on my password protected laptop. I then uploaded these to Sony's transcription software package 'Sound Organiser' (Version 1.6). I choose to transcribe recorded interviews verbatim. I made no changes to the interviewee's words; this meant that I made no changes to the local dialect[44] that many of the interviewees used. I wanted to capture the authentic voices of interviews and I also felt that it would have been

[43] The exceptions were when I left the Centre in late evening: on these occasions, I typed up fieldnotes the following morning.
[44] A comprehensive glossary is provided at the end of this thesis for readers unfamiliar with the local dialect and Scots words used; this is based on my understanding of these words. The acronyms, terms and names section at the beginning of this thesis provides brief explanation or 'translation', but these are provided in greater detail in the relevant sections of this thesis, either within the body of the thesis or in footnotes.

disrespectful to change these. In the first transcriptions, I included all my supportive responses and acknowledgement tokens. I realised that while it was important that I had a record of my interviewing style, partly to reflect on it with the intention of improving it, it was also very time consuming to transcribe my responses. Furthermore, from a data analysis perspective, including these made it more difficult to code an interviewee's words: my (sometimes excessive) acknowledgement tokens interrupted their narrative. In these transcriptions, I also added my own observations, thoughts, and feelings; again, these were coloured in blue in order to differentiate these from the interview. However, it is acknowledged that even with these additions, the resulting transcriptions remain partial records of the interactions that took place (Mason, 2002). This partial picture also applies of course in relation to the ethnographic observation: despite my best efforts to write down and capture as much as possible, other data is irrevocably lost. Indeed, as Bengtsson observes, the data written down becomes data *because* it was written down, while data which was not logged in this way, data which Bengtsson terms 'silent data' becomes lost, but nevertheless is often valuable (Bengtsson, 2014: 736).

I coded the data in several iterations. Prior to transcribing each interview, I listened to the full recording. After printing off all fieldnotes and transcripts, I read through the printouts several times and annotated these. These notes included ideas for themes, and some of my own thoughts and comments about what the data were revealing. Over the course of my PhD, I also kept a notebook on my desk, which I sometimes carried in my handbag, to note down ideas about my PhD as they emerged. There were periods when the notebook was ignored, and later periods, particularly when I had begun this analytical process, when it became a handy and well used aid to pen and help organise my thoughts. To aid the process of coding, I uploaded all data, excluding the children's drawings, onto the qualitative data analysis software package NVivo. While NVivo's features are extensive, I used NVivo for two specific purposes: to systematically code data and as an administrative tool. Regarding the latter, NVivo enabled me to store and work with the data from a single location.

First I 'open coded' the data, grouping data which shared commonalities into categories. In NVivo various types of codes can be created, which are called 'nodes'. I used 'free nodes' which are stand-alone nodes that are unconnected to other nodes, and tree-nodes which are hierarchically structured and comprise a parent node, and child nodes (Bergin, 2011). For example, 'reasons for visiting' was a parent node, and there were five child nodes which

detailed five separate reasons for visiting. Based on my reading of the printouts, I had some initial ideas for nodes. I started with a large number of free nodes. I then: retained some of these free nodes; merged some free nodes, and made others into tree nodes. After this I, a little more primitively, revisited paper and pen. I alternated between writing scribbles on paper and reading and re-reading the nodes presented in NVivo. I also read and re-read the jottings contained in my notebook. Through this messy and mentally draining process, I identified how I could fit these nodes into larger categories and frames of analysis, which would be represented in the four broad findings chapters (Chapters 5-8) contained in this thesis.

***Anonymity, confidentiality, and data protection***

There was no option to allow for use of names with consent because doing so may have identified prisoners and families, potentially jeopardising their safety. Aiming to be participative, I invited interviewees (including the children) to select their own pseudonyms. I also invited them to select pseudonyms for their family members. I gave staff members the option to be identified, but all opted to remain anonymous. I have identified staff as 'staff member A', 'staff member B' et cetera in order to respect this decision, but also to avoid confusing their views and experiences with families identified by pseudonyms. I distinguish interviews with families from the more informal ethnographic conversations I had with families, by referring to the former by their chosen pseudonym and the latter by referring to them as 'a visitor' or 'a family member', and referring to these interactions as 'fieldnote' rather than 'interview' excerpts. Where I refer to a family I have spoken with informally, I have given them a family surname in order to convey that they are within the same family unit. [45]

While I aimed to type up fieldnotes and transcribe interviews as quickly as possible, the audio recorder and my notebook were stored in a locked filing cabinet in my flat for the duration of fieldwork. Once these interviews were transcribed and fieldnotes typed up, I shredded the paper copies using my personal home shredder. These typed notes and transcripts are being kept in a secure data file for a maximum of 10 years after completion

[45] While this was for ease of conveying that these family members were part of the same family, it is acknowledged that this comes with a problematic assumption about family: that is, that having a common surname is the only indicator of family, or that families that do not have the same surname are lesser families; these are not beliefs I personally hold. Rather, it was my view that this would be a straightforward way of communicating that different individuals were part of the same family to readers.

of this project, as per the University's Code of Good Practice in Research. Regarding personal data, any information relating to an individual from which the individual could be identified and/or is of a personal nature was securely retained (in a locked filing cabinet) and was later shredded, in accordance with the legal requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998, and the guidance of the University of Glasgow's Data Protection Office.

## Some reflections on methods

### *Ethnographic observation*

While much more could be shared of my experiences of fieldwork I wish to focus here on two personal reflections, and for balance, both a negative and positive reflection.

On numerous occasions, I wrote in my fieldnotes that I felt that I had a great deal of 'wasted' or 'dead' time on my hands. The visiting times of HMP Edinburgh dictate the Centre's routine. Therefore, when there is no visit for a considerable period, or if one visit has gone in and there is some time before visitors arrive for the following visit, the Centre is very quiet. In such periods, members of staff have other jobs to do. Yet, for me as a researcher, such periods seemed, or indeed were, fruitless:

> "1.30pm- I'm just sitting here. There are no visitors around. This very much feels like 'dead' or 'wasted' time. At least for staff members, when there are no visitors around, they have other work to be getting on with. I don't have that, and there are only so many thoughts and reflections I can have." (Fieldnotes)

These quiet periods did offer time to reflect on what I observed in the previous session. Yet, as I note in this excerpt, there is only so much reflecting one can do, particularly when the environment affords a lot of time for reflection. Moreover, part the reflexive process involves having distance- both geographic and temporal- to reflect on these events, interactions, and encounters. While this was entirely foreseeable, I had not properly registered it, which led to some frustration that I had to manage.

More positively, a benefit of the ethnographic approach was that it enabled me to establish rapport with families, including those who may have been less inclined initially to be interviewed. Arguably, there are certain 'types' of people with particular personalities or

particular experiences that are likely to want to be interviewed and equally the reverse also applies. For example, Judy was part of the 'Wednesday Club'.[46] This group will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5 but for clarification here, the Wednesday Club is a self-named group of family members who visited on Wednesday afternoons on the Ingliston session. These family members essentially grouped together and became friends. They met every Wednesday at the Centre but also socialised and kept in contact the rest of the week. Over a five-month period, I chatted with her; we occasionally discussed Patrick's (Judy's partner) imprisonment and how it was affecting her, but most conversation was small talk. I remember mentioning the possibility of interviewing her at the early stages of fieldwork, which she did not express any interest in being involved with. However, after five months, and with my continued presence in the Centre, when I mentioned again that we could do an interview, Judy expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of this. Judy's experiences that she shared in the resulting interview are drawn from in various sections of this thesis; had I not invested this time in the field largely 'hanging around', I do not think Judy's views, experiences and insights would have been shared. This ethnographic approach enabled interviewees like Judy to be involved in the research as key interviewees. However, my sense was also that some of these interviewees had different experiences of imprisonment to those who were more inclined, at least initially, to be interviewed. Moreover, the experiences of these family members who were more hesitant about being interviewed, are to a certain extent overlooked; this will be discussed in Chapter 8.

***Interviews***

As Mason outlines, 'qualitative interviews' generally refer to "in depth, semi structured or loosely structured forms of interviewing". These have various features in common which include an "interactional exchange of dialogue", a fairly informal style, with the dialogue focused on a specific theme or topic(s) (Mason, 2002: 62). I conducted qualitative interviews sharing these characteristics with adult family members and with members of staff. While I had a list of key topics to raise (see Appendices 7 and 8 for a sample), the informality of the interview was important, and interviewees had room to shape the

[46] Single quotation marks surrounding the Wednesday Club will now ceased to be used for the remainder of this thesis.

discussion, provided the discussion did not stray into particularly emotive territory, though safeguards were in place should this have occurred.

Where possible and where participants wished, I carried out serial qualitative interviews. Murray et al. (2009) refer to some of the strengths of such an approach; a number of which I felt were applicable to this project. As they outline, serial interviews can "elicit changing needs or opinions", can elicit fluctuating anxieties and emotions, and experiences since the last interview can also be discussed (2009: 343). Serial interviews allow "narratives to unfold, revealing the complexity of individual situations" (Murray et al., 2009: 344).[47] Indeed, in the first few weeks of fieldwork, it became clear that visiting was highly changeable; how 'good' or 'bad' it was (acknowledging of course that there is far more nuance than this binary suggests) varied between each visit. While I did not feel in the end that this translated into the rhythm of the interviews themselves (for instance, a good visit did not obviously translate into a 'good interview' and vice versa), I suspected that recent visits may have shaped an interviewee's responses to their perceptions of visiting. It was also clear that while families who were new to visiting (and perhaps imprisonment) may have been initially anxious, nerves swiftly dissipated as they became familiar with the prison environment and with the visiting process. This method allowed me to capture the ongoing visiting experience for a number of family members; relying solely on snapshot interviews would have overlooked the complexity and changeability of the experience of prison visiting.

Moreover, this method provided the interviewee(s) with time for reflection after their last interview, and also provided them with the opportunity to tell me things that they had forgotten to tell me about. It also provided me with the opportunity to follow up on points interviewees had made in their previous interview. Lastly, this method, along with observational fieldwork, captured not only the changeability of prison visiting, but also how lives and personal circumstances changed, sometimes substantially so. For example, in my early interviews with Serenity, she told me how difficult it was to visit her partner Paul and how she was longing for his release. A couple of months after these interviews, the relationship broke down and Serenity began a new relationship with a fellow visitor. She told me: "You have to update your research!" Serenity, of course, was quite right. Had

[47] For clarity, this is a different 'Murray et al., 2009' to the authors described in Chapter 2- please see List of References.

I not re-interviewed Serenity or had I not had continued interactions with her due to conducting fieldwork, I would not have gained this insight. [48]

## Researching with children

### *Children as participants*

My review of the literature highlighted that children's views and experiences of imprisonment had, with some exceptions, either been overlooked entirely or gained through talking to adults. I was also aware that although it would not necessarily be possible recruit children, hearing from the children directly would be preferable given that precisely because adults are adults (and are therefore no longer children), means "adults are unable to be full participants in children's social worlds because they can never truly be children again" (Punch, 2002: 322); a full insight into children's worlds is permanently lost. Kellet et al. also state that the "richness of knowledge that is inherent in children's own understanding of their worlds and subcultures" cannot be replicated by an adult, even the "most skilled ethnographer" (2004: 207).

In the CRFR course I attended, I was re-introduced to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), where Article 12 in particular was drawn attention to; Article 12 states that children have the right for their views to be given due weight "in all matters affecting them". Re familiarising myself with the UNCRC reinforced the importance of attempting to include children in my research: not only did children have distinct views and experiences, it was also their right that they were offered the opportunity to share these, should they wish to and should the ways in which these are sought of course take stock of all ethical considerations.

In the event that I failed to recruit any children, I hoped that through my interviews with parents and with staff members, combined with fieldwork, children's experiences of visiting would emerge. However, bearing in mind these considerations, this would have been no substitute for hearing the children's views and experiences directly.

### *Why drawing?*

[48] Serenity's changing circumstances will be discussed in the findings chapters (Chapters 5-8) of this thesis.

In recent years, there has been a shift in thinking about children and young people, from 'human becomings' to 'human beings', who are "cultural agents or social actors in their own right" (Mitchell, 2008: 60) who have their own views and experiences that should be sought and captured. However, as noted by Mitchell (2008: 60), this requires careful consideration of methodological issues, including addressing issues of power. Consideration of these has led researchers to adopt methods which are thought to work *with* rather than *on* children (Mitchell, 2008: 61), such as visual or creative methods, which by virtue of this, are deemed to be 'child friendly'. Included within this vast category are: drawing; photography; film; collage; art with clay; and mapping activities. These methods are now increasingly used in research with children (Kearney and Hyle, 2004). Such methods provide children with the opportunity to express their views in a "fun and enjoyable way" (Fargas-Mallet et al., 2010: 183).

Given its widespread use primarily in school but also in the home, drawing in particular is familiar to most children (Johnson, Pfister, and Vindrola-Padros, 2012). Drawing is viewed as being appropriate for the "cognitive and communicative skills" associated with being a child (Mitchell, 2008: 62) since it does not place too great a reliance on verbal and written communication skills, unlike more traditional methods. Thus, methods such as drawing aim to take full account of children's competencies and work with these, rather than against them. Although I opted to use drawing with children because of its purported 'child friendly' nature, there is an important caveat. Mitchell notes that drawing is not "inherently" 'child centric', and relationships of power, authority and difference need to be acknowledged and integrated into the analysis" (2008: 70), and indeed, I would argue, acknowledged, and where possible, addressed, into the process itself. However, drawing, of all the methods available to me, appeared to be the most sensitive to children's needs and competencies, and the most feasible of available creative methods given the parameters and setting of the research.

***Materials used***

For these activities, I provided participating children with A4 white card, HB pencils, rubbers, coloured pencils and felt tip pens. As some of these activities took place in the Children's Corner (where the arts and crafts activities take place), there were other materials lying around which children were free to make use of: these included glue and

coloured pieces of paper. I provided each child with two pieces of blank card, but offered them more card if they wished to 'start again'. A sample of these drawings is provided later in this chapter and again in Chapter 5 (see Figures 4-9).

***Recruitment***

As stated, my approach to recruiting participants in my research was firmly organic in nature, and the recruitment of children was no different. Accordingly, the ways in which I invited children to participate in my research varied. My dual role provided the opportunity to explain my 'two jobs' at the Centre, describing my research in some detail. In these cases, I said that they could take part in research at any point if they liked, provided their parent agreed. In these instances, I also explained my research to their parent. Sometimes, the children were free and willing to participate there and then, and their parent agreed. In others, the invitation to participate was left open; then at a later date, we did the activity. In one case, the involvement of Keira in my research came about directly from Keira observing myself and Douglas doing the activity, and Keira asking her mother if she could do it too.

***Informed consent***

Given that the children involved in this research were under sixteen years old, parental consent was needed, in addition to the verbal consent provided by the children themselves. I provided parents with detailed information sheets about the drawing activity, and asked them to sign a consent form on behalf of their child(ren) (See Appendices 3 and 4). I asked the children to read aloud their information sheet, and asked them to explain to me what they thought it meant; in all cases I was satisfied with their explanation. My training with the CRFR informed the design and contents of the consent materials for children and young people, in the sense of making materials as child-friendly and inclusive as possible. The children's information sheet was written in terms that the children could read and understand (Alderson and Morrow, 2011: 89), and aimed to be visually engaging to children. The information sheet included an image depicting Article 13 of the UNCRC with text underneath: 'you should be allowed to say what you mean in lots of different

ways'.[49] This cartoon image was intended to be appealing to the children, and its message was apt for my research and chosen methods. The information sheet for children participants is provided in Appendix 2.

After going through the information sheet, I then asked them if they were happy with what the drawing activity involved, if they had any questions and if they were happy to take part. I was satisfied that their consent was informed and freely given. This activity was audio recorded, with parental and children's consent. On those occasions where children did not want the activity to be audio recorded, I instead took notes. While obtaining ongoing consent was in general not an issue, one of Katie's daughters effectively withdrew her consent during the activity. Despite seeming enthusiastic at the beginning of the activity, Elsa later withdrew her consent, though her reasons for doing so were not clear.

> "Sisters Elsa, Amy and Britney had actually written their pseudonyms on their pictures. Elsa looked at me and said "That's not my name" and then proceeded to rub 'Elsa' out and write her real name on the picture. She said that she was going to give it to her daddy. I asked if I instead could keep it, but she said 'no'. I said that this was 'no problem'. Concerned that Britney and Amy would also wish to give their picture to their father, I double checked with them that they were happy to continue drawing/taking part in my research, and if I could keep their drawing in the end for the research. Both were happy with this" (My note additions to a family member interview transcript).

While Elsa's actions could be interpreted as simply that she wanted to give her picture to her dad, I got the sense that was instead indicating that she was no longer fully comfortable with participating in the research, and for this I went with my instinct and interpreted her words and actions as withdrawal of consent. For ease of understanding the complete interaction, I transcribed the interview including the dialogue with Elsa. However, Elsa's views and experiences are not included in this thesis, which is unfortunate.

As I aimed for my research to be as participative as possible, I encouraged the children, like adults, to select their own pseudonyms. I invited the children to select their name prior

[49] I contacted the organisation represented by Tam Baillie, the Children and Young People's Commissioner for Scotland. It provided me with its materials, and gave me permission to use them in this research; specifically, here this related to the text and accompanying image.

to starting the activity, after consent was given. In most cases, the pseudonym selection worked successfully: children seemed to enjoy selecting these names, with laughter accompanying some of the 'sillier' names, but they choose their names quite promptly. Pryha, Pandora and Annabella also selected the pseudonym for their mother, Paisley. However, in the drawing activity with Katie's family, there was a preoccupation with the selection of pseudonyms, which I felt distracted from the activity, but which I should have foreseen.

***Rapport***

I knew all of the children who participated in the research from my arts and crafts work; this cannot be a coincidence. I also had the advantage of knowing that these particular children enjoyed creative activities, as they choose to engage in the arts and crafts work. While drawing for drawing's sake and drawing for research are different, I benefitted from the knowledge that these particular children were not opposed to drawing per se, and I felt safe to assume that the activity would not be rejected purely based on children not enjoying drawing. Adults represent the "major barrier to effective participation for children" in research (Alderson and Morrow, 2011: 107). Yet, this area of my research depended on parental consent for the children to participate. I was in the fortunate position to know all of the parents of the children, either from my arts and crafts work or through the time I spent in the Centre during fieldwork, or both. Rapport and trust were established, which helped to make the process of obtaining parental consent straightforward. For example, I interviewed Katie prior to doing the drawing activity with her children, and I had previously informed Katie about the potential to include her daughters too in my research, after our interview. This meant when her children asked about participating in my research, the research had already been introduced to Katie. As a consequence, the children not interested in arts and crafts fell out of the research by implication, and my personal relationships with both children and their parents were key to agreeing participation.

***Approach: 'Drawing and talking'***

For these activities, I used an approach informed by White et al.'s 'draw and talk' (2010). This approach is based on the premise that the richness of the data flows from not merely the 'product', the drawing, but also the process in which the product is generated. The drawing cannot be divorced from the context and process in which it was created, and the

verbal interactions which accompany it. Indeed, in Kearney and Hyle's study which involved adults producing drawings, while there appeared to be consistency between the drawing and the verbal reports, "the drawings could only be fully understood with the participant's interpretation" (2004: 367). In their analysis of their results, Kearney and Hyle comment that the personal experience as portrayed by the participants could "only be considered complete with the additional interpretation of the drawing by the participation" (2004: 376). Elden also refers to this completeness of drawing and talking combined: "the drawings are part of the whole picture, and cannot be separated from the talk" (2012: 76). The drawings are useful and tangible products, but as stand-alone entities, fail to convey the "thinking, talking and social interaction" that has formed a "fundamental part of the process" (Coates and Coates, 2006: 222).

I asked the children to draw the Centre and/or the visit room, and as they were drawing talk me through what they were drawing and also tell me more about it, including what they liked and what they did not like about each space. Coates and Coates highlight that often researchers ask children to describe their drawing when it has been completed, and point out that this is potentially misleading: this version of what the drawing is, may differ from what it was as it was being created (2006). I intuitively felt that this more contemporaneous talking would be more authentic and would more accurately reflect their views and experiences. Furthermore, as I was keen for research to be as 'natural' as possible, I was also in effect monopolising on an observed phenomenon of children talking to themselves or others while drawing. Although, all children are different, and not all children talk while drawing (Coates and Coates, 2006).

Bringing together both the drawing and the accompanying talk is important because failure to get this additional interpretation gained from 'the talk' would likely result in omissions or misinterpretations (Kearney and Hyle, 2004: 377). This is particularly pertinent in research with children: inexorably, adults see children's drawings through adults' eyes (Coates and Coates, 2006). However, obtaining a verbal record of the drawing was not sought at all costs. As Mitchell notes in her critical reflection of employing arts based methods, just like adults, "children vary in their ability and inclination to talk about their visual productions. A drawing may sometimes express what a child cannot or does not wish to say aloud" (2008: 69). Pursuing this at all costs would have raised ethical issues. Finally, there is often some awkwardness when an adult asks a child what he or she has drawn when it is not immediately obvious to the adult what the child has drawn, but the

child assumes it is. This method seemed to circumvent this awkwardness, since the children were told in my introduction that I would be asking what they had drawn. This seemed particularly important given that one of the child participants was twelve years old, and I was concerned that asking this question may offend her, given her age. Fortunately, in my case, all of the children were eager to talk me through their picture(s), often in some detail and I did not sense any awkwardness when I asked about specific elements of their picture(s).

***What counts as talk?***

While I was focussed on the talk which concerned experiences of visiting prison, this was not the only 'talk' which occurred or that was important. Coates and Coates (2006) broadly categorise 'talk' into: the talk related to the subject matter; social talk and interaction with the adult. The 'talk' relating to the research topic will be discussed in later chapters. There was 'talk' surrounding the specific micro environment that we were in. For example, although Douglas selected the 'top booth', one of the most private and quiet areas of the Centre, it is not totally sound proof. During the activity, I jotted down:

> "A mother in the background (in the Centre) shouts. Douglas looks up and exclaims: 'Someone's going mental!' and we both laugh." (Family member interview transcript)

In the second drawing activity with Keira, Keira talked a great deal about school. Although this was a less relevant to my research, it conveyed to me that she felt comfortable chatting to me about her life, and wanted to share her day at school with me. It may also have conveyed that her experience of visiting was not particularly memorable or distressing; a theme I will explore in Chapter 8. Finally, there was also sometimes talk between some of the children. For example: Pryha pointedly told her sister: "you're not telling her what you're drawing! You need to tell her!" We all laughed and Pandora then dutifully proceeded to tell me about her picture. This was an amusing encounter which conveyed the relaxed atmosphere of the activity, and also captured sibling and family dynamics.

***Power imbalances***

There are certain power imbalances between an adult researcher and a child participant, which stem from the inherent vulnerabilities of children. Throughout I aimed to be mindful of and to address these power imbalances where possible (as will be discussed in due course). Yet, children have their own power. For example, in the first drawing activity with Keira, I was being quite enthusiastic about the activity as we set up, as was Keira herself. However, as it transpired, this enthusiasm involved me (over) using the word 'awesome'. Without delay, Keira told me off for over-using the word 'awesome', because it "wasn't cool". I had been put in my place. I stopped using 'awesome' for the duration of the activity (and then I also became quite conscious of not using other words which Keira may also have deemed 'uncool'!). For me, this conveys the rapport I shared with Keira, and also highlights the subtlety and changeability of power dynamics, and the power which Keira had and certainly used in that moment. Gallagher notes that we view power as a commodity which has to be shared and more evenly distributed, and highlights the familiar talk of empowerment: "'empowering' children through 'giving them [our] power'" (2008: 140). Yet, our preoccupation with mending these imbalances and our fixed ideas regarding who holds power may in fact stifle children's own power.

***Understanding the contexts***

It may have been logical for the drawing activity to take place in the designated children's areas. However, as Punch (2002) warns, children do not necessarily prefer the research to take place in a 'child' space, since this may be construed as an invasion. I therefore encouraged the children participating to decide where the activity would take place in the Centre, which could include the designated children's areas but was not limited to these.

Pryha and Pandora (sisters) selected the Children's Corner. In the first drawing session with Pryha and Pandora, their mother Paisley was present. In their second drawing session, Paisley was not present but their older sister Annabelle (aged fourteen) was present. Annabelle did not draw, but did share her experiences of visiting. Annabelle did not seem interested in drawing. Given her age, she may have seen the activity as 'babyish', a cited drawback of the method (Fargas-Mallet et al., 2010: 183), particularly when her two younger sisters were doing the activity, or she may have been more inhibited by a lack of "artistic competence" (Punch, 2002: 331). Both of these activities took place in the Children's Corner. Therefore, in the drawing activity with this particular family (the

Finnegans'), there was a great deal of flexibility, with family members coming and going, but with Pryha and Pandora's presence constant. In this way, the act of drawing was only part of the method and was an oblique way of understanding these children and young people's experiences. Douglas opted to sit at the back of the Centre next to the office. Douglas wanted his mother and great aunt to be nearby but not sitting with us, so his mother and great aunt sat in the booth next to us.

There is also a broader context which should be borne in mind. Drawings are often produced in a school environment. Punch stresses that research taking place in a school environment should consider the fact that children or young people often feel a pressure to give the "right answer" (2002: 328) or, I would add, to 'draw well'. Although my research was not conducted in a school environment, these associations of school and 'drawing correctly' or 'drawing well' may have persisted and influenced the drawings produced. Moreover, the visitors' centre is a quasi-institutional space, sharing similarities with school in this sense, which may make more likely that this association was present.

As I introduced my research to the children and went through the consent process, I stressed to children that there were no 'right or wrong' answers or, by extension, drawings. Although this was said in an attempt to cast out these associations, clearly this could not guarantee these associations were indeed erased. As mentioned, sisters Britney, Elsa and Amy wrote their pseudonyms on their pieces of paper. While this perhaps shows, positively, enjoyment with selecting and identifying with a pseudonym of their choosing, this also perhaps shows the influence of school on these children: drawings of course are often produced in a school environment where children are asked to write their name on their picture for easy identification.

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, Britney asked on three occasions if her drawing was 'good'. I reassured her that it was; that it was 'very good', and was 'very helpful' for my research. In this way, I aimed to reassure her, but also to remind her that this drawing was for 'something else', and that whatever she drew, it would be useful to this 'something else'. On the other hand, on a couple of occasions, I said, unprompted, that their drawings were "really good". Admittedly, my comments followed Britney's questions seeking reassurance that her drawings were 'good'. I wonder if I subconsciously felt the need to again reassure her and her sisters, but in so doing, I may have perpetuated this issue of

children seeking adult validation that their drawings are ‘good’. However, none of the other children sought these reassurances.

The presence or absence of other children may shape the drawings produced. White et al. found in their research that in the small groups where drawing took place, younger children “frequently looked at (and copied) each other’s drawings” (White et al., 2010: 153). Likewise, Punch observed a similar effect in her research with children growing up in rural Bolivia, and therefore advises to not “over-interpret the significance” of a recurring image, in light of this observed effect (2002: 332). There were similarities between the drawings but I attribute this to the children all drawing the same environments. In some cases, the drawings were especially similar: for example, sisters’ Pryha and Pandora’s (sisters) drawings. This may be attributable to the sisters copying each other. On the other hand, the interactions which accompanied the drawings differentiate each child’s experiences and views.

Finally, in the session with Douglas, his mother influenced his drawings. Once Douglas had finished drawing, he wanted to show his mother the pictures, who then suggested that he colour them in to make them “look better”. I assured Douglas that he did not have to colour them in if he did not want to and that the pictures were great as they were, but also that we did have time for him to colour them in, if he wished. In so doing, I provided Douglas with the room to exercise his own discretion over his drawings. However, when reflecting on this interaction, it struck me that I was putting myself in opposition to Douglas’ mother, and a preferable alternative would have been to ask Douglas whether he thought his drawings needed to be coloured (albeit this may have still been construed as opposition).

In the end, Douglas chose to colour in his pictures. He did not seem offended by his mother’s suggestion. However, he did colour them in quite hastily, with minimal care and attention; I noted this contrasted with his earlier quite meticulous drawing, and colouring in, perhaps because of its hasty nature, obscures some of the detail (see Figures 4 and 5 below). For example, to accurately draw a door handle, he peered at a door in the Centre and closely observed its handle. He also drew around his hot chocolate mug so that its exact size and shape were reproduced on the page. Consequently, I sensed Douglas choose to colour in the drawings to please his mother. Douglas’ mother was being in no way unkind with this suggestion; she only wanted her son to do his ‘best’ with the drawings and

I suspect many mothers and parents would have made similar suggestions. Nonetheless, this seemingly banal encounter, does serve as a reminder that children are children living in an “adult centred world” with much of their lives controlled and limited by adults (Punch, 2002: 323). Had Douglas’ mum not made this suggestion, I suspect Douglas’ drawings would have remained black and white; his mother’s advice ultimately shaped the finished product.

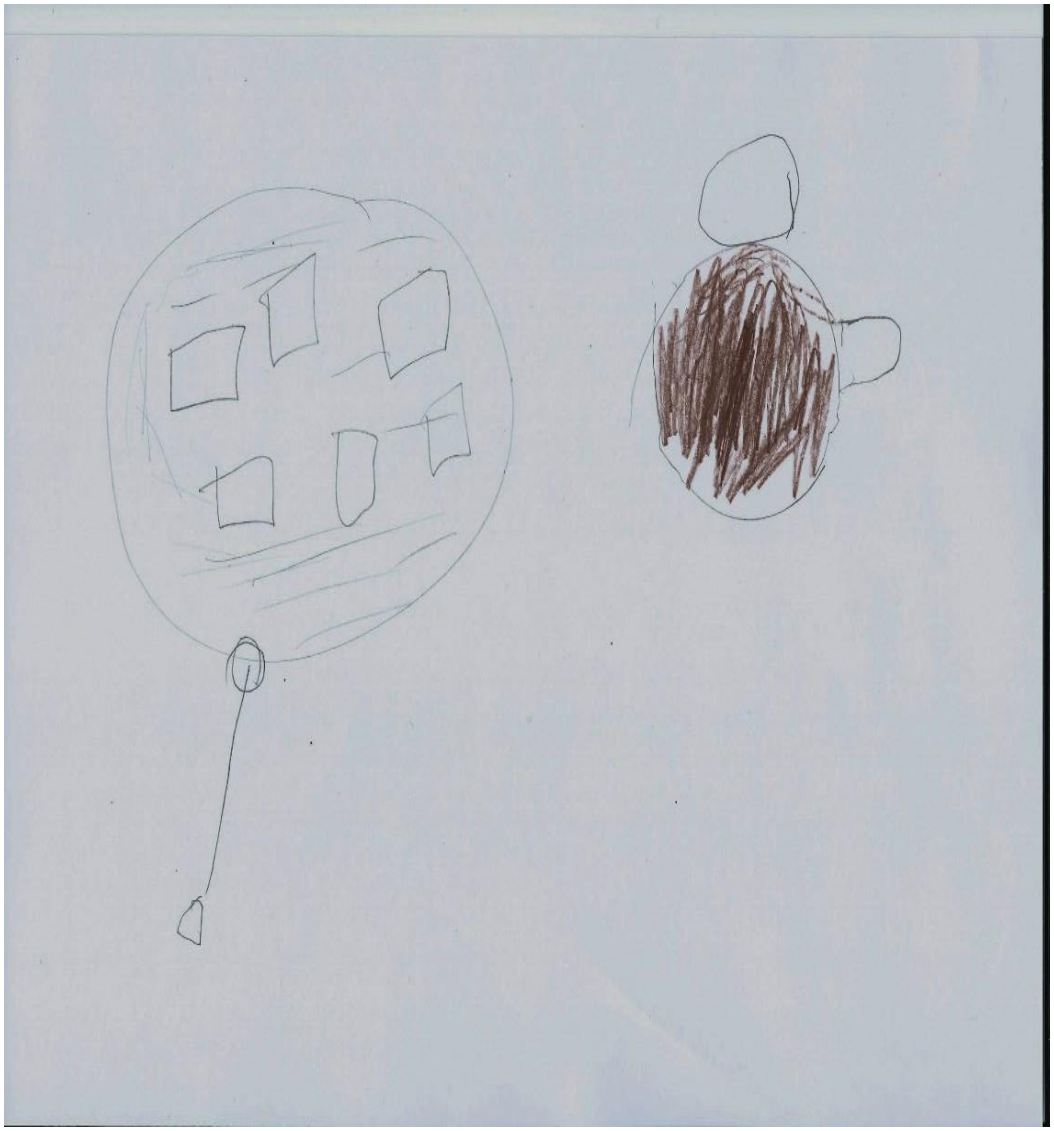

Figure 4: Douglas’ drawing of the Centre (to the left, the ham and cheese toastie; to the right, his mug of hot chocolate)

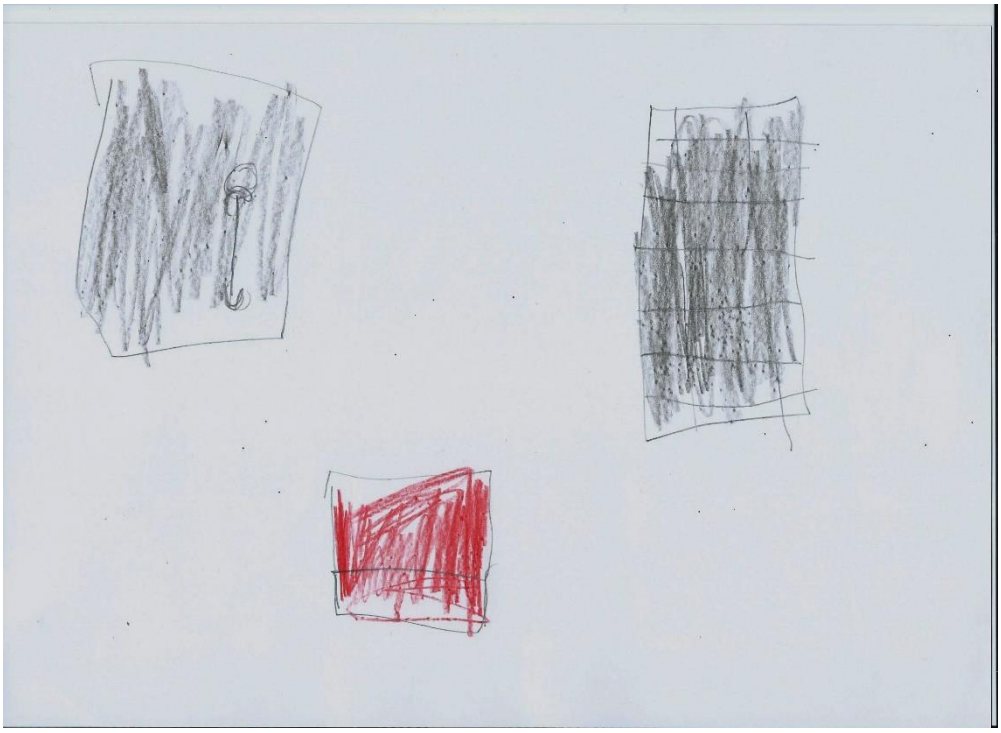

Figure 5: Douglas' drawing of the visit room

***Drawing takes time***

Children can devote a great deal of care and attention to producing drawings (Hill, 2006: 79), which typically involves taking time over the activity. Drawing gives children time to reflect on their experiences and encounters (Fargas-Mallet et al., 2010; Elden, 2012). Thus, this designated time gives children "the option to amend their image, giving children more control over their form of expression, than in a more traditional research method where the response needs to be much quicker" (Punch, 2002: 331). Giving children more time to consider their responses is another reason underlying the perception that drawing and other creative methods are 'child-centric'. Clearly, this is a benefit of this approach. However, this time to think and create was not compatible with the time I had to oversee each activity. In general, I only had a short amount of time (usually around twenty minutes) in which to do the activity with the children. Consequently, in many respects, these drawing activities were quite rushed. Most of the drawings were created in the waiting time prior to the visit. In some occasions, children started the drawings in this waiting time, and then returned to them after the visit; in others, children had arrived in the Centre quite early giving them more time to draw.

Another factor contributing to the time pressure which I had overlooked was that the environments themselves- the Centre and the visit room- were quite complex, consisting of various elements, such as tables and chairs, people, canteens, doors, windows, and distinct areas such as children's areas. Indeed, Amy commented as she drew the visit room: "This is gonna take forever because I want to draw hundreds of tables!" I managed to counter this to some degree by offering the children the opportunity to add to or finish their drawings at another time they were visiting, when I was also present in the Centre. In these cases, I asked if the children would be happy for me to scan the current version onto my computer so that I had a record (in the event that a future drawing session did not occur), and then I would bring it back to the Centre for them to add to or finish. All of the children were happy with this.

This misjudgement with timings was by no means fatal for the research. It could be also argued that lengthening the activity by much longer may not have been appreciated by some of the children and in any event, in my ethics materials, an activity time of around fifteen minutes was suggested. However, this time issue inevitably influenced the data produced. Coad advises all art based methods be "well thought out and prepared" (2007: 488); timing was something I failed to properly consider.

**Conclusion**

After charting my journey into this research, this chapter has provided an overview of the methods used to generate the data upon which this thesis is based and should help to contextualise the findings presented in succeeding chapters. It has by no means included discussion of all the ethical, practical, and methodological considerations that were part of this research, but it should provide a flavour. However, it is very difficult to separate the data from the means by which the data were generated, therefore these methods will continue to be discussed and reflected upon throughout this thesis. The next chapter, the first of the findings chapters, will discuss families' experiences of visiting the prison.

# Chapter 5: Experiences of visiting the prison

## Chapter outline

This chapter discusses families' experiences of visiting their family members at HMP Edinburgh. It begins by briefly outlining families' motivations for visiting, and the anticipation they may feel immediately prior to a visit. It discusses the transport and financial considerations that are attendant with visiting. It then focuses on families' experiences of being in both the Centre and the visit room. Particular attention is paid to families' interactions in these two distinct spaces; these are the interactions that take place between family members, and between families and members of staff (from both the Centre and the prison). This chapter highlights how visiting is important and highly valued by families, despite the many negative aspects of visiting. These negative aspects are explored through the lens of secondary prisonisation (to draw on the work of Comfort); this enables us to see how visiting families are treated as though they too are prisoners when they enter and spend time in the institutional environment of the prison. This also speaks to a broader argument woven through these findings chapters, particularly Chapter 8, of how families often encounter other experiences in their daily lives which they may also experience as imprisoning.

## Motivations and anticipating the visit

As outlined in Chapter 4, I interviewed a broad range of family members for this study because prisoners at HMP Edinburgh receive visits from a wide range of relations and friends.

Visiting is highly valued by families. This was powerfully but implicitly conveyed in one of the research drawing sessions. During a session with Katie's daughters, the tannoy announcement called the visitors over to the prison, and Amy, the eldest of the sisters, stood up and said: "Come on, hurry up, we've got to get through [the entry process]!" The girls all put down their pens, and there was a quick exchange of goodbyes with me. The girls and their mother then ensured their belongings were in the locker, hurriedly left the Centre and made their way to the prison. The anticipation for the visit, particularly by

children, is sometimes palpable and this example conveyed this well. Although the girls seemed to enjoy drawing and speaking with me, this could not compare to the excitement of the impending visit to see their father. As soon as the tannoy announcement was made, the activity was over and the focus was understandably very much on getting to see their father. This anticipation and excitement, sometimes tinged with nerves, was also displayed by visiting adults. Jane, a young woman visiting her mum, commented:

> "The waiting on a Saturday can be horrendous. Like, like I'm pacing. I used to pace. So, I think the wait for me…I'm very close to my mum so it is kind of unbearable. It's like: "Why can we just not go?!" *continues firmly*[50] "What is the hold up? Why is no-body explaining anything to me? My brother used to get *really* anxious: "Come *on*, why are we not going?!"[51] (Family member interview transcript)

As will be discussed, over the course of a custodial sentence, families tend to encounter an array of obstacles when visiting the prison. The experience of these led some family members such as Jane, to fear that their visit would not take place. While such fears may be perceived as irrational or even paranoid, given families' direct previous experiences, or due to seeing or hearing about the experiences of others (or both) it is easy to understand how family members may develop these fears.

While families' principal reason for visiting was due to a strong desire to see their loved one face to face (and these examples are typical), other factors shape this longing. Firstly, families can experience a sense of obligation to visit which arises for various reasons. For some, this originates because the prisoner is not receiving visits from anyone else. Serenity explained that her partner Paul's family "don't visit him really…they don't bother their backside". It was not clear why, but it may be related to the nature of Paul's offence (a sexual offence); families' responses to sexual offences will be discussed in Chapter 7. Paul's sister has visited a couple of times but "that's it". I asked if she felt an added pressure to visit because of Paul's family's infrequent visits. She replied: "You cannae leave them there with nothing; you just cannae dae it." However, visiting can take its toll on families, which Serenity herself experienced. She admitted that on one occasion she

[50] Asterisks are used in quotations in this thesis to either convey an action, or to separate out a piece of description from the rest of the content. In these cases, I have added description that I felt was important; for example, to note the tone of a family member had when describing an experience or viewpoint.
[51] Chapter 6 will discuss the waiting experiences of families in greater detail.

told Paul that she had lost her ID card, but this was a lie. She explained that she "just couldn't be bothered with all the effort of getting to the prison, all the travel."

Jake, who was visiting his son serving a short-term sentence, also expressed that he did not want his son to think no-one cared, but this sense of obligation was borne partly out of his sense of obligation as a father to care for his son: "I don't want him to have sort of games playing in his mind where he thinks that nobody cares… I also come out of a sense of duty as a father". Keira's auntie said: "I don't want my brother thinking that his wee sister doesn't care." In a conversation I had with a visitor, she said: "If it's hard visiting, it's a lot worse being in there. You need to remember that". She visited her brother so that he knew people were thinking about him, but she reiterated to me that she did not like visiting, though she did not substantiate why.

These family members visited in order to ensure that their imprisoned family member felt cared for. Families' side line the inconveniences they experience when visiting: families have a strong desire to care and to demonstrate care, but families also perceive their own suffering to be lesser to that borne by their imprisoned family member. Relatedly, perhaps due to either or combinations of: cultural perceptions of prison life; because the prisoner has made them concerned about prison life; or because separation from family and life outside is painful, seeing a prisoner face to face provides reassurance to concerned family members. Jane spoke about this in detail:

> "And for me, just relief I think, a relief just to see her and to be able to comfort her"
>
> "Me: So like how important is the visit compared to other things [other forms of communication]?
>
> "Jane: Very important. Because, just to like give her a hug. For her to…she always used to say: 'Put loads of perfume on' so that she could smell the perfume…em so I think, a visit is very important. I think it just puts your mind at ease about how that person is feeling- physically. When my mum has make up on, I know she's good. And when I go looking healthy and good, she feels good about that. She's like: 'Right, my babies are fine.'" (Family member interview transcript)

Judy also revealed the importance of the visit to her, of seeing her partner Patrick face to face:

> "…considering I only see him for 45 minutes twice a week, you know altogether 90 minutes, that's only an hour and a half. And alright, he phones me near enough

> every night, but a phone call is just his voice…because I've recently been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. And seeing him…ups my spirits …So yeah, it is definitely imperative for me that I see him!" (Family member interview transcript)

Visiting provides families with the crucial opportunity to provide emotional support to prisoners. Jake told me: "I want him to think that we are kind of with him as it were, and support him as much as we can". Jane also commented:

> "Because this time with that person, could be a time of a little bit of empowerment I suppose, a little pep talk, to get that person through the weekend." (Family member interview transcript)

Therefore, family members visit for many reasons which are not limited to simply wanting to physically see their loved one and be physically close to them; even this may have its own complexity, and may be shaped by other, overlapping, factors. This also raises questions which Scott and Codd outline, regarding how families, rather than being seen as people affected by imprisonment and in need of support, are instead "co-opted" as tools by the state to support family members, as part of this new emphasis on preventing re-offending (2010: 152) through visiting and by maintaining contact via other means. While as I discussed in Chapter 2, families are increasingly identified as requiring support and in various ways, arguably this new, or at least more intense, focus on preventing re-offending and an associated promotion of family contact to maintain family ties to help secure this, has meant that families are effectively treated as tools in some way. Further, it may be the case that families become tools more straightforwardly because of the obligations and desires to visit they feel; in the promotion of family contact, there is an effective, though inadvertent, monopolising of the obligations and desires families already experience. As discussed in the Chapter 2, there are also *gendered* expectations of care-giving which sees women as the default and natural care givers. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, families, especially female family members, do indeed take on this care work, and are arguably, expected to do so, by virtue of wider societal expectations of women.

**Transport experiences**

Many visitors to HMP Edinburgh depend on public transport (sometimes in multiple forms), which may be time consuming, expensive, and unreliable. Indeed, in the most

recent survey of visitors to HMP Edinburgh, 48% of visitors were reported to use the bus to get to the prison; 31% used their own transport; 9% received a lift from a friend; 2% used a train either way; 6% used a taxi and 3% walked or cycled (Families Outside, 2009). Most families travel for more than five miles, and families also tend to travel for more than thirty minutes for each visit (Families Outside, 2009). Though HMP Edinburgh is well serviced by buses, many families are required to use more than one bus each way, and the journey can be time consuming. Staff member B reflected:

> "So, I think that even though it's [HMP Edinburgh] a local prison, I think it still has quite a negative impact on families travelling, because the city's so busy." (Staff member B, interview transcript)

Jake commented:

> "…we can get across town on two buses, so it's ok…Well I suppose all in all it takes about an hour. We also have a car which we sometimes use. If Teresa [Jake's wife] is away at her work, we come by bus. The car journey's ok, it takes about half an hour, yeah." (Family member interview transcript)

Even Katie whose journey was less onerous, was still less than enthusiastic about the journey:

> "Well getting here…I have my own car and I'm only 20 minutes up the road. So em getting here is not *too* bad." (Family member interview transcript)

However, given the prison's wide geographical reach (encompassing Edinburgh city, Fife, the Lothians, and the Borders; see Figure 1 in Chapter 3), families often travel lengthy distances, and again may rely on public transport to do so. For example, Zoe said:

> "Well, coming here is a bit of a nightmare sometimes because I live so far out from here. If you live closer, I don't think it's that much of a bother, but it's like two buses to get here." (Family member interview transcript)

However, she reflected that this was an improvement on previous journeys to visit her partner in HMYOI Polmont:

> "Before I was going through to [HMYOI] Polmont, and when I was pregnant as well." (Family member interview transcript)

HMYOI Polmont is in the village of Polmont in the Falkirk Council area of Scotland. Polmont is 25 miles from Edinburgh's city centre, and Zoe, an Edinburgh resident, was reliant on using various forms of public transport or lifts to get to the prison. This meant that her journey to HMP Edinburgh was, comparatively, less onerous.

**Financial issues**

As outlined in Chapter 2, visiting, and more generally keeping in touch, places (additional) financial strain on families. When families visit, they spend money on transport, on buying refreshments for their family and for the prisoner, and they may also spend money supplementing the prisoner's PPC. Figure 6 conveys the burden visually (with each circle representing a different financial expense associated with visiting); the cyclical representation also helps to convey the cumulative financial burden associated with visiting. The nature of this cumulative burden depends on the circumstances of family members but may be brought by: visiting a family member over several months; visiting a family member over several months over the course of multiple imprisonments; visiting multiple family members or friends serving multiple prison sentences, at different prisons, and over many years. These examples are all drawn from the experiences of families who shared them in this research.

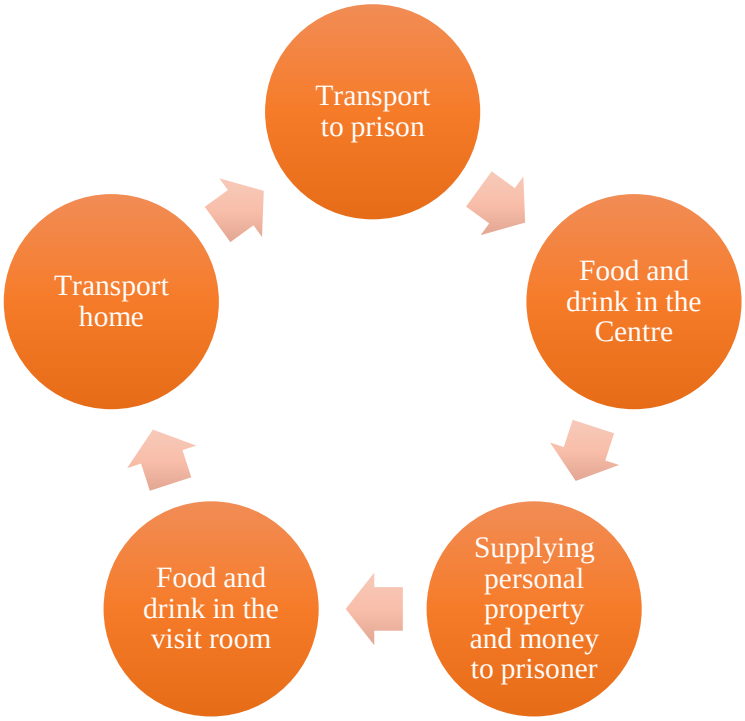


Figure 6: Diagram of visit costs

Dee, who experienced her own issues while attempting to claim for state benefits, summed up the situation for many:

> "But some people, I see how difficult it is for folk with kids and all that, buying themselves a cup of tea and getting the kids a toastie or a biscuit or whatever. And it's not just outside! They do that in the visitors' centre, then they go inside and they have to do the same for the kids *and* the prisoner. And then put money in their PPC!" (Family member interview transcript)

Financial assistance is available to families to assist with travel, via a scheme managed by the Assisted Prison Visits Unit (APVU). The National Offender Management Service in England and Wales manages the scheme, but it also supports families visiting Scottish prisons. However, the scheme has qualifications and limitations. For example, family members must be in receipt of state benefits, and only one visit every fourteen days is compensated (Citizens Advice Scotland, 2016) which may help but is far from being sufficient for most families who are much more frequent visitors. For example, most of the families I interviewed saw their family members' multiple times per week. As mentioned, the scheme only covers the cost of travel and does not cover the cost of refreshments

purchased en route or within the prison compound (Codd, 2007); these costs may be equally or even more prohibitive. Moreover, some families perceive the application forms as being lengthy and intimidating, and there is a lack of awareness among families that such a scheme exists. What may also be overlooked is that, as staff member A suggested, it may be very embarrassing for families to claim, particularly if it is for a relatively small sum, such as a £3.50 bus fare. [52] Lastly, prison staff must sign the form to confirm that they have visited; given the often fractious or at least temperamental relationships between families and prison officers (as will be discussed shortly), this may be another hurdle for families to jump.

As mentioned by Dee, many families include children, which increases the expense tied to visiting. Staff member H also raised this:

> "If you're bringing up the kids as well, you're adding on children's bus fares and things, it can be quite an expensive experience." (Staff member H, interview transcript)

As outlined in Chapter 3, families also bear the financial burden of supplementing a prisoner's income and of providing personal belongings, such as items of clothing. Sophie explained how this added to the burden of visiting, even if the visit itself 'only' demanded the expense involved with transport and buying refreshments:

> "So, you're spending your money over there as well, then you're handing in money for the property, so they've got money to get their cigarettes or get whatever they need." (Family member interview transcript)

There will be further discussion of families' financial situation in Chapter 8, but for the purposes here, if families experience a degree of financial precarity already, visiting is likely to compound it. The various costs associated with visiting quickly accumulate, particularly if visiting is frequent, which means that even if families are more financially comfortable, it is likely that they will experience an impact of this, even if the impact is minimal. Moreover, exploration of the financial dimension of visiting here also reveals aspects of stigma and power: visitors are offered the opportunity to claim visiting 'expenses' in technical terms, but the process is tedious and lacking in sensitivity in practice, dis-incentivising families from making use of the service, or at least with the

[52] The then (2014-2015) price of an adult's day ticket for the city of Edinburgh bus region.

same regularity that they visit; keeping in contact, as encouraged by the prison, depletes financial resources for families, which may already may limited, creating or exacerbating financial disadvantage.

## Being in the Centre

### *Centre activities and facilities*

In Chapter 3, I described in detail the activities and facilities offered by the Centre. I wish to briefly share families' views and experiences of them, particularly from the perspective of children visitors. There was a consensus from both families and staff that irrespective of what was offered in the space, having a designated area for families to wait comfortably, and protected from the elements, was essential. Evelyn reflected:

> "… thank goodness the Centre is here…I was driving past the old Aberdeen prison…I can't imagine how it would feel like going to a prison like that, approaching it, and when it doesn't have a Centre like this." (Fieldnotes)

An elderly visitor who had difficulty walking said she found the environment "nice and comfortable", and said that having this space is particularly important if the weather is bad, reinforcing the wisdom of Baroness' Linklater's concerns. Centre staff commented:

> "Most of the visitors that we get in here obviously find- they've even said when they've been to other prisons and there isn't this facility and they have to queue up in the freezing cold, they can't get a cup of tea or coffee and they really, really think this [the Centre] is a good idea." (Staff member G, interview transcript)

> "We get it from the old timers as well, the ones who remember how it was before, when they were just standing outside a grey building...now they've got somewhere warm." (Staff members D and F, interview transcript)

Visitors were very positive about the Centre's environment, describing it as "comfortable", "homely and modern", "very accommodating", "nice", and said that the atmosphere "feels relaxed". Visitors specifically praised the facilities offered by the Centre, including the canteen, the accessible toilets, the play areas and activities for children, and the comfortable seating. Children also expressed an enthusiastic appreciation of the activities and facilities offered by the Centre. Pryha elaborated:

> "The kids' area is good in here for the wee ones and older ones. And you can do stuff. Like you can help your wee sisters. There's things to read and stuff. There's comfy seats for the adults here too. The Children's Corner is good, with pictures and things up." (Family member interview transcript)

Amy and Britney enjoyed spending time in the Children's Corner and the arts and crafts activities offered in it. They liked the arts and crafts activities so much that they said they wanted these to be offered more often. Pryha and Pandora echoed these sentiments. Pandora said, "I like the park bit outside", the children's outdoor play area attached to the Centre. Douglas told me when he was drawing his picture of the Centre: "I'm going to draw a toastie…because I like them. And the hot chocolate". There appeared to be some consensus among the children that the waiting in the Centre was enjoyable because there were opportunities for play and for tasty food. However, this is likely due to there being an array of activities on offer to keep them occupied. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, children were far more critical of the waiting involved after their time in the Centre: the waiting in the various queues which had to instead be spent unproductively.

Parents were also positive about the activities and facilities available to their children. For example, Katie commented:

> "The kids are well entertained anyway…with the playroom, and the staff and their help…Because I know the children, I know they like playing here, and em they can play outside or play in the playroom you know. Or they can do drawings and things like that, you know. And I know that they're ok, they're alright you know. It's a good environment, you know?" (Family member interview transcript)

Since the children were so well catered for, this meant that some parents could take the opportunity to relax in the Centre. Staff members' D and F highlighted this: "[the Centre gives parents] somewhere for their kids to play, so they get a wee respite from the children for a wee while." Yet, there is also an irony here: the prison offers, albeit brief, respite from 'free' life where there may be a lack of child care and parental support, or as the case may be, intrusive parental support (a theme I give consideration to in Chapter 8).

***Prison friendships are not just for prisoners***

Since the Centre is the designated space in which families wait, it is also a site in which many social interactions take place, between families and between families and staff. As will be shown, the space itself produces, even impliedly, particular social relations.

As Codd notes, formal self-help groups for prisoners' families have surfaced, with the aim of supporting families during imprisonment (2002); such groups have been viewed as being empowering to women, through "providing information, practical and emotional support and promoting confidence and skills" (Codd, 2003: 16). However, as Codd rightly highlights, describing such groups as empowering for these women may obscure the fact that the state and penal institutions rely on these women to continue contact with their imprisoned partner, during the sentence and after release (2003: 17). I observed the natural 'springing up' of these informal support networks, finding them preferable, less paternalistic and ultimately more empowering, to these families, than, formal support networks, created on their behalf: visiting spaces within prisons tend to orchestrate family life around the needs of the institution (such as the institution's need for a narrative of rehabilitation), and the prisoner (a theme I develop in Chapter 6); purposely and formally creating groups for families would be an extension of this, as Codd notes.

Waiting spaces such as the Centre may help facilitate the natural emergence of these networks. Literature exploring interactions in medical waiting rooms (Akerstrom, 1997; Kutash and Northup, 2007) offers insights here. In Cohn's study of parents' experiences in the waiting room of an occupational therapy clinic, it became clear that "quasi spontaneous support groups" emerged, and, importantly, were created without having to actively "make them happen" (2000: 168); part of this was simply due to the fact that the support was "naturally occurring" (2000: 170). I observed this too. Despite activities and the availability of food and drinks being *put in* for families to improve the experience of visiting, simply having a space to pause in, along with others, itself was productive of interactions.

As in any social environment, conversations of all sorts spring up in the Centre. Conversation topics range from the seemingly banal to those of a more serious nature. These seemingly banal conversations have an important social function: small talk "enacts social cohesiveness, reduces threat values of social contact, and helps to structure social interaction" (Coupland, 2010: 1). When the families return to the Centre, the atmosphere is very much one of hustle and bustle, as families collect their belongings from the lockers, and greet others who are on the same visit or those who are waiting for the following visit. In

these cases, it is not feasible for in depth conversations to take place, though small talk can and does take place. Jane explained:

> "Here [the Centre], you actually get to know a lot of people here… So, there was one particular female, and her family would come here every Saturday and we'd always acknowledge each other. There's another female- her dad would come and we'd stand and chat… you'd ask, how each of their other family members are doing…" (Family member interview transcript)

Jane highlights here the small talk families often engage in. Moreover, in some cases, these types of conversations can lay the foundations for more serious conversations ('big talk' or 'real talk'), allowing relationships to form, and support networks to be established (Coupland, 2010: 2). On an unrelated but important note, it is also worth pausing here briefly to observe the very subtle ways in which family members may take on the lexicon of the institution: for example, with Jane's description of the woman prisoner as a 'female', which has a distinctly institutional feel, rather than the more informal 'woman' which one would perhaps expect her to use in other contexts; this theme of the prison's extension of its boundary, and the often very subtle manifestations of this, in this case in the adoption of institutional language, is one I develop in Chapter 6.

However, to return to the discussion of the sociality that develops among visitors, in her qualitative study[53] on families' experiences' of visiting centred on two New York prisons, Christian observed that the time spent at the visitors' centre at one of these prisons[54] prior to the visit brought out a "sense of community among the women" (2005: 39) where these women essentially shared. Women wished one another luck, offered encouragement with news of successful appeals, and shared concerns about the news they may receive during the visit (Christian, 2005). In Kotarba's study of the visiting process in a county jail in the US, he observed that in the imposed waiting period, conversations naturally sprung up. Amongst acquaintances, typical conversation focussed on the prisoners, and regulars to the jail developed their own "jail friendships" (1979: 85). Likewise, in Kutash and Northup's medically oriented study of an intensive care unit waiting room, the families commented that "one family could console another" and they identified the waiting room as a place "where you can be with people in similar situations" (2007: 386). Clearly, this idea of

[53] This included conducted ethnographic observation on bus rides to these prisons, attendance at prison family support group meetings, and conducting open-ended interviews with women visiting partners confined within them. This centre was not a distinct site or focus of Christian's research unlike my own.
[54] Like the setting I researched, the visitors' centre was within the prison confines but was operated by a voluntary sector organisation independent of the prison service.

"ready-made" support is not novel, nor is it limited to single settings. This notion of ready-made support emerging from these 'jail friendships' was apparent from my own research in both interviews and ethnographic observation. For example, Bob commented:

> "They're [the visitors] all in the same position but for different reasons. We all help each other… "we're in the same case, because the people we love closely are in jail. You know we're in the same boat…" (Family member interview transcript)

Cohn's study found that this "weekly waiting room ritual" shifted parents from being in a position of isolation, to a position of "shared experiences in which others understood their concerns" (2000: 170). In the Centre too, weekly waiting room rituals develop:

> "Jamie: The first time I came here, it was awkward you know. You don't know where to sit, where you're going, where you book in…. Though the staff are nice. The first time I came here, I was sitting here for like an hour, just at a loss you know. Then someone, I think it was Serenity came over. And that was it. The Wednesday Club [was formed]
>
> "Serenity: Aye, the Wednesday Club
>
> "Jamie: It's just a good laugh you know. Just chatting to folk. It's like a wee family, here every week. Wee random chats, you know. It's good to see them, catch up, only a quick chat about the imprisonment." (Family member interview transcript)

Jamie later told me that the Wednesday Club "just sort of happened", that it is "really good" and that he "looks forward" to catching up with the other people in this group. These visitors meet at the Centre on Wednesday every week as they each wait for the same visit session (for Ingliston Hall), and have called themselves the Wednesday Club. It seems that a quasi-support group has formed, quite unexpectedly and without any concerted effort to establish it. Yet this also shows again, how the prison leeches out, in this case in relation to classifications, and serves to classify and organise people outside when they visit; a theme I develop in Chapter 7.

Bob also revealed how he developed friendships with other visitors:

> "… it's [the Centre] a lovely place, a lovely place. Great people that I've met and now I can call friends…" (Family member interview transcript)

These examples draw attention to the importance of families who share the experience of incarceration to have a space to talk and offer support to each other, should they require it. In some cases, the networks and friendships established in the Centre go beyond this space. For example, Jamie and Serenity kept in touch between visits through texting and social media. Jamie elaborated: “it’s all about making friends”.

Dee also shared how she and another visitor Evelyn became friends. Dee and Evelyn’s husbands were cell mates, and Evelyn and Dee attended the same Friday afternoon visit to see their spouses:

> “Because Evelyn and I just started meeting up on a Friday, and we’d have like a toastie and a blether and catching up. And we [Dee and husband Tommy] still keep in touch with Evelyn and Iain. I like text her and see how she’s doing. Because she’s had quite a tough time, because it’s an adjustment to having them back in your house all the time.” (Fieldnotes)

Having experienced familial imprisonment before through her son’s imprisonment and now experiencing her husband’s imprisonment, Dee drew on this experience to support Evelyn; although, Dee’s experience of multiple familial imprisonments was not exceptional, as will be explored in subsequent chapters. To return to the interactions in this space, there is a clear sociality produced through prison waiting for some visiting families, and in the designated waiting space of the visitors’ centre, informal support networks spring up. However, there are subtleties to the sociality of waiting that I have also identified exist in this space: Chapter 7 will explore how families’ accessing of these informal support networks can be conditional on the offence perpetrated by their family member, and that some support networks emerge as a direct result of the offence perpetrated (and may be more relied upon by families for this reason). Moreover, Chapter 6 will shed light on the negative aspects of prison waiting, including the inconvenience it brings, and its taking away of time from families.

### *Support from Centre staff*

In Chapter 3 of this thesis, I discussed the formal support and services offered in the Centre. However, much of the support that is offered by staff to families is informal in nature.  This was commonly raised in interviews by families or in the conversations I had with visitors.

> "Paisley: The staff are really nice. Like for you Pryha, they got you a cake for your birthday.
>
> "All agree that the Centre staff are 'really nice'." (Family member interview transcript)

In a conversation I had with Dee and Evelyn, Dee said: "they're [the staff] really friendly. Because we're here every week, they remember you know, the can of juice that you like."

One day I wrote in my notebook:

> "There are various little things the staff do that may well go unnoticed; things that are certainly not part of their job description. Like charging phones in the sockets behind the reception desk; storing buggies behind the desk; storing car keys so visitors don't have to use the lockers just for car keys; holding babies to allow mums to go the toilet in peace; giving visitors a loan of a £1 coin for the locker but not chasing visitors if they do not return it; warming up formula milk for babies; keeping a collection of spare clothes for children in case they have accidents; giving visitors directions to various places and so on. However, these all seem to add up to create the supportive atmosphere I feel the Centre has, which is also felt by visitors I have spoken to." (Fieldnotes).

In another conversation, two visitors said the staff are "really good". The woman said that staff member H told her to phone the Centre when they are at a certain roundabout, so that she can have a baked potato ready for her when she arrives in the Centre. Staff member H does this, and the visitor appreciates it. The pair also mention staff members' C and D specifically and said that they are good, but also said "they are all brilliant".

These small acts of kindness by staff may be easily overlooked and may fail to be captured in formal reports charting developments in the Centre, including the programmes, support services and initiatives it offers. However, it was these friendly and supportive interactions that families raised repeatedly in discussions, demonstrating that these gestures did not go unnoticed, at least by families. It is worth highlighting here the importance and value of the informal support offered by Centre staff to families, and the informal support between families.

**Being in the prison**

***Secondary prisonisation***

In contrast to the often very positive accounts of the Centre, families' experiences of being in prison and the visit room specifically were often negative, or at best, neutral. Exceptions should be acknowledged: the children's visits were generally praised, and positive interactions with prison staff were also often highlighted, but these were indeed exceptions.

Clemmer (1958) coined the term 'prisonisation' to describe the processes by which prisoners adapt to, and become part of, the subculture of a prison. Comfort argues that visitors experience a diluted but still potent version of this prisonisation or institutionalisation, which she terms as 'secondary prisonisation'. Comfort described the partners of prisoners in her study as simultaneously both captive and free, being "quasi inmates" (2008: 15). Families become secondarily prisonised through the maintenance of contact with their incarcerated family members; in other words, repeated contact with the institution prisonises families. However, Comfort also argues that secondary prisonisation extends beyond the prison and into the lives of the families at home; its application at home in this study will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6. This lens of secondary prisonisation is useful here to consider families' experiences of being in the prison, and the prison visit room specifically, and the various aspects of these experiences.

***Problems getting into the visit***

While this chapter discusses visiting, it is important to emphasise that successfully getting into the prison for a visit is sometimes no small feat. For example, various bureaucratic issues (for instance, being omitted from the visiting sheet, as noted in Chapter 3), may result in a family member being denied a visit. However, the outcome may be influenced by the members of prison staff who are working at the time; some are more willing to deviate from the rules than others. The following fieldnote excerpts convey this well:

> "There's a woman here from Banffshire [approximately 200 miles north of Edinburgh]. She is partially slighted and comes here every Tuesday for a double visit. She essentially travels for the whole day for her visits. Today she has been told that she cannot have her second visit. Staff member A is surprised because this lady is here every week for a double visit. She phones the prison staff who say that

> the paperwork isn't there. Staff member A points out that this is not the family member's fault, and also points out that she has travelled a long distance. Thankfully staff member A is successful in challenging this and the woman is visibly relieved." (Fieldnotes).

A double visit is where a family and a prisoner have a visit that lasts the duration of two visiting sessions. According to Staff member B, at HMP Edinburgh, the Gate Visit Manager authorises a double visit, which may be proposed by an FCO based on a family's circumstances; this would typically be if the family was travelling a significant distance and if no-one else was there to visit the prisoner. However, sometimes a family will be allowed to stay in the visit room for the short period in between visiting sessions, while on others, the family must return to the Centre to then go through the security process once more. What happens on a particular day appears to be dependent on the preference of the officer in charge at a given time. Formal clarification of the policy and its rationale (or lack of it) is lacking. However, the fact that families do not necessarily enjoy a seamless transition between visits and instead undergo a degree of hassle for this, conveys how inconvenient this particular aspect of visiting (alone) can be.

> "I speak to a man and his daughter. They tell me that they sometimes worry about not getting into a visit due to lateness, through no fault on their own- for example, due to a breakdown on the motorway. This has happened before. They *did* get in for their visit, but not without a lot of hassle. The prison staff on these occasions he says are 'completely non-negotiable'." (Fieldnotes).

> "Em again I think it depends on who's on the Bubble [prison reception desk] as to how easy or hard they make it. Well I get that impression anyway. And it depends who's on, if there are problems, whether they'll move a wee bit and account for them, and will say 'definitely, you're not getting in'. I think that's a shame really because I think everyone should be singing from the same hymn sheet…sometimes you feel that you're just banging your head against a brick wall..." (Staff member E, interview transcript).

Therefore, under certain circumstances which demand discretion, being allowed in for a visit or otherwise depends on the extent to which the prison officer in charge at that moment is willing to either bend or break the rules. On this matter of rules, visitors are compelled to obey them, even those that they perceive to be needlessly strict or

superfluous. For example, Jake lamented the fact that he was not permitted to share a *Kit-Kat* with his imprisoned son: "It just seems so silly".[55] He also complained:

> "But two weeks ago, when we went through, they were 15 minutes late in bringing him down, so obviously that's a short time. They said 'It's ok, we'll give you the next space [visiting slot] as well', which was at half past 3. I just don't get why you can't just carry on 'cause we've met other people who've come down here from Aberdeen. They've had half an hour and they have to come back in and they have to go through the whole process again, for another half hour. It just seems bonkers to me…I mean I think sometimes it's silly. Sometimes we've gone up there [to the Bubble] to check in and we're told that 'no, we're too early, come back here', and once we're back, we're told 'everybody can go over there'… it's just…. I know it must be hard to organise, getting those prisoners to their visits, getting them all down blah blah blah but it's just…. *makes exasperated face*." (Family member interview transcript)

One visitor told me: "there was one time that they were making paper aeroplanes, and they got told off because it was a health and safety risk". Another rule that was a source of irritation to visitors is that all mail must be posted in via Royal Mail. In addition to this costing families' money in posting fees, it is also inconvenient. Jake commented:

> "What is ridiculous, is that you can't scribble down a postcard if you're passing here, and hand it in at the desk, because it has to be sent in the post." (Family member interview transcript)

Judy also complained about this: "If only I'd be allowed to just *hand it in*, it would be a lot *quicker*."

The arbitrariness of which personal items are allowed into the prison, as well as the fact that these forms outlining the approved items routinely go missing, was also frustrating for families. Judy revealed:

---

[55] Sharing of food and drink, on the grounds that it may facilitate passing contraband (e.g. drugs), is prohibited by the prison and strictly enforced by officers. However, this effectively also criminalises families, including children.

> "I mean the amount of times that we've had pro formas [prisoner applications for property to be given to them] go missing, or visits have not been properly booked, even though he books them well in advance." (Family member interview transcript)

Serenity mentioned this on a couple of occasions.

> "Serenity has handed in property for Paul. All items got accepted, except the trainers. She laughs, and says that these rules make no sense." (Family member interview transcript) [56]

In another conversation I had with Serenity and also Jamie, they told me about the problems they have when handing in property. There seems to be arbitrary distinctions between joggers and trackies; bedding; notepads and various other items. Serenity told me that the bedding must be fire retardant. Her bedding once got refused once for this reason, yet someone else was allowed to hand in exactly the same bedding. The general changeability of rules (or their application) was also mentioned by staff. Staff member C said:

> "Yeah like if they're handing things in…like the rules seem to change with that. From what I've seen. Yeah the rules seem to change with that a lot." (Staff member C interview transcript).

Staff members' D and F said:

> "I think some of the rules and regulations in the prison can be a bit OTT [over the top], they change constantly, which means that we can then be giving visitors the wrong information, because the prison hasn't informed us of the changes." (Staff member D and F interview transcript)

While families complained about the rules and perceived some to be strict or unnecessary, I also got the impression that families would have been more accepting of these if they were consistently applied. This would mean that they would not expect an infraction and would therefore not be disappointed and frustrated if the rule was instead enforced. I will discuss the issue of power in Chapter 6, but the fact that many, sometimes excessive rules were imposed, but also the fact that they were inconsistently applied, is demonstrative of

[56] Serenity did not wish to be recorded with the audio recorder but consented to me making notes as she spoke, hence the use of the third person.

how institutional power is exercised over families, and to some extent by representation of the institution- namely, by prison officers.

As mentioned in the Chapter 3, families are subject to a period of obligatory waiting each time they wait. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the act of waiting is bound up with issues of (lack of) power and agency. Codd comments that families (and in her study the women partners specifically) are forced into a "position of subservience in relation to the prison" (2003: 7). This position of subservience is reinforced by various processes, and accompanying interactions, which I will shortly discuss. However, it is important to reflect here that it begins with the (sometimes challenging) process of receiving authorisation for a visit, the process of handing in money and personal items, and as will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6, in the obligatory waiting period attached to each visit, which are all part of the 'pre-visit' stage of the visit.

***Disrespectful treatment***

Being treated negatively by prison staff was a common complaint of families, and Centre staff also shared their experiences of families sharing these complaints with them. As outlined in Chapter 2, being treated badly by prison staff is a common complaint of prison visitors universally. At this field-site, negative treatment often manifested specifically as being treated as if they too have been convicted of committing a crime. However, the extent and frequency to which they felt this was determined by which members of staff were working during the visit; again, this highlights the variability of treatment families receive from prison staff. Jake explained:

> "Yeah. They [the prison staff] can be really good, or they can be really, the word I would use is…vicious. Or just the whole sort of 'they're in charge', you know." (Family member interview transcript)

In a later conversation, Jake said he was treated with "contempt" (echoing feelings articulated in the same way in Hutton's study, 2016) and "disdain" by one member of staff. However, others were supportive, understanding and helpful. For example, he explained how one member of staff apologised for a mix up that had occurred with his son Thomas and had worked hard to remedy the situation. Katie also commented on the differences in treatment between prison officers:

> "…Em…actually going over to the prison. Some of them are nice, some of them are a bit…they think you're a criminal as well, when you haven't even got a criminal record *Katie laughs*." (Family member interview transcript)

The disrespectful treatment by staff was raised in my informal conversations with visitors:

> "I sit with the Wednesday Club. Another visitor arrives and I introduce myself. The visitor with the 1-year old's mum and the other visitor complain about 'them over there- the screws'. Both say that they are not treated like members of the public; rather, they're treated like prisoners." (Fieldnotes).

Zena discussed the different prisons her brother was accommodated in. She could not remember the name of this particular prison, but describes her overall experience of visiting:

> "…But it was like yeah…that [prison] was the worst in terms of the visit. Because not only was it so far away, but the way we were treated was like shocking, the way that we were spoken to
>
> Me: Ok, can you spell that out a bit, the way you were spoken to?
>
> Zena: Yeah, yeah, yeah. They'd have to tell you stuff like 'you're not allowed to take anything with you, you have to put it in the locker, blah blah blah' but you know, especially towards me, because I was a child; usually they'd have some consideration of care or whatever. But em I'd have instances of prison guards literally shoving me, like pushing me, like shouting at me saying 'you need to go and do that' as if I'd done something wrong. And it was in that one especially that we experienced it [bad treatment]. And like I refused to go back to that one [that prison] because it was such a horrible visit." (Family member interview transcript)

Another complaint is that families are treated with suspicion. Katie discussed one occasion when she was suspected of passing drugs:

> "Like some of them might think you are taking drugs in or that, when you don't even, you don't take anything to do with drugs...there was one incident two years ago. I was very ill because I've got Crohn's Disease. And I was very ill, and I was about a size 8, I really wasn't right at all. And they searched me when I came in. And was it my hands? My finger-tips were curled into my hands and I put them on the table. And the prison officer came over and thought I was passing drugs over

> and I wasn't. It was just…it was maybe the way I looked as well because I was very skinny." (Family member interview transcript)

While some of these examples (particularly Zena's) account are quite extreme, staff member B summed up the situation well when she suggested that a number of the prison officers simply did not have any respect for families. Staff member B explained:

> "…it's just in their…actually at the most basic level, they just don't have any respect for prisoners' families... But at a basic level, it's a lack of respect and just basic customer service skills, people shouldn't be coming here to be disrespected, that's ridiculous. It's mind-blowingly ridiculous. And I think the effects of that attitude are absolutely pervasive…" (Staff member B interview transcript).

Lastly, the attitude of prison staff had not gone unnoticed by children. For instance, Pryha tellingly said: "Sometimes they [prison staff] can be a bit moody". It is beyond the scope of this thesis to consider alternative explanations (beyond lack of understanding) for this treatment, but it is likely that the reasons underlying are complex. Moreover, it is acknowledged that families can be problematic and disruptive, perhaps because of the stresses they experience while visiting; other imprisonment stresses; wider stresses in families' lives, or a combination of these.

In addition, inter-generational tales of negative treatment by 'screws' may lead to confirmation bias. As acknowledged in Chapter 4 of this thesis, prison staff were not interviewees in this research and have therefore not been offered a right of reply. However, based on these shared experiences (which are also commonly cited in the literature, as noted in Chapter 2), there is scope to consider that more comprehensive training for public facing prison officers[57], as well as research specifically with this group may be of use, though this is not given consideration here. The complexity of the relationship between these prison staff and families is noted here; better understanding this complexity is likely to be central to improving the visiting experiences of families, but also to improving the working lives of prison officers. Regrettably it is beyond the parameters of this thesis to explore the complexity of this relationship and its implications, but it is observed that the relationships and interactions between families and prison officers are often strained, and it

[57] Those whose roles involve regular interaction with members of the public (e.g. families), which include working at the reception desk or working as FCOs. These roles are contrasted with roles which involve working primarily with prisoners and which consequently involve having fewer interactions with members of the public e.g. prison officers based in the halls.

is argued that this shapes families' overall experience of visiting, and presumably, in a negative way.

***Being monitored***

Visitors are subjects of and subjected to, surveillance, a finding of my research that resonates with Foucault's observation that the "slightest movements are supervised" and "all events [are] recorded" (Foucault, 1995 [1977]: 197). Jane gave a particularly vivid account of this in the visit room:

> "You just know you're being listened to. Mum says, they'll [the prison officers] lip read. They'll have you on camera…. some of them just stand with their arms crossed and just kind of gaze about. Not a lot of them pace. They've normally at their stations and that's where they stand…" (Family member interview transcript)

She described one situation where she felt acutely her quasi prisoner status:

> "I mean one time I had my legs crossed. So I was told to uncross my legs. Which I feel like saying… 'No! I'm not the one in a purple jumper[58] here! I have my freedom so- I'm not concealing anything'." (Family member interview transcript)

Jake said:

> "We can sort of hug you know, but we have to make sure that they can see that we're not passing anything over, or with our mouths as well." (Family member interview transcript)

Prisoners' and visitors' movements within the visit room are constrained, controlled, and observed; this affects how visitors and prisoners occupy the space, interact within it and how they feel about it. As introduced in Chapter 3, visitors' and prisoners' movements are literally constrained by the style and arrangement of the tables and chairs. This was powerfully conveyed in children's drawings, detailed below, which also demonstrated the

[58] Colour of jumper worn by the women prisoners (in Ratho Hall) at HMP Edinburgh, as discussed in Chapter 3.

contrast between seating arrangements in the Centre and the visit room (Figures 7-9 below).

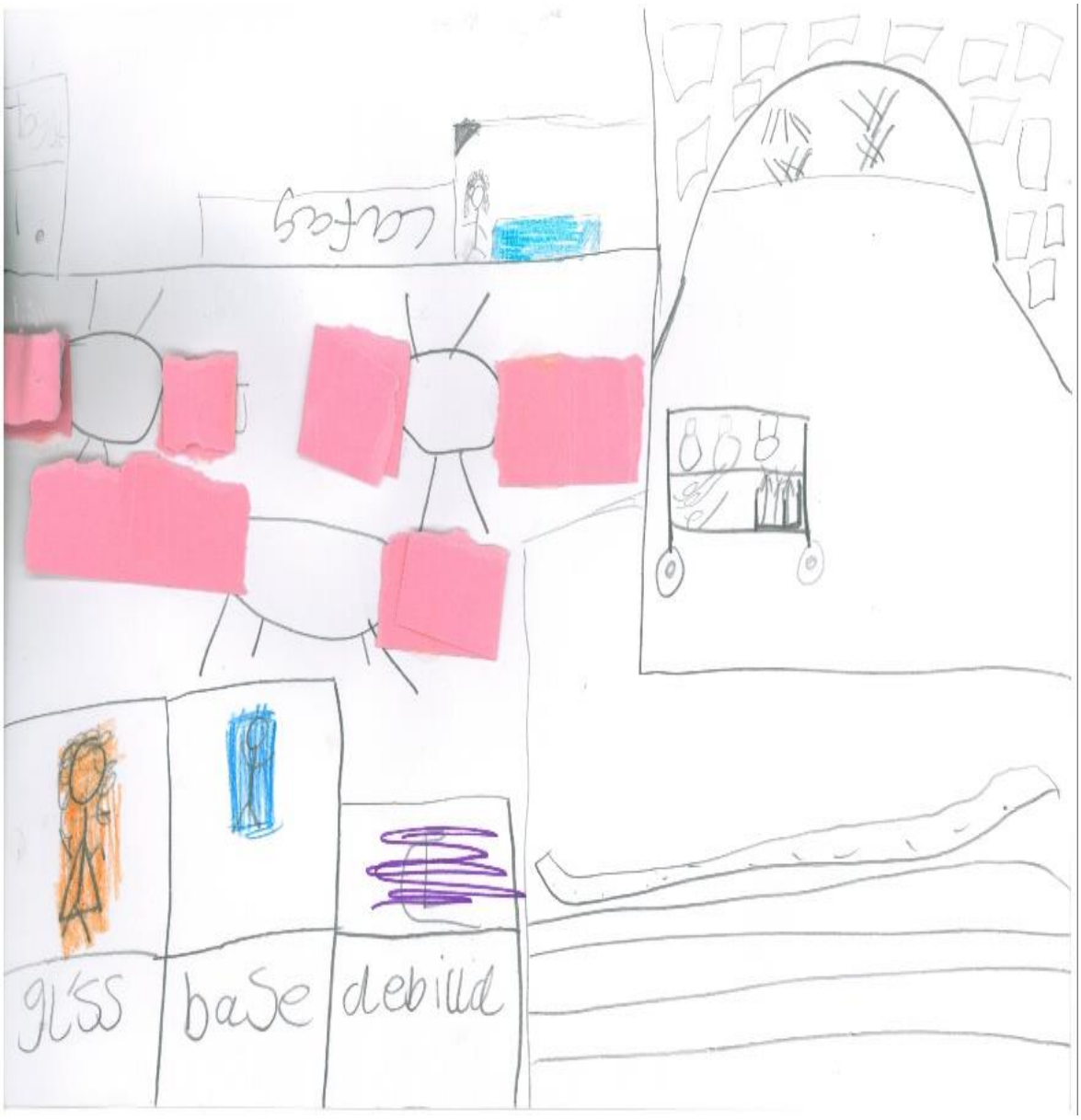


Figure 7: Pryha’s drawing of the Centre

Figure 8: Pryha’s drawing of the visit room

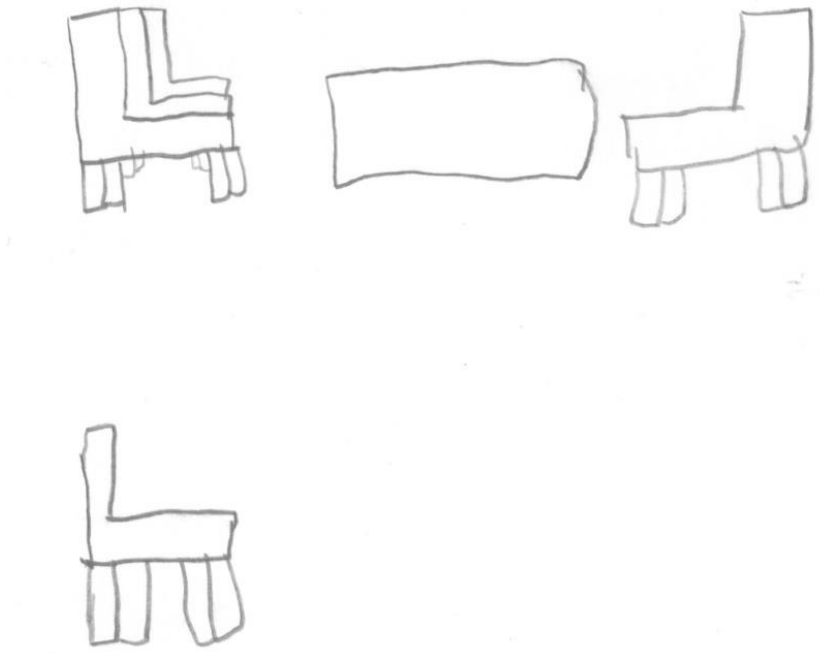

Figure 9: Amy's drawing of the visit room

In Figure 7, Pryha depicts the circular tables and chairs in the Centre. The tables and chairs in the Centre can be moved around and placed in any desired configuration, allowing families to occupy, move around within, and use the space as they wish. In Figures 8 and 9, Pryha and Amy depict the tables and chairs in the visit room. In both drawings, the separation between family and prisoner is indicated by the seating arrangement; three fixed seats for the family are separated from the prisoner's single seat by a large, more rectangular table, with a number on it. When seating arrangements were discussed, all family members including children, complained about these restrictions. Pryha reflected:

> "The seats are comfy here [in the Centre]. But through there [in the visit room] they aren't. There are only 3 seats for each one. There's 4 of us. I always get stuck on the end. They should separate the seats." (Family member interview transcript)

Sophie commented:

> "Ken you look at them, and that silly table, I dinnae understand why that's there. Ken, it's that big a table and you cannae even reach your husband…I'm telling you now, because you cannae get near your partner…whether you sit at the end seat, the middle, it doesnae work." (Family member interview transcript)

Zena suggested that all of these restrictions conspired to create a non-inclusive atmosphere, and enforced the division between the prisoner and the family member:

> "Once you're there, it's like…the way that the visit is structured; it's not inclusive to family members. Like the way that you have to sit [reels off the following in a tone, like a long and frustrating list], you're opposite them, they're wearing a different outfit, they're not allowed to move…just all of it like creates this atmosphere of fear and tension. Oh, the amount of times we had arguments [with each other] on the visit is like too much to count." (Family member interview transcript)

Samantha, who was visiting her partner, also seemed to hint at this artificiality, worsened by the brevity of the visit which she also referenced. I sensed from Samantha that there was almost a pressure to 'perform':

> "It's so hard when you're sitting there. You can't, you've got to…basically I'm sitting here. He's sitting there and you've got maybe 20 minutes to talk."

In Chapter 6 I will discuss the artificiality of the visit room interactions, in relation to conversation topics and dynamics. However, it is worth highlighting here how the configuration of the tables and chairs, and the movements which are sanctioned and those which are not, can add to this sense of 'fakeness' for families. Furthermore, as suggested by Zena, the atmosphere created by these restrictions excludes rather than includes family members, thus undermining the success of the maintenance of positive family ties, and in turn, the fostering of the desistance process.

***Experience of closed visits***

The default location for visits at HMP Edinburgh is the visit room, within the prison itself. However, under certain circumstances prisoners and their families may be placed on closed visits. This may be due to a prisoner's behaviour in his or her hall, or due to institutional suspicion that either a prisoner or family member may 'pass'. Closed visits involve families being separated from the prisoner by a screen partition. There may be more than one family having a visit under closed conditions, but families do not interact with one another and instead are separated into different cubicles. The families who experienced closed visits were very critical of them and of the conditions in which they took place. Judy was put on closed visits because she attempted to pass drugs. She elaborated:

> "In comparison, right now, I don't like being on closed because…I feel like I'm a goldfish in a goldfish bowl. And there's…no ventilation, you, basically, feel like

> you're sitting in someone else's odour of whoever was in there before." (Family member interview transcript)

Though Judy was describing the environment in a Scottish prison, it reminded me intensively of Comfort's description and remark that "lowliness was conveyed through corporeal discomfort" in the Tube at San Quentin (2008: 45). At HMP Edinburgh, being denied fresh air and instead having to sit in the odour produced by the previous occupant has a similar effect. However, what is even more alarming is that families are sometimes forgotten about when they are in these cubicles:

> "I speak to a visitor with a two-year-old son. She tells me how bad it was last week when she and her son were kept locked in the closed visit room twenty-five minutes after the end of the visit: prison staff had completely forgotten about them." (Fieldnotes).

Having witnessed the aftermath of this happening on a couple of occasions, and having discussed this with staff member H, I wrote one day in my notebook:

> "If visitors are forgotten about (for whatever reason), there is no way for visitors to get in contact with staff. The visitors are locked in the room, and the glass is soundproof and there are no buttons to make contact with staff; they are essentially relying on prison staff not to forget about them. Staff member H has told me before that this happens from time to time, and they can be forgotten for hours." (Fieldnotes).

Being forgotten about with no means of reminding prison staff of their presence is, as indicated, distressing for most families. However, I recall one occasion where this had a particularly detrimental impact on a family. For Carrie, who suffered mental health problems, and her five-year-old daughter Lucy, being forgotten about with no way of communicating with staff was extremely distressing. It made Carrie so fearful that she no longer visited her partner; a relative continued to bring her children to visit their father. Carrie waited until her partner was transferred to a different prison before visiting him again. Of course, what is striking about this experience of being forgotten about is that this is not only secondary prisonisation, it is also *primary*, literal, prisonisation.

***Children prisonised***

Finally, I wish to briefly consider children's experience of secondary prisonisation. Their experience was harder to decipher, but nonetheless apparent, as shown in the following example.

> "Pryha: I don't like how we have keep going through the lines [queues].
>
> "Pandora: I like the dogs!
>
> "Paisley: I know, you want to pat them, and you're not allowed!
>
> "Pryha: I hate how you need to ask to go to the toilet
>
> "Paisley: So do I! I feel like a naughty school girl!
>
> "Pryha: I feel like they should have a toilet inside."
>
> (Family member interview transcript)

Pryha expressed that she did not like having to wait in the various queues to get into the visit room (as detailed in Chapter 3). Pandora excitedly said she liked the dogs (present for drug detection purposes), and her mother replied that she always wants to pat them but that she is not allowed to do this. When I analysed this interview, it struck me that it must be quite alien, and perhaps difficult to comprehend, for eight-year-old Pandora who likes this dog to have to resist the natural temptation to pet it. As I will discuss in Chapter 7, Pandora's older sisters Pryha (aged 12) and Annabella (aged 14) demonstrated high degrees of knowledge about the prison and its workings, whereas the level of Pandora's knowledge was not clear. It also not known how she made sense of not being allowed to pet this dog, but I would assume that this would make an impression on Pandora, and most likely not a particularly positive one.

Other visitors shared this family's dislike of inadequate toilet arrangements. I once overheard a mother ask her young daughter: "Are you sure you don't need the loo? Because once you're in, you're in!'". Not only do families have to request permission to leave the visit room and go to the toilet which is denigrating in itself (Paisley's revelation that she feels like a "naughty school girl" is suggestive of this), they must also be escorted by a prison officer who has to lock and unlock doors which is far from a quick process. It is unsurprising that this complex process, coupled with the time it takes away from spending with the prisoner, dissuades families from using the facilities during the visit time, and results in parents encouraging their children to use the Centre's facilities as a

(less than guaranteed) safeguard. While I did not hear, or observe any such incidents, it struck me that these arrangements are incompatible with the needs of young children, particularly those being toilet trained, or for that matter, are incompatible with the needs of some adults who may need to use the facilities more frequently or access them more quickly. This in itself is infantilising and degrading but particularly combined with these other, as Comfort terms "mortifying practices" (2008: 50) of uncertainty, enforced waiting, and lack of concern for information or amenity provision, serves to denigrate visiting families.

## Conclusion

This chapter has discussed how families experience prison visiting, and has focused attention on their experiences of being in both the Centre and the visit room. It has suggested that families, particularly children, find the Centre to be a welcoming and comfortable space, and enjoy the activities and facilities offered within it. Moreover, families appreciate the informal support offered by staff, and some families also develop their own support networks and friendships in this space. Nonetheless, it has also discussed the negative aspects of prison visiting, through the lens of secondary prisonisation. It has shown how families are often treated like prisoners, from being watched, having movements limited and controlled, and from even being treated as if they have offended by prison officers. Since visiting is important to families, and for a number of reasons, families continue to visit, despite these many obstacles and strains. In the next chapter I will build on this discussion of visiting, but focus on the temporal and spatial dimensions of visiting. This will form part of my argument that while the prison offers new sites to perform family, it also, paradoxically, takes time away from families in its provision of these.

# Chapter 6: Prison's spatial and temporal alteration to and re arrangement of family life in two parts

## Chapter outline and structure

This chapter argues that the prison alters and re-arranges the space and time of families affected by imprisonment. Other scholars have applied this claim to the experiences of prisoners, for example through the notion of the total institution (Goffman, 1991[1961]) and some have begun considering the altered time and space of prisoners' families through concepts like liminality (for example Moran, 2013a, 2014). While both lines of inquiry offer important insights, I argue in this chapter that they are also flawed because they remain wedded to a distinct and primarily a literally bounded space of 'the prison'. I aim also to expand and advance concepts of prison; my research on prisoners' families exposes the prison as more fluid[59] , moving into and out of lives, just as lives move into and out of it. In so doing, I explore how prison alters and re-arranges the space and time of families: the sites in which families are performed and how family time is divided up and spent. This findings chapter is organised in two parts: Part 1's emphasis is on space, and Part 2's emphasis is on time. Each of these are themes worthy of their own considered attention, yet as will be demonstrated, space and time intersect; I have included them in a single chapter in order to provide an overlapping discussion of both space and time.

## Introduction to chapter

Since Goffman's seminal text *Asylums* (1991 [1961]), the notion of the prison as a *'total institution'* has provided a dominant lens for understanding and explaining institutional power. In this chapter, I discuss how the sharp inside-outside distinction that is the hallmark of Goffman's approach misses important elements of how imprisonment is actually experienced both by prisoners and by their families. Goffman's analysis encourages scholars to conceptualise prison as a closed space, its physical walls dually functioning as symbolic barriers to social interaction with the world outside. Given that the homes of prisoners' families are situated outside this wall and thus are firmly situated in the outside world, it may be considered that the homes of prisoners' families are exempt

[59] A term also used by Armstrong and Jefferson in their (2017) publication.

from institutional interference. There is growing recognition, however, that these sharp distinctions are not representative of the lived experience on either side of the prison wall. Yet, there is still a dogged persistence of the inside-outside distinction when prisoners and their families are discussed in various spheres.

I begin this chapter by problematising the concept of the total institution. I then suggest that more recent ideas about prison's liminality offers useful insights, but do not move us far enough towards understanding penal power beyond spaces of physical confinement. In deploying a sceptical stance towards both the prison as total institution and a notion of prison as liminal, we are able to see both how the outside (and specifically the family and the home) enters the prison, but also (which I focus particularly on here) how the prison extends beyond its spatially bounded site, and into the lives of family members in their homes. I argue that both the concept of the total institution and albeit to a slightly lesser extent, the theory of liminality, focus on a particular literally bounded site: in this instance, the prison. This supports the insightful work by Armstrong and Jefferson (2017) who argue that even critiques of the total institution still reinforce this binary: for example, of inside and outside, of prison and home and community. Moreover, this binary comes with the implicit assumption that the binary itself is easily identified or exists in all senses. My own research alternatively exposes the prison as fluid.

I show this movement and fluidity empirically by discussing in detail the nature and experience of the prison's spatial and temporal re arrangement of family life. I discuss how the prison creates new *spaces* for families in which to practice or '*do family'*, such as in the visitors' centre and in the visit room itself. However, I also discuss how the prison alters and re arranges family *time*. In particular, I explore how in imposing diverse forms of waiting, the prison actually takes time away from families. In addition, I show how the prison's spatial and temporal interference is actively resisted by some families, and weave in these examples throughout this chapter.

Overall the chapter builds on themes of the secondary prisonisation of families in Chapter 5, but separates out the distinct qualities of this. As will be discussed, much of this temporal and spatial rearrangement is experienced negatively and has detrimental impacts on families. For example, by creating new sites to 'do family' and share 'family time', (following increased attention on the importance of family bonds and often informed by research emphasising this) this comes, paradoxically at the expense of family time in ways

I will discuss. In addition, the extent to which these sites provide a meaningful opportunity to do family is interrogated, further building on Chapter 5's discussion of prison visiting. This chapter relates closely to elements of Chapter 8 which explores how families have experiences and encounters that closely resemble those inflicted by the prison beyond the prison's spatial site.

## Part 1 Prison's spatial flows and effects

### Revisiting and razing the 'total institution' concept

To reprise Goffman's widely influential account, a total institution is a "place of residence or work where many like situated individuals, cut off from their wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (1991 [1961]: 11). Moreover, a total institution's "encompassing or total character is symbolised by the barrier to social intercourse with the outside and to departure that is often built right into the physical plant, such as locked doors, high walls, barbed wire, cliffs, water, forests, or moors" (1991 [1961]:15). Thus, these literal barriers also signal an exclusion of interaction with the outside world. Accordingly, total institutions are considered to have "binary distinctions between the inside and outside" (Baer and Ravneberg, 2008: 205). Prisons provide a "clear example" (1991 [1961]: 11) of total institutions, but army camps, concentration camps, psychiatric institutions, among others, can also be deemed total institutions.

However, in recent years, this notion of the prison has been subject to both scrutiny and challenge. Increasingly, scholars argue that the boundary between the prison (the inside) and the outside is blurred; instead, there is an 'inter-penetration' between inside and outside (Farrington, 1992). There is no denial of the prison's *literal* boundary. This boundary is created and signalled by the presence of multiple doors and locks, fences, gates, and barbed wire, and in some cases, the prison's remote location. There is also no denial of how the prison strictly controls what parts of the outside world (for example, prisoners' possessions), and which outside individuals are allowed in and precisely when they are allowed in (as brought to light in Chapter 5). In these respects, the prison's encompassing or total character is uncontested.

Scholars (Farrington, 1992; Baer and Ravneberg, 2008; Moran, 2013a, 2014) argue that it is how this boundary between the prison and the outside is *experienced* that reveals that this demarcation is much more ambiguous than suggested in the concept of totality. Farrington argues that when prisons are considered in their broader social settings, what emerges is a complex web of "transactions, exchanges and relationships" that bind the prison to not only the "immediate host community" but also to society more generally (1992: 7). For example, a wide range of external or 'non-prison' workers enter and leave the prison; family members and friends visit and often bring in money and items of personal property from the 'outside world'; prisoners make phone calls and send letters out of the prison; most prisoners eventually leave the prison and return to the 'outside world'; and some prisoners, caught up in the so-called revolving door of offending will enter and leave the institution many times. This is a glimpse into the reasons why the prison's walls are now considered porous and why the inside-outside distinction struggles to withstand scrutiny.

However, as recently argued by Schliehe (2016) in her rich re-engagement with Goffman's *Asylums,* Goffman's theory has in some respects been taken too literally. Indeed, closer inspection of the text does suggest a more nuanced picture of the institution's totality anticipating the relational conception of prison raised in more recent analyses (as in Farrington, 1992 et seq.). Moreover, the text itself offers rich insights into prison life, insights which continue to resonate with the contemporary prison experience.

Nevertheless, the view of the prison as total lingers, even dominates. Perhaps this is because it resonates with the commonly and long held public view of prison both literally and metaphorically 'casting out' a person from society, forcibly containing them in a hermetically sealed space. Given the rise of penal populism (Pratt, 2007) both a literal and symbolic ostracism of the 'offender' for members of the public is a fully expected, (and in some cases desired), consequence of state imposed punishment.[60] Indeed, Farrington suggested that this was the prevailing image of the prison in twentieth century USA, and offered various reasons for why this image has never been dislodged. One reason suggested was the intuitive appeal of the idea that society's most dangerous persons were locked away until such time as they were deemed sufficiently safe for release, if this time

[60] The complexity of this phenomenon, including the extent to which it actually exists, is acknowledged (Matthews, 2005).

ever came (Farrington, 1992). There are echoes here of Foucault's leper colony. Foucault discusses the measures that were put in place to prevent and quell the spread of the plague: strict spatial partitioning, the closing off of houses and constant and close inspection. Those who fell victim to the plague, the lepers, were cut off from society and as such from all human contact (1995 [1977]: 195-197). Foucault argues all contemporary forms of exclusion, specifically exclusion of those deemed abnormal, find their roots in these earlier methods of quarantining plague victims (1995 [1977]: 199); the modern prison is also therefore borne out of this same idea of exclusion. Moreover, such is the hold of this idea of offender cast out that even future ideas of prison remain fixed to historical ideas of the prison as dungeon, as suggested by Nellis (2006) in his chapter on science fiction prison films. In this he discusses a number of American science fiction films from various decades; though future oriented with technological advancement particularly surrounding surveillance, cells and prisons are presented as cramped, bare, dark, and cold and as such closely resemble prisons of the past.

This discourse of offender cast out can also be found in the desistance literature, encapsulated in the idea of prisoner 're-entry'; because the prisoner has been 'away' (both literally and symbolically), and in order to regain full civic status in the outside, he or she must 're-enter' it fully in a process of transition; re-entry encompasses not only geographical re-entry into the community from the prison, but a symbolic one too, conveying acceptance into the community (Maruna, 2011). Prisoners do some degree of re-entering because prison life *is* different from non or beyond prison life, and imprisonment represents a painful and traumatic experience for many who experience it. Yet, questions are raised. Comfort notes that the re-entry process is complicated by the fact that prisoners' *families* are secondarily prisonised and to such a degree that the dividing line between 'inside' and 'outside' is "significantly blurred" (Comfort, 2008: 186). I take up this theme in Chapter 8 and expand it, interrogating the nature of the prison experience for both prisoner and family: when pre-imprisonment outside conditions and lives are either already marked by imprisonment, or when families have experienced other forms of institutional (penal and otherwise) involvement in their lives; this blurs the distinction between these different forms of institutional intervention, and perhaps diminishes the effects of *penal* intervention specifically. The view that the concept of prisoner re-entry is a slippery one has been acknowledged (Lynch, 2006), but its critique has centred on how its catchy name and intuitive appeal fail to capture the complexity of the reintegration process. Within this concept of re-entry, there is still a persistent and implicit assumption that clear demarcation

between pre-and post- imprisonment life is possible; in short, there is an assumption that there is a clear demarcation spatially and temporally between inside and outside, between prison and home and community. I argue that neat separation in this context is more analytical than empirical, given the lived experience of imprisonment(s) of some families.

The prevalence of this view of the prisoner being banished literally and metaphorically, then does not originate with Goffman.[61] However, there is a popular and academic prevalence of the idea of there being a lived distinction between inside and outside, one which I argue is problematic. If the prison is indeed a 'total' institution, its harmful effects would be contained to 'only' to the incarcerated. However, when we appreciate the permeable nature of the prison walls and when we situate the prison in its broader social context, we can see as Crewe notes, both how "external forces" flow into the prison and affect prisoners, but how these forces "flow out" and observe the myriad social consequences of imprisonment (2001: 5). Yet this still reinforces the inside-outside distinction; prison is conceived of as a total container that enables these forces to flow. As will be discussed, *prison itself flows*. As was documented in Chapter 2 and as will be explored fully in Chapter 7, these "collateral consequences" (Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999) of imprisonment are often harmful. Studies of families of those imprisoned, and demonstrated in the research presented here allow us to see prison as 'not so total' and appreciate the indistinctions of the prison boundary.

**Liminality**

Liminality has generally been positioned as a critique of the total institution model. However, liminality is not a panacea to the difficulties of conceptualising the character of the prison. It too presents as a problematic concept; one of these is that through being widely applied to cover such a broad range of experiences, it is in danger of meaning very little. However, when closely engaging with Goffman's work and engaging with the work of scholars focussing on the indistinction between inside and outside, and then engaging with the lens of liminality, we can see where inside and outside meet and consider the implications of this.

[61] Exile as punishment may be the historical and empirical starting point, but Goffman's work resonates and amplifies this theme for contemporary times.

Arnold Van Gennep (2010 [1960]) introduced the concept of liminality to anthropology, through reflecting on the distinct stages experienced by those taking part in rituals, and discussed the rites of passage that accompanied these rituals. In these rites of passage, the liminal stage is the middle stage of transformation, in between the beginning of a transformation (the 'pre-liminal' stage) and before the transformation's completion (the 'post-liminal' stage). In short, the liminal stage, is the 'between' stage. In this post, liminal period, the 'transformed' individuals re-integrate into society with their newly ascribed status (Moran, 2013a). In Van Gennep's version, the liminal stage can be fleeting or lasting, but it is not permanent; there is the expectation that the liminal period will end, and another stage will succeed in the same way another stage preceded the liminal stage.

Victor Turner rediscovered Van Gennep's theory after a long period of neglect, and focused his attention specifically on the liminal stage of the transformation (Thomassen, 2009). For Turner, transitional or liminal beings are "neither one thing nor another, or may be both; or may even be neither, and are at the very least betwixt and between" (Turner, 1967: 48). Thomassen observes that liminal beings are broadly considered: individuals, as well as entire social groups and societies can be also considered 'beings' (Thomassen, 2009). There are not only liminal beings; there are also liminal spaces and liminal periods; liminality thus can be applied to both space and time (Thomassen, 2009). Objects, even anthropological fieldnotes (given their attachment to the liminal period of fieldwork), (Jackson, 1990) can be considered liminal. These liminal 'conditions' share this one important characteristic: all are *in between* one thing or another; for example, between one place and another; and between one identity and another, future identity. As Thomassen notes, the "key feature" of liminality is transition (2009: 15).

Since Van Gennep's development and Turner's re-working, liminality has continued to be applied by other fields to other contexts. With this broader application, it has also been posited that in some cases, transition cannot or does not manifest. As regards its application to other contexts, criminologists and carceral geographers have applied liminality to shed light both on prisoners' experiences of imprisonment and on specific prison environments. For example, Turney (2015) applies liminality to incarcerated male prisoners, whom she describes as being 'betwixt and between' given their current separation and isolation from families yet anticipated reunion upon release. Prisoners are excluded from society while at the same time, remain technically part of it. Jewkes (2005) compares the experience of those serving a life sentence with those experiencing for

example chronic illness, and in drawing parallels, sees both groups as experiencing permanent or near permanent liminal states. Crawley and Sparks (2006) also draw parallels with Jewkes' observation in their study exploring the experiences of elderly men confined. In her exploration of liminality in the context of prison visit rooms, carceral geographer Moran has also noted there are certain situations where individuals (liminal beings) "for various reasons, become permanently identified with a state of between-ness from which they cannot emerge" (Moran, 2013a: 343) meaning the anticipated transformation does not or cannot manifest. Individuals become *stuck* in this liminal state. There is no moving on to the next stage; individuals are rendered in permanent limbo. In this way, liminality has been extended to not only include the sites, states, and periods of transformation, but also those sites, states and periods which are characterised instead by immobility and where there is no, or at least minimal, prospect of exit. As Turney points out, "incarceration is liminality par excellence" (2015: 501).

I now turn to liminality and its applicability in the context of families of the imprisoned.

***Liminal visit rooms and visitors' centres***

Given liminality's broad applicability to not only periods of time, and individuals, but also to spaces and sites, specific prison environments, such as prison visit rooms can also be considered liminal spaces. However, the entire prison building and complex can be deemed a liminal space or site, given the presence and influence of many non-imprisoned actors who regularly move through and inhabit the space of prisons; these muddy the distinction between the inside and the outside world, rendering it liminal.

Of relevance to this research, Moran discusses the distinct spaces of prison visit rooms, exploring how 'inside' and 'outside' meet (2013a). In this liminal space of the visit room, prisoners come "face to face with persons and objects originating in and representing their lives on the outside", and visitors also experience the institutionalisation of the 'inside'" (Moran, 2013a: 343). The institutionalisation Moran refers to essentially denotes the 'prisonisation' undergone by prisoners; the process by which prisoners adapt to and become part of the particular prison subculture. As Moran observes, others have referred to this 'state of in-between-ness' in this carceral space, albeit using different terminology. For example, Comfort describes the visiting suite as being the "border region of the prison where outsiders first enter the institution and come under its gaze" (2003: 80), and Arditti

describes the visiting room as a "portal" (2003:116). However, little has been written on the liminality of prison spaces beyond the prison: these are spaces intimately connected to the prison and geographically proximate, yet also, simultaneously, separate; these include prison visitors' centres. Breen describes visitors' centres as "bridging the gap between two very different worlds" (1995: 99) and Jewkes refers to the "prison reception area and holding bay for prison visitors" as a liminal space (2005: 375). However, this is the extent of liminality's application to these spaces. The research I conducted advances this scholarship, recognising liminal spaces, but suggests liminality works in a more fundamental way beyond physical sites of prison. To develop this claim, I will now briefly discuss my own observations of the Centre at HMP Edinburgh.

***The liminal Centre at HMP Edinburgh***

How the Visitors' Centre operates and is experienced has been the focus of the thesis so far, but I now wish to turn to how it is experienced as a liminal space. In Chapter 3, I discussed the Visitors' Centre's architecture and management, and noted a degree of separateness that is conveyed by these. Yet the ways in which the Centre is used suggests that the Centre is not totally separate from the prison's internal life; these are now considered.

There are several visible markers of the Centre being a space outside of the prison. These include: the presence of non-uniformed Salvation Army staff who instead wear civilian (casual) clothes; children's play facilities; information boards offering help and advice; a colourfully decorated Children's Corner displaying children's own artwork; an abundance of comfortable chairs and tables; and a small café offering fresh and nutritious snacks and small meals. Moreover, there is an active 'bringing in' of the outside into the Centre. While some of these elements are part of the in-prison visit, particularly through the lack of institutional staff markers (primarily conveyed through uniforms, but also keys, radios, and panic alarms), there is an entirely different sight, sound and feel of this space. As discussed in Chapter 3, the Centre takes a broad approach to its remit of providing support to families, offering an extensive amount of informal support to families through their everyday interactions (as discussed in Chapter 5). Other support, as outlined in Chapter 3, is more formally provided; for example, in providing information about the visiting process and about other services, and in providing arts and crafts workers to entertain visiting children.

While the Centre predominantly accommodates families and friends visiting someone in prison, many other individuals and groups also use this space. For example, SPS members of staff use the Centre on a regular basis. Therefore, while prisoners, the most obvious 'insiders' do not enter the Centre, other actors who are in effect representation of the inside do; and there are external actors (for example, defence lawyers, NHS workers who visit clients and patients respectively) who remind the observer that this entire complex is organised around the prison. There are other conspicuous markers of the penal institution in the Centre: the lockers (to store personal belongings prohibited from being taking into the prison); the formal tannoy announcement; and SPS notices outlining the prison rules. Perhaps most peculiarly of all, is the "fairly common" presence (Centre staff member interview) of newly liberated prisoners from HMP Edinburgh. Upon release prisoners are afforded the opportunity to make a phone call to a friend or relative to arrange a lift home, so members of SPS staff often direct these individuals to the Centre. Therefore, this space becomes something much more than what it was originally designated for.

Though there was a clear attempt to 'design in' the 'outside' into the Centre (using architectural distinctiveness to reinforce its physical separation from the prison), the prison finds and forces its way into it. My argument here has been that though the prison has literal walls that limit or prevent free interaction between the inside and outside worlds, these walls are permeable with actors, objects, rules, and functions of the prison installed in and flowing through the Centre. In short, there is no clear demarcation between inside and outside. By also applying the lens of liminality to this discussion, this haziness is emphasised, and instead the prison, and the experience of imprisonment is seen to be *between* both inside and outside. I have used these lenses as a theoretical backdrop to support the empirical data that follows on how family is 'done' in the prison, and how prison is 'done' in the home, drawing on both spatial and temporal dimensions. This further lends support to the idea that though prison is of course a spatial site that produces specific and unique pains and, it is also, simultaneously, elsewhere, and beyond.

**Doing Family: prison as a new site and ways of performance**

As Janet Finch notes, our understanding of doing family is rooted in the everyday and the routine, where certain actions and activities are 'family' practices (2007). Routines and rituals typically practiced in the family context become 'family practices'. Routines and

rituals are often conflated terms but Evans and Rodgers offer a more nuanced understanding of these: family routines are those activities that "occur on a daily basis and assist in organising time, that is, they provide structure to family life"; whereas rituals are a "symbolic form of communication expressing family identity and defining the boundaries of the family unit" (2008: 98). Both, combined or operating in isolation, can convey various benefits including promoting family resilience, and improving individual family members' well-being. Meal times, and the sharing of food, are important family routines, however 'special' meals (for example, birthday meals) can also serve as rituals. These authors also argue that routines and rituals may be located on a continuum, where routines "take on emotional connotations and have meaning for the family" and thus also become rituals (Evans and Rodger, 2008: 103). Finch has recently suggested that recognition should be given to the importance of family 'display'; she describes this as the "process by which individuals, and groups of individuals, convey to each other and to relevant audiences that some of their actions constitute 'doing family things' and thereby confirm that these relationships are 'family' relationships" (2007: 67). For example, in the ritual of sharing a special meal such as a birthday meal, this will often take place in the public sphere such as in a restaurant (an example Finch draws on herself). This act of public meal sharing as a family signals to the audience in the restaurant that a group is a 'family' but also confirms this to each of the individual family members reaffirming to themselves that they comprise this 'family unit'. Both analyses highlight how doing family is embedded in practices associated with family life, but how these are also on occasion displayed or performed instrumentally: to reinforce that a grouping of individuals is a family.

As Finch highlights, many dimensions of doing family are so routine that they are taken for granted and thus overlooked. Accordingly, there is no need to establish that these practices are steeped with special meaning; they are just 'family' practices and meaning is implicit. Yet there are occasions where family may need to be displayed for it to be considered a 'family' practice; these occur are where such activities are a rare occurrence, for example, if a family member has been absent for some time, meaning that this particular family member performing or undertaking the activity is not a routine event (Finch, 2007: 79).

Imprisonment creates such family absences, albeit only partial absences. Indeed, while prisoners are absent from the home in terms of their bodily location, they often remain 'psychologically present' and continue to be involved in family life (for example, in the making of phone calls). This continued psychological presence despite physical absence is a form of 'ambiguous loss' (drawing on Pauline Boss' theory); ambiguous loss theory has

been applied to the situation of prisoners' families in light of the effects of imprisonment, which include the uncertainty it creates (Bockneck and Sanderson, 2009). The other form of 'ambiguous loss' is physical presence but psychological absence: Arditti (2005) suggests that families equally experience this form when visiting, where the effects of imprisonment on the prisoner prompt psychological distance. [62] Consequently, these family activities are likely to take on new meaning. Given the hardships of imprisonment, many taken for granted practices become imbued with greater meaning in the prison context. Food and food sharing are included in these, and indeed these are themes often discussed in prison sociology literature.

One of Sykes' pains of imprisonment is the deprivation of goods and services; here he discusses how prisoners long for the amenities as well as necessities of life; interesting, flavoursome food and drink as well as that which provides requisite calories and nutrition (2007 [1958]: 68). Sykes' thesis continues to resonate with contemporary prison experiences in many ways, including in relation to food. [63] For example, as Ugelvik noted in his ethnographic work with imprisoned men in Oslo, the food reminds the men of their families outside and thus provides them with a "means of escape" and a way of temporarily "transcending the institution's concrete walls" (2011: 57). In her study with women prisoners, Smith reported that the lack of choice over food and drink mean that "prison food is experienced as punitive" (2002: 202); women resorted to consuming 'comfort food' when it was available to them, to cope with these pains of imprisonment. Comfort's study highlighted the importance placed on food by the entire family; the women in her study brought their men home cooked dinners whenever this was possible. Comfort noted that the food was given to nourish their incarcerated men in both body and soul, and the sharing of food was symbolic and a way of bringing 'home' *in*, albeit fleetingly (2008: 108).

Unlike in Comfort's field-site in the US, prisons in Scotland and indeed the entire UK, offer no opportunities for conjugal visitation (sometimes referred to as 'extended family visits'). Comfort's study offers rich insights into how the prison becomes the family home or "papa's house" through these conjugal visits where meals are shared; family activities are carried out; weddings take place; and so on (2002). My research site and focus generated different data on how family is 'done' in the Scottish context, showing some

[62] While parts of the theory resonate, and are as such highly valuable, I argue in Chapter 8 that the associated language applied (for example, 'loss') is problematic.
[63] See Chapter 2 for a brief overview of how these pains have been applied and extended in contemporary times.

continuities but also important differences compared to US locales where conjugal visits are possible (on Scotland, see also, Jardine, 2015, 2017 on the performance of family).

Glimpses of doing family became apparent in my research in how families cared for prisoners (including its gendered dimensions), but also in visits, particularly in the sharing of food. Food sharing became particularly important for the reasons described above but also, I suspect because it is one of the few family routines and rituals that these families are permitted to engage.[64]

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the children's evening visits (held at HMP Edinburgh on Monday and Wednesday evenings) provide families with the rare opportunity to share cooked family meals on set nights. To date there has been an Indian meal night and Italian meal night. These special family meals are infrequent, occurring approximately only once every six months. Despite their infrequency, they were very well received by families, particularly by the children for whom these visits are primarily intended, as is shown here:

> "Annabella: In the bonding visits[65], they should do more theme nights
>
> "Pryha: Yeah, we've been here quite a while. There's only been 2 theme nights. I think they should have them once a month!
>
> "Pandora: Or once a week!"

Our conversation continued:

> "Pryha: The bonding visits are good.
>
> "Me: Better than the normal ones?
>
> "Pryha: Definitely! Because you actually get to do stuff…. proper like walk about….and bond! Pryha and I laugh." (Family member interview transcript)

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[64] There are a couple of exceptions to this. The first is that in the children's visits, children can bring in homework and their imprisoned family member (usually dad) can help them to complete it. The second is via the Bookbug Scheme, as outlined in Chapter 3. The existence of these activities are welcome developments, but it should be noted that not all families are offered the opportunity to participate in them, and not all families take these up when offered.

[65] Annabella, Pryha and Pandora, all of school age, do not attend the early morning bonding visits (see Chapter 3), but there appears to be some interchangeability with the terms used by the families, as is evidenced by their choice of terminology. It may also be the case that other prisons refer to children or family oriented visits as 'bonding visits' and families who have visited other SPS prisons, take on the lexicon, even subconsciously. This chimes with discussion found in Chapter 5 on how families sometimes adopt institutional language, perhaps without realising.

Though Pryha's recognition that these visits are to encourage family bonding, demonstrating a shrewd, perhaps unexpected, awareness of how purposeful official actions are, she explains that she does nonetheless bond with her family in these visits, and does so by "doing stuff" and through being allowed to move around freely. "Doing stuff" in these visits encompasses a very wide range of activities in these visits led by Centre staff (see Chapter 3, but as a reminder, includes activities like doing arts and crafts and participating in the activities offered by guest organisations).

Normal (or non-children's) prison visits do not offer the opportunity to share food so actively, but even in sharing their experiences of these visits, families in our conversations and interviews widely mentioned and discussed food. This was quite striking since I never directly asked any family member about food either in the Centre or in the visit room. When discussing the visit room, for example, Jake said:

> "…Yeah the café over there [the small café offering refreshments in the visit room] that's really good I think. Someone was telling me that there is the only place where he [Jake's son] actually gets to drink real coffee, so he also has that." (Family member interview transcript)

"Real coffee" (i.e. filter coffee), from the home and outside world, can only be enjoyed in the visit room. The everyday act of coffee drinking therefore takes on new meaning as the consumption of "real coffee" becomes inevitably associated with family visiting and more broadly, with the family. Nonetheless, the food sharing remains tightly constrained and the more active sharing of food between the prisoner and family (such as sharing bites of the same snack, or sips from the same cup) is prohibited. I drew on Jake's dismay in Chapter 5, and it is specifically applicable in the context of this discussion, when he expressed his frustration about the fact that he was not permitted to share a *Kit-Kat* with his son: "It just seems so silly".

Hence, family practices cannot be *fully* displayed or performed[66], which represents a source of frustration and distress. Moreover, as discussed in Chapter 5, there are many issues associated with prison visiting. These include the difficult admission by some families that the visit is "fake" with each family member "putting a brave face" on and not revealing how they truly feel; conversation is limited to small talk or superficial social

[66] Of course, in this analysis, there are not unproblematic assumptions about what 'real' family life is. This is an important argument; one which I will not dwell on here, but one which I have borne in mind.

niceties. If this concern is extended here, there is even a question over whether this display of family is *merely* display. On the other hand, family life involves fakeness, display and performance; these are meaningful anthropological phenomena. What is critical is the issue of how the prison, and to a lesser extent the Centre, create particular styles and models of display, and how families experience this as imposed or real. Further, it may also be the case that while having a space to re-enact family routines and rituals is valued, the limits placed on these may create added frustration, even distress.

The prison not only offers new sites in which family activities and routines are performed and enjoyed, it also creates new family routines. I will take this up in the second part of this chapter which explores the prison's reach at home, but here I wish to briefly explore how in even attending frequent visits, new family routines and practices are established.

These routines often revolve around food. For example, the children in the Miles family who attended the children's evening visit on Mondays enjoyed a regular Monday evening treat by going to 'McDonalds' for their tea, before coming to the Centre. While the children perceived this as a treat, their mother had little choice but to offer them some form of quick dinner (these options made narrower still by their fussy eating): she had to pick up the children from school, and then travel from Fife to Edinburgh, and arrive at the Centre for 5.45pm (complying with the request to book in for the visit thirty minutes prior to its official start time). Arriving promptly is no small achievement considering that dinner time must also be incorporated and she is driving in rush hour traffic. In addition, the Finnegan family's Annabella, Pryha and Pandora also had a food based routine. They attended the Friday afternoon visit every week. They arrived for this visit immediately after school ended on a Friday, and had a toastie, (specifically a "ham and cheese one"), every Friday.[67] Therefore, the timetables of visiting in turn create timetables of eating, and the time pressures of visiting also in some way determine or constrain the food choices available to families.

However, as mentioned, even attending visits on a regular basis mean routines become established. For example, Jane commented: "This [the Centre] has been such a, it's been a big part of my life for the past [x] months. Em every Saturday morning, this has been it for me!", evoking Arditti, Lambert-Schute and Joest's article 'Saturday morning at the jail' (2003). Visiting her mother in prison was a weekly ritual for Jane and her boyfriend.

[67] Edinburgh schools (both primary and secondary) close at lunchtime every Friday.

Therefore, these particular visits seem to afford families important time in which to 'be a family' through the sharing of food and activities. At a general level, I found that families appreciate these opportunities for interaction, but are also critical of how these are offered and how they are managed at the same time. Specifically, they are critical of the overly regulated and very limited nature of family contact that they are offered, and more critical still of the ways in which prison staff sometimes (or often) interact with themselves and other visitors (as raised in Chapter 5). However, these criticisms are directed exclusively towards the normal prison visits, and not the visits tailored specifically for children. Instead, the families spoke very highly of children's visits; they enjoyed the activities offered, and were also keen for the length of these visits to be extended and for these visits to occur more frequently. There are broader questions that are raised in the offering of these types of visits and these are not only centred on the underlying rationale for offering these (namely, reducing re-offending). Arguably, certain assumptions about how family is performed, and more disconcertingly, how family *should* be performed; of how families should act, interact and bond with one another, are revealed. Such assumptions are unlikely to emerge in a vacuum and the prison instead is likely to be influenced heavily by societal perceptions of what these should entail. These questions have no straightforward answer, and answering them is not the focus of this thesis. However, in amongst all this ambiguity, is an important point which is that families' interactions are powerfully shaped, managed and constrained, by the prison.

## Part 2
## Prison visiting: taking time away through imposing time on families?

### Introduction to the sociology of waiting

I will now more fully explore the temporal dimensions of family contact in prison environments. I argue that family visiting involves *taking away* much more time *from* the family. This happens primarily through the imposition of various forms of *waiting:* a specific way of spending time that is familiar to us all but arises in institutional contexts in onerous and unevenly distributed ways. Part 2 is organised first to overview waiting as a social phenomenon and experience, engaging with the literature in the sociology of this temporal experience. I then explore families' experience of waiting both during visiting and demonstrate how prison alters the ways in which family time is organised and spent. I conclude that while families value spending time together as a family in the visit, visiting and other methods of keeping in contact also involve taking time *away* from families.

We all wait, for something, at some point. As Bissell comments, there seems to be a consensus within sociological literature that the experience of waiting is universal (2007: 283). The universality alluded to here is that 'everyone waits'. Bournes and Mitchell comment that "waiting is a universal experience that everyone can describe in some personal way in relation to their own lives" (2002: 58). Adam also observes the universal nature of waiting, and notes that this universality transcends several boundaries, including class distinctions: "the poorest pauper and most powerful politician must each wait for their coffee to brew" (1990: 121). There is room to be critical here: the most powerful politician may have someone less powerful *doing* the literal wait for the coffee to brew; and this example also fails to acknowledge how structural barriers embed inequalities which play out through experiences of time. However, this idea of waiting being a universal experience is a common and substantiated one.

Yet power plays a central part in experiences of waiting. Indeed, McCarthy refers to the sociological idiom: "the distribution of waiting time coincides with the distribution of the poor" (2001: 199). Gasparini comments that to some extent, waiting can be viewed as a "form of exchange and power between actors" (1995: 35). Schwartz notes: "to be kept waiting…especially to be kept waiting an unusually long time, is to be the subject of an assertion that one's own time (and therefore, one's social worth) is less valuable than the time and worth of the one who imposes the wait" (1974: 856). Griffiths also observes that 'being made to wait' is "inextricably bound up in power relations', and is often associated with "bureaucratic domination" (2014: 6). Or, as Bourdieu suggests, "waiting is one of the privileged ways of *experiencing the effect of power*" [emphasis added] (1997: 228).

Waiting then communicates that someone else, whether an individual actor or an organisation, holds power over oneself. Adam observes that "waiting is not a neutral phenomenon" (1990: 123), something that is uncovered upon closer examination of *who waits and for how long*. In short, some individuals or groups of individuals wait for longer, more often and in more demeaning conditions than others.

These inequalities which exist in relation to waiting times have not been fully explored to date, though are gradually receiving their due attention. For example, Laudicella, Siciliani and Cookson's study concludes that NHS waiting times and socioeconomic status are linked in England, albeit in complex ways: their salient point was that those from a lower socio-economic status waited for longer for elective surgeries (such as hip replacements) than their counter parts who held higher socio-economic status (2012: 1331). Auyero's study offers a different perspective on "poor people's waiting". He explores the waiting

experiences of current and prospective welfare recipients in a waiting room in Latin America, and he found that for the majority of the interviewees, "waiting is a modal experience: they have to wait for everything (for example, housing, health services, employment)" (2011: 9). McCarthy also observes for many people, particularly those in disadvantaged groups (here she includes women and the economically marginalised), 'the long wait' is an inexorable part of the process of receiving basic access to goods and services; it is a central part of their daily lives (2001: 198). These works all contend that some individuals or groups wait for longer, and/or more frequently than others. As discussed in Chapter 2, prisoners and their families are often among those who experience this modality of waiting caused by the experience of a "catalogue of disadvantage and exclusion" (Crewe, 2007: 123). Yet, as Armstrong points out, prisons literature tends to ignore prison waiters who are not prisoners; Armstrong observes the waits even prison researchers are obliged to do in order to conduct prison based research but which are hidden (Armstrong, 2015); this is a similar observation to one made by Rhodes who observes how the slow passage of time, in addition to other frustrations attendant with prisons research offers telling glimpses into the frustrations of those studied (2009: 6). I will explore how imprisonment is experienced against this backdrop of social disadvantage for families in Chapter 8. Prison is not the only institution which imposes waiting. Alternatively, it becomes one waiting experience among many for the families I studied and spoke to, who must wait in many other contexts: for example, for welfare benefits; healthcare appointments; social work appointments and so on. The prison, and indeed these sources of temporal control, combine to produce highly controlled or orchestrated lives for families.

***Resistance via agency?***

Although waiting may be imposed on oneself with associated powerlessness, *how* exactly one waits may be instead, firmly in the hands of the person waiting. Bissell (2007: 285) has highlighted the "agentive capacity" of making decisions regarding where to wait and "what to do while waiting". Being able to choose how one waits, means that waiting does not have to be rendered a "negative or empty experience" (Griffiths, 2014: 6). Scholars have referred to "constructive waiting periods" (Catania et al., 2011: 393) and 'equipped waiting' (Gasparini, 1995: 35), both of which tap into this concept of making waiting productive, should waiters wish to make their wait productive in some way. By this I mean a wait that is not passive or empty but instead one that can be used for many other

emotional and material labours. Productive waiting encapsulates "reflective" and "social" forms of waiting, among others (Griffiths, 2014: 6): the sociality of the Centre was discussed in Chapter 5, and is considered here shortly to show its relevance in the context of the waiting that families do.

The need for or of 'agentive capacity' is important where power is already limited, and its importance is lessened or heightened, depending on the time which is being encroached upon during this wait. Indeed, Comfort comments on the "very fine line" which appears to exist with regard to waiting: waiting in 'free time' (i.e. non-visiting time) can be tolerated, while waiting which encroaches on visiting time cannot (2008: 44). The obligatory wait in or around the Centre at HMP Edinburgh may be considered or felt to be free(er) if visitors can use this waiting time in whichever way they wish and thus exercise agency. Appreciating the (lack of) power and agency that is tied to waiting helps contextualise here the waiting experiences of prisoners' families, and the wider impacts of imprisonment.

## The waiting experiences of prisoners' families

### *Waiting in and around the prison*

As already discussed in Chapter 5, for many families, the Centre is a space where they can socialise and interact with other visitors and staff while they wait to visit their loved one, and this may include the giving and receiving of emotional support. There is certainly a parallel here with Auyero's exploration into the waiting experiences of current and prospective welfare recipients which found that their waiting experience is "active and relational" (2011: 15). As discussed, while for many, the waiting is social, for others the waiting is not particularly social; a significant number of visitors either actively resist socialising or passively dis-engage from it, and instead wait in their cars or in the more private areas of the Centre. While families can wait in a way that they wish, this 'being made to wait' is not only a clear example of the channelling of social relations through the imposition of institutional power (and of the restriction of the families' own power); it also demonstrates the pains for some families. All families present in the Centre share the common denominator of being affected by imprisonment. Despite this, the public waiting and attendant public 'admission' that a family member has committed an offence (the admission given by virtue of being in the space), is for some families a source of embarrassment, even humiliation. For other families, 'being made to wait' is stressful.

Katie is a mother of four children, one of whom is only six months old, and she visits her partner. Though she is positive about the Centre for her children, citing the positive atmosphere and fun activities offered to children, she commented:

> "When you're waiting it's a bit…especially when you've got…like I've got 4 children. So it's a bit…it can be a bit stressful at times with 3 children and a baby, so it can be quite stressful. Em especially when they're jumping up and they're all over you for going to see their daddy…" (Family member interview transcript)

There is an obvious irony here: a waiting space designed to allow greater family contact, is stressful precisely because of this greater contact. Further, Katie's stress may be magnified by concerns about feeling judged as a parent, for her children's behaviour. Children's experiences of waiting also suggested that the waiting experienced when visiting was not an enjoyable feature of the visit. Keira told me: *"*It's a bit long to wait. There's sometimes a big, big, [queue], lots of people." Amy and Britney, two of Katie's daughters (the Reid's), told me emphatically that they "hate the queues". Pryha (Finnegan), a little less emphatic though still firm: "I don't like the queues". Children's enthusiastic reeling off and discussion of the activities they do while in the Centre (as discussed in Chapter 5) contrasts sharply with their discontent at having to wait while queueing and do nothing; this also highlights the importance of more active or productive waiting, as opposed to waiting which is merely 'dead time'. This finding is particularly significant since it is often said that children experience time differently from adults, with time typically passing more slowly for children.[68]

This unique waiting situation may also complicate our understanding of agency: prison waiting involves a bizarre combination of both giving and taking away control. More broadly, it also shows how in the offering of family contact and 'family time' (this act of offering itself conveying power transfer), time is also taken away from families, in imposing a wait when visiting and as will shortly be discussed, in imposing more long term waiting.

The waiting area of my field-site contrasts starkly with the waiting area described in Comfort's study. California's San Quentin's waiting area, referred to as 'the Tube' is a physically uncomfortable waiting space: it is unheated; lit by white fluorescent lights; is

[68] Indeed, Mazza notes that due to children experiencing the passage of time more slowly than adults, imprisonment itself is likely to seem like a very long time for children, even if the sentence is short (2002: 524).

draughty and is in a general state of disrepair (2008: 24). As described, the physically comfortable and aesthetically pleasing waiting environment of the Centre at HMP Edinburgh is highly valued by families and conveys many benefits, particularly for children. The symbolic functions of prison design are becoming a research area in their own right (see for example Moran, Jewkes, and Turner, 2016) and I do not intend to trivialise the issue here. However, the obligatory wait for families in the Centre, regardless of the pleasantness of surrounding, fundamentally involves and is experienced as being confined and waiting is imbued with these issues of (lack of) power and agency. It is far better that the waiting occurs in an aesthetically pleasing and physically comfortable environment, but this should not be a distraction from confronting the issues that stem from being made to wait in the first instance, particularly where this wait constitutes one wait among a long series of waits, and where the wait may be simply tolerated rather than enjoyed.

***Waiting at home***

Certain kinds of waiting take place in a "specially designated space" (Hogben, 2006: 333), such as at a bus stop or in a waiting room. The Centre is one such space. However, as Hogben and Gasparini both comment, waiting can, and does, go beyond a designated space. Prisoners' family members while waiting in the Visitors' Centre are waiting in the short term, for the impending visit. However, they are also experiencing the long term wait for their incarcerated loved one's return to the 'free world' (assuming release is a prospect). While there is a close connection between waiting and expectation and anticipation (as Gasparini and others have observed), prisoners' families are also *just waiting*, or are in a *state of waiting*. To put this in a more nuanced way, families experience a series of nested waits in their interactions with the prison (see Figure 3 in Chapter 3 for a visual reminder of these).

The waiting experiences of prisoners' families falls into Gasparini's short term waiting and long term waiting (1995: 36). For Gasparini, short term waiting is waiting which does not exceed a day, and is typically shorter than this; long term waiting is waiting which goes beyond a day, and spans into weeks or months. In these waits which are 'long term', the 'waiter' no longer visibly waits in a designated space. Instead, the 'waiter' waits at home (1995: 36).

In my interview with Jane, these two different types of waiting are raised. Jane said:

> "The waiting on a Saturday can be horrendous. Like, like I'm pacing. I used to pace' and reflects: 'So I think the wait for me…I'm very close to my mum so it is kind of unbearable…It's like "Why can we just not go?!" *continues firmly* "What is the hold up? Why is nobody explaining anything to me?" I think it is probably a little bit of frustration. But then you realise, it's just 'the system'. And *laughs* it's not personal. And it is what it is. You just have to get in line…and deal with it. That's just what it is." (Family member interview transcript)

For Jane, the waiting was stressful too, albeit in a different way from Katie's experience. Jane also reveals how she as a family member became accustomed to waiting and resigned to the powerlessness that the waiting (and imprisonment more generally) brings. As regards the second type of waiting, the 'at home' waiting, Jane explained:

> "My life has been a wait! The court date was waiting….; waiting for a verdict; waiting to hear the judge say his final [decision]; waiting to see how much he's gonna take off [the sentence]; waiting to see when she's gonna be pulled into court; waiting for her phone call…" (Family member interview transcript)

Dee also discussed the different prison waits that she experienced as a family member:

> "…You're waiting from Saughton to then waiting to going to the open prison. The open prison to then getting days out or weeks out, then, like, so for your home visits, then you're waiting 'til *the tag*. And you'll be waiting from the tag[69] 'til the end of that, and that's when your life kinda can start again…" (Family member interview transcript)

Reflecting on end of the visit, Jane poignantly said:

> "But I think when they [the prisoners] leave and they [the prisoners] all get up, it's one of those, *sighs* deflating feelings you know. And I'm like: 'That's it; I've just got to wait 'til next week. I can't wait 'til next week!'" (Family member interview transcript)

[69] The Home Detention Curfew (HDC), commonly referred to as 'the tag' allows prisoners, typically those serving short term sentences, to serve up to one quarter of their sentence at home- this is for a minimum of 2 weeks and a maximum of six months. Prisoners wear an electronically monitored tag attached to their ankle, and must keep to a curfew.

Therefore, no sooner is one wait over, when another begins; or perhaps more accurately, the waiting is ongoing; life becomes a series of nested waits or life may even become simply a wait. Serenity said: "October [the month of her partner's release] better hurry up. Can you get a time machine to speed things up?" Serenity tells me that the countdown for release had begun. In another interview, Serenity simply said: "I can't wait for him to come out".[70] Jane also told me that what was difficult for her was the lack of her mum being involved in her life; 'the waiting and the missing out' are the things she especially struggles with. Dee also referred to life being 'on hold', with the perpetual waiting impeding on everyday life. For example, Dee commented:

> "Dee, your life is on hold! Well you can't…like holidays, you can't just go on holiday. Well *you* could, but they can't go with you…
>
> "…Yeah, you just have to wait for everything, it feels endless. And at the very beginning it feels like a *lifetime*. You know and it's just every day…" (Family member interview transcript)

Judy complained that the imprisonment made it difficult for her relationship to 'progress':

> "Judy: He was looking into maybe having a marriage while he was still in there. But everybody kept not getting back to him with the proper answers, so he gave up.
>
> "Me: Ok, and is that something you'd be interested in?
>
> "Judy: Well, in a way, yes, because it then finalises that we are *married* but, it then means that every anniversary we'll be reminded of him being in here." (Family member interview transcript)

There is a small minority of prisoners in Scotland who do not know when they will be released, if ever; those who have been given an OLR. For prisoners serving indeterminate sentences such as these, "planning a future is impossible" (Crewe, 2011: 514), echoing experiences found in other institutions where indeterminacy is a feature, such as immigration detention centres (Turnbull, 2016). For these families of these prisoners, the wait may literally be without end. Judy, whose partner was subject to the OLR, may never get the opportunity to marry Patrick inside, but even if this was offered to the couple, they may never enjoy married life beyond the prison. Yet as is evident from this excerpt, Judy clung to the hope that release would be a realistic prospect, even if it took some time to

[70] As it transpired, this relationship ended and Serenity is now in a relationship with a new partner. Serenity's story will continue to be shared in Chapters 7 and 8.

manifest. This is reminiscent of Comfort's (2008) work describing the hopes, dreams and even fantasises women and their partners engage in. There are also tragic cases where two factors combine: lengthy and indeterminate sentences *and* ageing or unwell relatives. In such cases, post release reunion will not be a prospect. This tragedy is poignantly conveyed in the following fieldnote:

> "'We'll be dead and in a box, and he still won't be out...he'll never get out'. Both [the elderly father and mother] say that the families outside suffer, and the woman is particularly emphatic about this." (Fieldnotes).

Therefore, a number of family members feel that they are constantly waiting, and suffer the effects of this penal reach in their own lives at home. Carceral institutions such as prisons, with their own rigid timetable are "dissociated from the rhythms of time on the outside" (Wahidin, 2006: 6.13). Moreover, they impose their own rhythms which tend to interfere with these outside temporalities. There are echoes here of Comfort's work; Comfort observed that the kith and kin who wish to remain connected with their incarcerated loved one, are "repeatedly exposed over sustained periods of time" to penal regulation which includes regulation over their "daily schedule" (2007: 279). Either as a consequence of it, or a response to it, these women partners of prisoners "(dis)organise their demanding personal agendas to accommodate the prison timetable…" (Comfort, 2008: 89). Not only are personal or family timetables shifted to suit the prison's rigid timetable, but the methods for staying in touch "require surrendering the private domicile as an extended site of penal control" (Comfort, 2008: 97); I will shortly explore this further. Insights such as these draw attention to how the prison extends beyond the literal walls and into the home lives of families, and as such, shows how the inside-outside distinction does not play out in practice. However, these insights also reveal how families' time- how much there is and how it is spent- is coordinated by the institution.

What I also wish to draw attention to here is how these waiting experiences both predate and follow the serving of a custodial sentence. As already discussed, for some families the experience of prison waiting is but one experience of waiting, and associated lack of power and agency; these family members are frequent waiters. However, all families, even those more familiar with waiting in other areas of their lives, experience waiting induced by the criminal justice system; as such they experience waiting both before and after the imprisonment. For example, Jane discussed the waiting for a court date, and Dee discussed the waiting for the electronic tag to be removed post release.

***Accommodating (and resisting) the prison timetable***

One way in which family members' homes become extended sites of penal controls is evidenced is in prison phone calls. As with most prisons in Scotland and elsewhere, since prisoners do not have legal access to mobile phones, prisoners make phone calls home (either to their family's landline or mobile) through communal phones situated in their respective prison hall. Dee recounted the numerous problems with current phone call policy. The first issue is that she cannot initiate a phone call: "You have to wait 'til they phone you". The second is that she has little or no control over when the prisoner makes a phone call:

> "Then if they can't get access to a phone, they don't phone you, because you know, there's lots of people trying to get on these phones…" (Family member interview transcript)

This means that family members either do not engage with, or do not fully engage with other activities. Jane commented:

> "I keep myself free Monday, Wednesday, Friday…before 8 she calls me. Any other time, we have to schedule." (Family member interview transcript)

On three evenings per week when Jane returns home from work and before eight o'clock, Jane waits for a phone call, her evening stalled until the phone rings. This enforced waiting, and in some cases forced confinement in the home to wait for the (sometimes long awaited) phone call, impacts upon the daily schedule of families and their organisation of it, with families prevented or severely limited from engaging or fully engaging with other activities or tasks as they wait (perhaps as seemingly banal as avoiding vacuuming to avoid risking not hearing the phone); the waiting time is 'dead' time.

Families adjust their own routines to accommodate the prison's visiting timetable. In adjusting this routine, time spent in the performance or undertaking of other family activities is redirected and reinvested in the process of visiting. Many families explained that on the days that they visited, much if not the full day was taken up with visiting: planning, travelling, waiting, the visit itself, and then the return journey home. Sophie said: "My whole day revolves around the prison". Zoe elaborated on how this translated in practice for her:

> "Like half the time if I'm coming here, I don't do anything for the rest of the day. Like obviously, getting him [her two-year-old son] ready, and then getting the two buses from town into here, it's quite hectic." (Family member interview transcript)

Jake, who visited his son, said: "It takes a chunk out of your week that you wouldn't sort of ordinarily have to do…" I also observed the extent of this temporal investment in my observations, as demonstrated in the following fieldnote:

> "The young woman with a baby comments that she is spending a lot of time in August visiting her brother, and she proceeds to reel off the days and times of her visits. Jamie jokes that she should pitch a tent here, and the young woman laughs." (Fieldnotes)

In another conversation, Jamie told me that it was his "week off" [from visiting] but "he's here again". He asked his dad if he could switch the visit to Monday, but his dad wanted to keep it as Wednesday because it "breaks the week up" for him. He then conceded that keeping it as Wednesday means that it breaks the week up for him too, and means he gets to see "these guys", the Wednesday Club (as introduced in Chapter 5). This fieldnote not only reveals the boredom of prison life, but demonstrates the extent of the temporal investment Jamie makes to visit his father on a regular basis; likening it to employment ('his week off') is demonstrative of this. His concession that this is actually "ok" because it gives him the opportunity to see his friends in the Wednesday Club, emphasises again the sociality of prison waiting for some families, and the informal systems of support that spring up in the context. It may also hint at the isolation experienced by families and the necessity of the space to provide support not offered or found in the community or 'at home', perhaps a result of the stigma experienced by families, which will be discussed in Chapter 7.

In our interview, Katie admitted:

> "I actually find it quite difficult to work around the clubs the children go to, with the visits. I mean, Sundays are ok, because my friend minds maybe one or two of them. But the other ones during the week, they've got that much on, it's trying to balance that out, weigh that out. Yeah." (Family member interview transcript)

Katie is trying to balance out these activities with the benefits of her children getting to see their father: "Because they [the girls] need to, he [the baby] needs to get to know his father and the girls need to know him..." Beyond the context of the prison, family life is often

considered a juggle; but imprisonment represents another ball to juggle in these families' lives. These added strains will be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 7 and 8. As mentioned, there were acts of resistance, albeit these acts of resistance tended to be directed towards the incarcerated family members rather than to the prison. Bob told me:

> "But I says [to father], you cannae expect me here every Tuesday and Thursday you know? I've got things on, honestly I've got things. I've thought, I might not make Tuesday, I might not want to come here every Tuesday because it's a stress you know." (Family member interview transcript)

Furthermore, Dee, while commenting on how other family members fit in their lives around the prison and the prisoner, said: "…I don't stick my life around Tommy [Dee's husband]. If I've got stuff I need to do, I'll go and do that". However, as described above, despite Dee's concerted effort at making life, specifically *her* life continue in the way she wished, hers was left still on hold because her life was bound up with her husband's. To keep this relationship strong, she had to subscribe to the prison's timetable and to some extent alter and re-arrange her own time(table).

These accounts reveal how family relationships are put under strain with a custodial sentence (as will be discussed more fully in Chapter 7). However, these accounts are also indicative of the sheer strength of institutional power. Families frequently lament this power, and the ways in which it is enforced; for example, in the enforcement of what families feel are "silly rules" (Jake). Yet families also accept that there is little they can do to properly challenge it; in part because it is so powerful, and also due to fear that if they did, it would have negative repercussions for their imprisoned family member. For example, Jane explained that though she wanted to complain about various aspects of her mother's and family's treatment that she "knew that this would go against her [her mother]", so "you keep your mouth shut".

On the matter of visitor complaints about the length of visits, one staff member said:

> "Yeah you'd almost expect there to be more complaints about it, but people are quite satisfied with the fact that that is the higher power at the end of the day and they will yield to what the prison service allows them to do." (Staff member H, interview transcript).

The word choice of 'satisfied' does not fit exactly what the staff member intended given her insights: this casts families as passive and as uncritical acceptants of the institution's

authority and thus suggests a form of symbolic violence; this passivity is not reflected in my data. 'Weary acceptance' would be more appropriate, taking account of how families resist its power and reclaim their agency, even if this is merely recognising that the institution has such power but that to fight it ultimately and break free from its grip (through the prisoner being released at the earliest opportunity), one accedes to its demands. However, in these accounts, it is clear that families (have to) alter and re-arrange their own lives to fit with the prison timetable if they wish to remain in regular contact with their incarcerated loved one. Moreover, all of the family members who shared their experiences with me in this research were frequent visitors. They visited at least once per week, but often visited two or three times. Where prisoners were remanded (held prior to adjudication), visitors often visited daily, as per the prisoner's legal entitlement. Other family members were visiting loved ones who were serving lengthy or even indeterminate sentences (as in Judy's case), and many had also visited this same family member during previous custodial sentences, or had visited other family members and friends in prison during their lifetime. Therefore, the cumulative reduction of the family's time (perhaps over many years), and the negative experiences associated with sacrificing or investing this time, must be borne in mind.

## Conclusion

Part 2 of this chapter has explored how the everyday experience of waiting is experienced in a very distinctive and controlling space of the prison and its environs. Waiting is complex and is inextricably connected to issues of power and agency. There are certain kinds of waiting imprisonment inflicts which family members are powerless to control (such as the waiting that occurs at home), but there are other ways that families are exercising control within controlling spaces. In offering a supportive waiting environment for families, the Centre enables families to wait in a manner of their choosing (for example, in making available activities and spaces which may make waiting less boring and disenchanting) and thus supports their agency and enables them to resist the institution's power. The importance and potential of visitors' centres in supporting families has been discussed and is stressed here. While this chapter explores the disempowering aspects of space and time in visiting a loved one in prison, this does not mean to take away from the underlying and widespread belief among families that I spoke to that to have family contact is extremely important in a variety of ways.

In this chapter overall, I have argued that the prison is not a total institution with a clear separation between inside and outside. I have suggested that viewing the prison through an additional lens- of liminality- ensures that we recognise the indistinctions of the prison boundary, and how the inside and outside cannot be neatly separated. Both lenses allow us to see how the outside enters the prison, and also prison's effects outwards. These include the wider social effects including effects on communities, as well as effects on the families directly impacted. These will both be explored in Chapters 7 and 8.

In this chapter I have focussed on how the prison alters and re-arranges family life spatially and temporally. I first explored how the prison offers (or imposes on) families' new sites in which 'do family' in the sharing of family activities such as meals; of how the home comes to the prison. I then explored how the prison alters and re arranges family time, including altering and re-arranging family routines, timetables, and schedules, and taking away family time through the imposition of multiple waits. In unmooring the prison from the spatial site of buildings and secure gates, we can see, in fact, the fluidity of the prison: prison enters and exits homes and lives, in the same way that families and lives enter and exit the prison. Prison can become part of the prisoner's life, and become part of the family's life. Further, the imprisonment can represent a temporary chapter in a family's life, or be rather more of a fixture, as will be explored more fully in Chapter 8.

This chapter has therefore raised critical points. Setting these against a wider backdrop, the institution has a need for a narrative of rehabilitation; HMP Edinburgh is part of the SPS and the SPS is committed to promoting rehabilitation. The SPS is committed to do this for a whole host of reasons, ranging from the humanitarian to the political; where exactly this commitment falls is open to question. The institution's need for this narrative means that family contact is promulgated. Indeed, among its other family oriented policies, the SPS has an 'Encouraging Family Contact' policy. In order to fulfil this policy, there are five key standards that must be met by each prison. These standards relate to: access, communication, participation, respect, and safety (Scottish Prison Service, 2016f).

Though families appreciate the opportunity to share in family practices and have even diluted quality 'family time', particularly in the children's visits, these opportunities simultaneously involve families making substantial sacrifices- not only those discussed in Chapter 5, but also temporal sacrifices. In offering new sites to perform family, the prison

alters and re-arranges family life. Yet this includes an altering and re-arrangement of family *time*; this is essentially the taking away of family time through the imposition by the institution of multiple waits on families, both during visiting and at home.

Moreover, given the context in which visits take place, family contact is heavily controlled, restricted, and ultimately shaped by the institution. Suggestions by some family members that the visit is 'fake' suggests that the contact is not always experienced as fully positive or meaningful. Nonetheless, other families are rather more positive about visiting experiences. This lends support to a central argument in this thesis that both prisoners' families and their experiences of imprisonment are highly diverse. Furthermore, data also reveal the importance and success of particular visits: children's visits. Families (and most likely the prisoners) largely *enjoy* these visits, deriving both meaning and benefit from them; they also express a desire for these visits to be lengthier and offered more frequently.

In conclusion, I have argued that prison alters the space and time of families, often quite significantly and often with far reaching and lasting effects. However, for many this is part of a broader experience of institutional intervention. I will return to this theme in Chapter 8. In the next chapter I will be exploring the pains of imprisonment for families, supporting and adding to the literature introduced in Chapter 2.

# Chapter 7: The familial pains of imprisonment in focus

## Chapter outline

As outlined in Chapter 2 of this thesis, the effects of imprisonment for families may be pernicious and far reaching, and as such may be considered the 'familial pains' of imprisonment. As observed throughout this thesis (but which will be focused on Chapter 8), these effects and pains also vary between families and across different family members. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore all of these with the close scrutiny they deserve. However, it is possible to focus in on some of these, as well as how particular groups experience these. This chapter begins by focusing on the views and experiences of children, before discussing these myriad pains. The stigma of imprisonment and the unique and quite intense stigma experienced by the families of those convicted of a sexual offence, are then given detailed consideration. Finally, some of the more 'everyday' pains of imprisonment are discussed, such as the burdens of (additional) care work. What should emerge in this chapter is a complex and nuanced picture of prison's effects and pains, with an understanding that these vary, often considerably, between families and between individual family members.

## Voices and Perspectives of Children affected by Imprisonment

While children's experiences of visiting and imprisonment are considered throughout this thesis, I will now pay particular attention to these experiences by focussing on some of the themes which emerged in relation to their experience of imprisonment.

### *Children's degrees of knowledge of prison life*

As outlined already, children affected by imprisonment have varying degrees of knowledge about the situation of their imprisoned family member, and of prison life more broadly. Some children have no knowledge of the imprisonment or are told half-truths; for example, that the parent is on an extended work trip or holiday, or are not told exactly how long the absence will last but instead are reassured that 'daddy will be home soon'. The literature

suggests that this can cause children confusion and distress (Light and Campbell, 2007). Yet parents and family members may make the decision not to reveal the full story in the mistaken belief that it will *circumvent* this, or because they find it difficult to know how to share with the child the actual situation. On other occasions, children *are* told the complete truth, but are told that their family member is innocent. The parents in my own study revealed information to their children to varying degrees, as is shown in my conversations with both parents and children. Serenity opted for total secrecy:

> "Serenity has not told her children the truth; instead she says: 'Daddy is away working'. Serenity tells me though that the 8-year-old is not stupid. The other day they got a phone call and the 8-year-old answered. The 8-year-old asked her who was in prison, and Serenity told her to shush.
>
> "Serenity tells me that she will never bring her children. She says that her children, particularly the 3-year-old are very clingy (physically) to her partner. She says: "I just couldn't pull them away when they had to say goodbye." (Family member interview transcript)" [71]

However, there is another reason for Serenity's reluctance to bring her children with her to visits. Serenity explained that she spent "a lot of time visiting jails when she was a kid". She spent her eighteenth birthday "in a jail" visiting her dad and had a "big badge" on. Consequently, it seemed that she did not want her children to have the same childhood experiences, and deciding not to bring her children to visit was a way of ensuring this.

A couple of weeks later, I spoke with Serenity again:

> "Her children now know the truth. Her 8-year-old daughter worked it out, and her 3-year-old son was 'earry-wigging' into conversation. Her children want to come to visits but Serenity will not bring them." (Fieldnotes)

Therefore, it may be the case that non, or partial, disclosure for some parents and their desire to protect, is partly informed by their own prior experience of what 'knowing' involves. For Serenity, 'knowing' was not limited solely to knowledge of her father's imprisonment; knowing meant that she visited her father frequently; knowing also meant that this milestone birthday was spent in a prison visit room and that her memories of this

[71] Serenity was one of two adult interviewees who did not wish to be audio recorded, hence the use of the third person. As discussed in Chapter 4, with consent, I took detailed notes. I tried to make these notes as verbatim as possible.

birthday are now inextricably tied to, perhaps even dominated by, this memory. The literature seems to assumes non-disclosure is rooted in fears of what this knowledge *could* result in. It does not consider the situations where these fears have actually been *lived* by parents; parents who have experienced these as *children* experienced familial imprisonment and who do not wish to see these perpetuated with their own children.

Katie was more frank with her children:

> "The girls are asking me lots of questions now about the imprisonment. I'm telling them the truth where I can but I'm also trying to shield them from things too…and sometimes they don't understand that when they go to the door [of the visit room], it's like: 'Why can't he come back with us?'" (Family member interview transcript)

Though prison life is in most respects highly regimented, other aspects are quite changeable, creating uncertainty for both prisoners and their family members. For example, it is common for prisoners to be transferred to another prison (typically to ease over-crowding); however, often prisoners and their families are not informed when exactly this will be. Indeed, when I interviewed Jane, she did not know if her mother's transfer to HMPYOI Cornton Vale was complete, if her mother was still in HMP Edinburgh or was en route to Cornton Vale. Yet, the literature does not consider how this adds further difficulty to the communication of information to children; Katie raised this:

> "And then my other daughter asking, my oldest one (Amy) asking: "Will he be here for Christmas?" And I don't really know what's happening, because he's on appeal just now so. I don't really know what to say. I says: "I don't know". I mean, what else can I say?" (Family member interview transcript)

Therefore, even if they wish to share information with their children, parents are not always in the position to do so; they simply do not have the information to share.

The following is an excerpt from the drawing activity with the Finnegan sisters Pryha (aged 12) and Annabella (aged 14). Annabella did not actually draw but participated in the conversation. Pandora, Annabella and Pryha's younger sister, was also involved in this activity and conversation, but did not share her views and experiences of this aspect:

> "Pryha: Obviously I want longer for the normal visits, but they're not gonna do that. I think the bonding visits should be longer too." (Family member interview transcript)

In this excerpt, Pryha expresses that though she wishes that all visits were longer, there is institutional resistance or blockage to this ("they're not gonna do that") and she seems resigned to the situation. The conversation continues:

> "Annabella: I think they should search the kids more, to look for drugs.
>
> "Pryha: No!
>
> "Annabella: They should check the shoes too.
>
> "Pryha: They don't seem to do that much." (Family member interview transcript)

The sisters' discussion of the search process showed an appreciation for the rationale underpinning it. Annabella's suggestion that shoes be checked indicates very privileged knowledge that drugs are passed into prison via people's shoes. Annabella's suggestion that children be searched more frequently is not popular with Pryha, which may suggest different attitudes towards or experiences of the search procedure. It may also be reflective of the ways in which children respond to and absorb the norms they are exposed to as they grow up, and how this in turn relates to their own budding sense of citizenship, and their self-identification as 'good citizens'.

These examples also reveal how the prison becomes a site of growing up and learning about the world for children who interact with it frequently. One might contrast this with other 'ordinary' informal ways of gathering information about the world as part of a child's learning process. In reflecting on the above conversation with Annabella and Pryha, I thought about how knowledge is passed down in my own family. For example, my nephew knows a great deal about animals and animal care because his mother is a vet and she talks to him a lot about animals. Moreover, because his mother is a vet, he often receives animal themed presents for birthdays and Christmases, which also add to his knowledge. Prisoners' children have knowledge about the secret world of prisons. What complicates the issue for these children is that there is a wider cultural message that 'bad people' go to prison, and by virtue of courtesy stigma (which I will explore shortly in this chapter), being associated with 'bad people' also makes *you* 'bad'. We know that this may be very difficult for children to initially understand and then reconcile, particularly as they enter adolescence when children become more aware of the stigma of imprisonment (McCulloch and Morrison, 2001), but may be largely unsupported to navigate this (Brown, 2002). Lastly, on a methodological point, this excerpt draws attention to the difficulties and distinctive dynamics of capturing the perspectives of children; their views and experiences

were often more difficult to decipher, and depended on a wider set of conversations and interpersonal dynamics not captured in the transcripts in order to make sense of them.

To return to discussion on varying levels of knowledge held by children affected by imprisonment, Pryha and Annabella clearly know what a prison is and how it functions and throughout our conversations, they refer to 'prisoners'. Pryha and Annabella's respective age has provided them with the requisite cognitive capacity to understand the idiosyncrasies of the prison world, and their mother's openness about their father's imprisonment helps this understanding. Moreover, a later reference to HMP Barlinnie indicates that the family has had experience of other prisons, which is likely to have added to this prison knowledge.

In contrast, Keira (aged eight) demonstrates some knowledge and awareness of prison life, but it is incomplete and confused.

> "Keira: I'm drawing the lockers [in the visitors' centre where personal belongings can be stored].
>
> "Me: Ok, why are you drawing them?
>
> "Keira: Because they are important.
>
> "Me: Oh yeah, why are they important?
>
> "Keira: So people's stuff don't get stolen.
>
> [I nod]
>
> [Keira asks me if she can draw outside, I say 'of course'.]
>
> "Keira: The wall's important eh? So the children don't run away?
>
> [I nod]" (Family member interview transcript)

Though Keira was right to identify that the lockers ensure visitors' belongings are kept safe, these lockers are of course only necessary due to the prison's restrictions on permitted items. The prison wall's primary function is to prevent prisoners, not visitors, from escaping. Linking with Chapter 6, Keira also showed awareness of the prison routine and its rigidity when she commented: "Uncle Trevor phones the house at a certain time". In this conversation, I felt that Keira was attempting to 'double check' that her suspicions about the walls' function were correct, and also perhaps to see if I would elaborate on this;

for ethical reasons, I opted for non-committal nods. Although Keira does not show any signs of distress, research suggests that distress can ensue when children begin to 'work out' the truth (Light and Campbell, 2007). Nonetheless, visits to prison can offer some reassurance about the realities of prison life and thus can help to minimise this distress (Sims, 2000; Sharratt, 2014). On the other hand, as shown in Serenity's case, not all children are given the opportunity to visit and therefore cannot be reassured in this way.

***Dealing with the prisoner's absence***

Despite not knowing all of the details, Katie's daughters were aware that their father was in prison, as she explained to me in conversation:

> "The other day, Amy said to me: 'Mummy, I'm the only one in the class who's got a dad in jail'. And I was a bit like *makes worried face*. She seemed ok about it, but still."
>
> "I speak to Katie and the girls for a while. She's just popping in after the school run to hand in property, before heading out again. She ends up staying for about half an hour. She seems quite harassed- two of the girls got into fights at school today. One of the teachers made a comment that Amy's behaviour was because of the imprisonment. Katie is quite dismissive of this and says it's not just about the imprisonment- sometimes people just snap and there are other things going on. Her partner has a hearing in February about his release- Katie is not sure of outcome." (Fieldnotes)

As discussed, the literature often associates the imprisonment of a family member with children's behavioural difficulties, typically manifesting in school. The causes of Katie's daughters' behavioural issues cannot be known. However, Katie raises the pertinent issue, which I will take up fully in Chapter 8 that the parental imprisonment often is the default explanation by professionals for any problem that a child or family member may experience. I will argue that familial imprisonment provides a neat explanation but that the pains of this experience are never neat and never involve prison in isolation. Although, it *is* likely that their fathers' imprisonment is having influence on their behaviour, even if the prison often is inserted as the default and complete explanation for a child's difficulties. Moreover, since children are developing moral and social beings, being affected by imprisonment during this development opens up possibilities for all kinds of reactions and trouble.

Excluding Dee, Zena was the only family member I interviewed whose family member had been released. Her account was very reflective, and Zena reflected on how her youth intensified the experience of her brother's incarceration:

> "So initially it was a massive shock and initially it was horrifying! *laughs* as it probably is for everyone. Like especially I was only 12 at the time, so for me it was all so overwhelming.
>
> "Oh it would be horrible. You know, I think a lot of the time my family got annoyed at me because I think I was affected by it a lot more than maybe others that were older than me or they'd been through it before. But I'd just get really upset by it all. Like I'd be upset at how people would talk to me, or get upset that I had to get searched…that would just really upset me, stuff like that." (Family member interview transcript)

Relating to discussion found in Chapter 5 (on how children eagerly await visits), there is a sense that children long for greater contact with their family member. They may also long for release where their family member can be more actively involved in family life and celebrations. Amy was not the only child who was looking forward to release, asking her mother Katie "will he be home for Christmas?". Serenity calculated that Paul would be released before her daughter's birthday, which was a relief as this would stop her daughter from continuing to 'nip her heid' about it. Moreover, Jamie told me that his 10-year-old daughter had recently been on the phone to her granddad and had asked if it was true that he was getting out. His daughter wanted to make a banner saying 'Welcome home Grandad' on it. Finally, there are also indications that the children miss their parent given the excitement they feel when visiting, as discussed in Chapter 5. These are touching reminders of how this familial absence is experienced by affected children. It may also show how family life is always incomplete when a family member is taken away, even when many efforts are made to lessen this.

## The stigma of imprisonment for families

### *The heightened pains for families of sex offenders*

As noted in Chapter 3 where I set out the wider context of my study, my research was situated in a prison context rarely explored in the literature: it was one which featured both

men and women in prison, where there were both pre-trial and post-sentenced prisoners, and with a population reflecting a diverse and wide ranging set of offences underlying imprisonment. One group of family members that emerged to have a particular and to some extent shared dimension of experience were the family members of those in prison for sexual offences. It was primarily the families of offenders convicted of serious crimes (almost exclusively sexual offences), [72] who discussed in vivid detail their experience of stigma. Individuals who have committed sexual offences ('sex offenders')[73] are treated and perceived by society as "deviants in an already stigmatised population [i.e. criminals]" (Ricciardelli and Mackenzie, 2013: 357) or are the "outcasts among outcasts" (Akerstrom, 1986: 1). Already stigmatised for being convicted of *a* crime, sex offenders experience an added stigma which relates to the nature of the crime(s) they have been convicted of. Sexual offences inflict quite unique violations and harms, spreading stigma to both perpetrator and victim. [74] Moreover, in contemporary Western society, there tends to be a conflation between sexuality and identity where the commission of a deviant sexual act (that is made public and formally castigated through a sexual offence arrest and conviction) leads to the assignation of a deviant identity- the 'sex offender'- which is all-encompassing and profoundly negative (Ievins and Crewe, 2015). As discussed, by virtue of courtesy stigma, this 'double stigma' (surrounding the commission of a crime and a sex offence specifically) attaches to the perpetrators' families also. Everyday understandings of the causes of crime, both general and specific, contribute to experiences of stigma (May, 2000). These common-sense understandings also relate to the situational characteristics surrounding the commission of a crime: for example, there is an erroneous yet widely held assumption that the families of sex offenders 'must have known' about either the sex offender's disposition to offend in this way, or about the occurrence of the offence(s) themselves. Families of such offences can experience 'contamination' due to their: proximity to the offender; omissions; commissions, and their continued involvement or support of the offender (Condry, 2011 [2007]). The notion that the family can justifiably be

[72] In my categorisation of 'serious crimes', I include all prisoners sentenced for four years or more ('long term' offenders) and offenders convicted of sexual offences; depending on the severity of the sexual offence, these offenders may occupy both categories. Interviewees Bob, Serenity and Jamie and other unnamed family members were all visiting family members convicted of sexual offences, including those committed against children.

[73] As other academics (Ievins and Crewe, 2015) acknowledge, reference to this particular group of offenders as 'sex offenders' is for reasons of word utility, and is not intended to essentialise.

[74] Sexual offences are also unique in that the victims of sexual offences often experience stigma and shame as a result of their victimisation and in some instances are blamed in full or in part for their victimisation; the attribution of blame to the victim is seemingly unique to sexual offences. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore these issues with the attention they deserve, but the complexity of sexual offences, including who commits them and who is affected by them, is emphasised.

blamed for any deviant or criminal acts has had a "long history" (Condry, 2011 [2007], 69). A contemporary discourse about 'broken' families' provides one vehicle for a persistent contamination effect for families with a loved one involved in the criminal justice system. Of course, this creates a bizarre situation where the families of offenders are viewed as sharing some responsibility for the offending, yet at the same time, are seen as important contributors to the rehabilitation of these offenders, a point Peelo et al. also make (1991). Condry has argued that families of serious offenders (including but not solely sexual offenders) also experience a secondary stigma: it is a stigma of not only contagion, but also of a stigma of a new identity; not only can a family member feel or be treated as if they are also criminal (or at fault for the criminality of a loved one) they also bear for example, the stigma of being the wife (child or sibling) of a sex offender (Condry, 2011 [2007]: 62); a stigma experienced due to the proximity of familial relationship. There were hints of this in my own study, but generally the stigma the families of sex offenders experienced seemed to fit best within the courtesy stigma category, though with a heightened intensity.

Though prisoners and offenders' families have generally been overlooked in research and policy until quite recently, the families of sex offenders have been especially neglected (Farkas and Miller, 2007). With some exceptions[75], the literature that does document their experiences is US centric and focuses on the effects of Sex Offender Registration Notification (SORN) rather than imprisonment per se, although custodial sentences often accompany SORN. Given similarities with registration requirements (with some caveats)[76] this literature is broadly applicable to the Scottish context. This literature highlights the numerous negative impacts on the families of sex offenders which include employment issues, financial problems, and housing issues (this often involves forced re-location) (Levenson and Tewksbury, 2009). These effects also impact those in prison for other offences, but may be experienced in more intensive and comprehensive ways by those convicted of sexual offences. It also highlights the pronounced stigma experienced by

[75] For example, Condry, (2011 [2007]) and Howarth and Rock (2000). However, the focus of this work is broader and the families involved in these studies are the families of any serious offence, which is not limited to serious sexual offences.

[76] In Scotland anyone convicted of a sexual offence under Schedule 3 of the Sexual Offences Act 2003 is automatically placed on the sex offenders register. Convicted sex offenders are required to give Police Scotland their details (for example, their name, address and bank details) within three days of conviction or release from imprisonment; these are known as 'notification requirements' (Police Scotland, 2016). In the USA, there are similar notification requirements. The key difference between the USA and the UK is the existence of the Wetterling Act (commonly known as 'Megan's Law'). This 1996 Act allowed the public to be notified of sex offender registry information; all US states now have publicly available web pages publishing information on sex offenders (Levenson and Tewksbury, 2009: 55).

these families: they tend, compared even with other families with a member in prison to experience especially high levels of stress, the loss of friendships and relationships, and feelings of isolation or loneliness (Tewksbury and Levenson, 2009). There are certainly echoes of this in my own study with Scottish families.

For example, one of my interviewees, Bob, visited his father who had been convicted of a sexual offence against a child. I interviewed Bob on a few occasions, and supplemented these with numerous more informal conversations:

> "Bob tells me that he has told some really good friends [about his dad's offence and the subsequent imprisonment]. However, some have been quite judgemental and opinionated about his dad and the offence, and have articulated what they would have done if they were in Bob's situation. Some have also told other people about the offence. He says he is ok with talking about it to some (trusted) people, but he regards it as confidential and doesn't want it spreading." (Fieldnotes).

During fieldwork, Bob and his wife were offered a larger house by the housing association in a nearby town, which suited them perfectly since they wished to have children in the near future. He and his wife were both very excited about the prospect of moving house, but fears surrounding his father's impending release marred this excitement. Though Bob did not have many negative interactions with his former neighbours, he did not want to risk these occurring in his new community. He explained:

> "He [his father] could come to my house and someone could say…they could notice that you know. And that could bring tension to my house, and I'm no, I'm no daeing that. I'm not taking that chance... I mean, it could come to bite me in the back side… because I'm just not willing to… I just don't want any trouble. I don't want anything to…" (Family member interview transcript)

Bob resolved that he would manage this by asking his father not to visit him in his new home, offering instead to visit him in his father's home.[77] Other family members were also careful about who they revealed the familial imprisonment to. Wednesday Club members Serenity and Jamie discovered that they had a mutual friend. Jamie told me that Serenity asked him not to "let on" to this mutual friend where they met: the Centre. Though

[77] Given child protection considerations in this case, Bob's father would have licence conditions which would prevent him from visiting Bob if there were any children living in Bob's home. It was not clear if Bob was aware of this, though he did express on other occasions that he would ensure his father was kept away from his future children irrespective of any legal protections. However, Bob seemed to have a broader concern about receiving unwanted attention from community members than about a risk to his children.

Serenity's life has been punctuated by multiple familial imprisonments (with different family members sentenced to imprisonment), she remained cautious about who she revealed this current imprisonment (her partner's) to. This may have been due to a particularly distressing experience: Serenity's brother was convicted of rape; she told me that she once had to remove a red paint inscription of 'rapist' from her mother's door step.

As mentioned, Judy's partner was given an OLR.[78] Her narrative draws attention to the fact that even where families have had prior contact with the prison through previous familial imprisonment, and even where their wider social networks have associations with imprisonment, they remain cautious about whom they 'tell':

> "But more often than not, I always arrive a little bit earlier than is suggested, so that I can catch up with other visitors, that are going through, whether we are all going through the same thing or not. It's just, knowing that you have that extra support. Because you can't just blab it to any person out on the street. They then look at you as though you are something beneath their shoe, no matter what your partner's in for…even if it's not your partner. For instance, some of my friends, they come into visit. Like brothers or nephews…they can't tell anybody that they've got a member of the family that's in the jail. There's still quite a bad stigma to it…" (Family member interview transcript)

Judy's comment suggests that all family members experience stigma, irrespective of the offence; I will explore this further later in this chapter. However, I wish to continue to focus here on the special intensity of the stigma for those where the prisoner has been convicted of a sexual offence.

### *Qualified Solidarity*

As discussed in Chapter 5 informal support networks naturally spring up in the Centre. However, these are particularly noticeable during the Ingliston visits. The families of sex offenders seemed to gravitate to one another, seeming to interact only or primarily with other families visiting sex offenders. I did not observe such obvious grouping together of

[78] Judy did not disclose Patrick's offence to me. However, given the OLR conditions, Patrick would have been convicted of a very serious sexual or violent offence. Since Judy seemed to interact near exclusively with the families of sex offenders, my assumption is that Patrick was also convicted of a serious sexual offence.

families with other visitors in the Ingliston visit, or indeed visitors in any other visit session. Centre staff also observed this phenomenon. As staff member H commented:

> "Because they're [the families of sex offenders] gonna be in a community where the offence has generally 'got out', where there's a lot more stigma attached to the offence, there's going to be a lot of community pressure on them. And that's the same regardless of any issue of class or anything. And so, they're coming in and they're feeling hounded and they feel like they've got no support system. And particularly given the specifics of any offence that can be really problematic. If it's a family offence, then there are obviously huge issues going on there, so they may have literally no support on the outside… and it's quite interesting to see particularly how the sex offender visiting population have created their own informal support networks." (Staff member H transcript)

Another staff member made a similar observation:

> "Sex offenders' families are in a group. Sex offenders' families are *all* in a group, and they just sit together in one group, and they do not interact with anybody else." (Staff member G transcript).

Staff member G implies that sex offenders' families are unwilling to interact with other families, and I sensed from this a slight tone of judgement about this. However, this may be a defensive response to feeling that other families are unwilling to interact with *them*. Zena explained:

> "I mean like the people that commit sexual offences wear different outfits [in the visit room compared to the other prisoners] and they sit in a place that are separate from us…I mean there's definitely like a stigmatisation, and a rhetoric of 'we're all in the same boat, but they've [the family member's imprisoned loved one] done something worse', a 'if we had that, we wouldn't visit them', but you never know until you're put in that situation…" (Family member interview transcript)

She continued:

> "My dad would talk to my brother, and they'd be like 'Oh did you see somebody's here to visit them?' 'I can't believe they're actually visiting them after what he did' or whatever. Like even though my brother's done something wrong…" (Family member interview transcript)

Several families I interviewed employed derogatory language when discussing sex offenders, and expressed concern about occasions when they shared the visit room with them (on the Sunday afternoon children's visits). Staff member H shared her experiences of observing and managing this:

> "And I've been in visits where somebody's went 'Oh you know, the dark red jumpers are beasts, keep your bairns away from them', which is…difficult to deal with, particularly given that they're in with Ingliston 4 [level four] which is a long termer population, so you have families who are quite vigilante almost about not wanting to be in with sex offenders. And occasionally that's flared up a little bit." (Staff member H, interview transcript).

Though infrequent, families did express these concerns to me, as is evidenced in the following fieldnote:

> "Katie's friend tells me that she came in for a Sunday visit recently but did not realise or wasn't told that the visit included some prisoners from 'protections' who she describes as the 'beasty feasties'. She was horrified. She left the visit after just ten minutes because she was so uncomfortable with her children being there. She tells me that this is 'not right'." (Fieldnotes).

Although these expressed concerns related specifically to sex offenders and not to their families, this sheds light on courtesy stigma and how the worries of families of those in prison for sexual offences are realised to some extent in the views of other visitors. In addition, Zena's account reveals how some families subtly distanced themselves from the families of sex offenders. There seems to be a mirroring between prison and wider social hierarchies: sex offenders are firmly at the bottom of the prison hierarchy and are segregated from all other prisoners due to concerns for their safety (Ievins and Crewe, 2015). Families also are segregated, with sex offenders' families visibly separated from the others. In the visit room, sex offenders and their families occupy a particular row, and are separated from all of the other prisoners and visitors. Therefore, the institution imposes a degree of segregation on families by virtue of the visiting timetable. However, the interactions which follow- the subtle (or less so) distancing which occurs- serve to reproduce and reinforce that segregation. In the same way that the prison represents a moral as well as physical exclusion of the prisoner (Sykes, 2007 [1958]), a moral community also exists *within* prisoner 'groups'- demarcated initially and most powerfully by the nature of the offence leading to imprisonment in which sex offenders start off life in

prison; in an almost already an exiled community within an exiled community (Ievins and Crewe, 2015). My research with families suggests this extends beyond the prison (and prisoner) and into the Centre: families create, and subtly enforce, their own moral community in this space.

Therefore, the notion I introduced in Chapter 5 of families all 'sticking together' is contingent on the nature of the offences involved. This qualified solidarity I observed in the research was clear, though not commented on by the families themselves. I did not observe nor was I told about any explicit confrontations or altercations between families over their loved ones' offences which leads me to conclude that this segregation of families functioned as defence mechanism triggered self-selectively by the families themselves to protect against experiencing further stigma. Even where offences result in comparable sentence lengths, thus legally treated as identical (or comparable) in terms of seriousness, this does not necessarily translate to how other families view, and then respond to, these offences. Separations between and solidarity among families then is shaped by social and not legal classifications of offence.

### *Stigma associated with non-sexual crimes*

Though particularly acute for the families of sex offenders, other families also experience stigma. Dee feared news of Tommy's imprisonment would spread even further than it already had. I interviewed Dee while her husband Tommy was imprisoned; her son Robin tragically died while in custody. [79]

Dee was highly critical of her husband's actions. For example, when she compared Tommy's offence to the offence of drunk driving, she said, "what my husband done was a *criminal* act". Tommy was convicted of drug trafficking.[80] Given his (and their) relative affluence and stable upbringing and lifestyle, Dee thought that her husband had "no excuse" for becoming involved in crime. However, Dee did not view Tommy and Robin's offences as being especially serious: they were not, as she identified, "terrible crimes".

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[79] Robin had mental health issues prior to being incarcerated, which were exacerbated by his imprisonment. Robin had never tried drugs before his imprisonment but became a heroin user while sharing a cell with a heroin user. Dee thought that Robin's mental health issues and his drug use (and later addiction) compounded, leading to his suicide. Dee explained that she was still grieving the loss of Robin when her Tommy was convicted.

[80] However, Dee said that she found her husband's offence particularly difficult to deal with given Robin's addiction to heroin. This led to some arguments with Tommy and to general relationship strain, though there was no question that they would separate.

Dee's narrative raises the question of how family members view their loved one's offence. Most family members did not discuss with me what their imprisoned family member had been convicted of. When they did, they were often very critical of their family member's actions. For example, Bob was horrified at his father's offence (albeit this was a sexual offence) and because of its severity and the wider family disruption it caused, Bob felt very conflicted: "I love him! But I'm angry. I just want to howk him, but I cannae…" Bob's father's 'techniques of neutralisation' (Sykes and Matza, 1957) exacerbated Bob's anger:

> "But you know, what annoyed me, is the fact that he says, he says, 'I'm mild'. I says, 'What do you mean, you're mild?' He says 'there's people here who've done heavy stuff…I ken this guy… [gives potentially identifiable details of another prisoner's offence who had perpetrated sexual offences against a number of children]'." (Family member interview transcript)

Jane also expressed: "I know my mum's done something wrong, she's in here for whatever reason". Yet an interview with a member of staff yielded different data:

> "You dinnae often here families talk about any crime at all. Any. I can count with two hands how many people say 'I'm furious with him about what he's done'. I've been here for [lengthy period of time] Rebecca…We hear people say to their kids 'It's no your dad's fault that he's in the jail…it's the polis' fault'." (Staff member A interview transcript).

Though I did not interview any family member who expressed such views, occasionally in my ethnographic encounters, there were hints that the family members viewed the imprisonment to be more a result of policing or criminal justice system injustices, rather than due to an offender's guilt. For example, an elderly couple told me that their son was innocent and his imprisonment was a consequence of three women "ganging up" on him. The woman elaborated: "He never had a chance against them". However, this couple visited in the Ingliston session and given these details, it could be assumed that their son was imprisoned for sexual offences against women; their denial may be partly explained by the difficulty of accepting their son's guilt in such offences. What is important to note is the pervasiveness of stigma: neither family members' views on their incarcerated loved one's offence(s) nor families' rejection of convictions, can shield family members from stigma attaching to them. Family members' denial or minimisation is likely to be partly due to the family member loving the prisoner, and still seeing his or her redeeming features, and the complex and conflicting emotions that are likely to be present. How

families navigate this, at least in relation to offenders convicted of serious offences, has been richly explored by Condry in her study (2011 [2007]).

### *The role of the media*

Finally, my researched revealed the importance attributed to mass media and their role in exacerbating this stigma. Dee explained:

> "…But that's another thing- the media writing about you. They wrote our street address, they wrote my husband's name, they described our car, you know. Ok, you've not given the number, but bloody hell; you've done everything but…"
>
> "But one of my friends did see it in the local paper…my friend's daughter in [place name] got it on Twitter. So, it's not only the likelihood of the paper, it's all the social media that can find this out. And I'm sorry, but once they're [the offenders] in there, they're in there. *They* should, *they're* the ones that should be dealing with it, not the people that are on the outside." (Family member interview transcript)

These were evident pains in themselves, but these also put strain on her marriage:

> "Well at one-point Tommy and I didnae speak for a week, and that was when the newspaper report went back again. It wasn't his fault, but all it did was brought all the 'you've put me in this situation' you know, how dare you...we've been together 20 years so you know, it's a long time. But the fact that he did what he did, the fact that he's put *my* relationship with my granddaughter in total jeopardy…" (Family member interview transcript)

In addition, each (very public) revelation of the offence was accompanied with the not groundless fear that this would have repercussions for her contact with her granddaughter Angel:[81]

> "When I first went in, I was just shaking like a leaf. I felt physically ill, and a lot of that is to do with the fact that you don't want people to know that you're there- do you know what I mean? I actually was like, 'Oh my god, I hope nobody recognises me in this place!'…The last thing I need is this getting out, and losing access to my grand-daughter for this, and having to go to court……But because of the

[81] Child protection issues were raised in Dee's case because of Tommy's drug related offence.

> circumstances with my granddaughter, that's why I didnae want anybody seeing me there…" (Family member interview transcript)

While Dee did confide in some people and received support from these confidants, generally she "told very few people" in her social circle. Dee explained: "And I don't lie, so for me, it's really quite hard". As a cover, Dee told most her acquaintances that Tommy was working away with his cousin. When visiting her husband in HMP Castle Huntly[82] with Angel, she said: "We told her it was her grandad's work. We didn't go in, we just pressed the buzzer and we said 'He's just busy, he's just finishing off'". As Dee noted, it "only would take her [Angel] saying something and her mother putting two and two together" and she would "lose" Angel. For Dee, the stakes were high. Continued contact with her granddaughter relied on five-year-old Angel not revealing that she had visited her grandfather, or Angel's mother not finding out; both far from being guaranteed. Unsurprisingly, given the fragility of this situation and the need to both create and remember these ruses Dee admitted that she was "permanently under stress". These ruses show how the prison may create burdens of lying and deception which constitute a unique pain for families.

Zena, a young woman who was a teenager when her brother was imprisoned, also discussed how extensive media coverage affected her immediate and wider family:

> "I mean the media was one of the worst things in *our* case. Like when it happened, everybody knew about it. It was in every newspaper; it was on the telly. Which looking back, there's some funny parts you could say, like just ridiculous scenarios-like of my family being filmed when they didn't know about it, just on the street. Which is obviously hideous, it shouldn't be allowed to happen.
>
> "…It didn't just name my brother, it named my mum and dad and other members of my family who may have been in prison as well, like 'Oh yeah, he's related to this person'. It actually named our street, it was like 'Oh oh oh'" (Family member interview transcript)

Zena endured this humiliating media coverage and was also bullied by her class mates. Zena reveals the courtesy stigma attached to her describing in an interview that there was "so much stigma" on her. Zena said that as a result of her familial connection to a 'serious offender' and its widespread media coverage, her friends "just couldn't handle being

[82] HMP Castle Huntly is the open prison that prisoners may progress to before release.

around her". Zena was left largely isolated, except for a couple of good friends who she remains close with. Although the stigma eventually dissipated she continued to fear that it would reappear for a number of years:

> "And again I had to go through the whole 'coming out' and telling people… But to actually say that you personally have a family member who's done something wrong like this, it's just like, the shame is just…oh yeah. It took me like two years. It took me until my brother actually came home to actually tell some of my uni friends 'Yeah, this is the case'." (Family member interview transcript)

As with Dee, media coverage of the offence ebbed and flowed. Zena explained:

> "Aye so it would be like…years after or whatever, and the guy who it happened to, would release another story again about his life, and it would be brought up again in the papers." (Family member interview transcript)

In both Dee and Zena's cases, media coverage was especially intense at the time of arrest, conviction, and sentencing, and quelled when the family member went to prison. However, developments in either the victim's life or justice developments (such as appeal outcomes) created opportunities for 'new stories' to be written again that once again thrust both prisoner and his or her family into the media spotlight. Both of their narratives show how uncertainty and fear of a story re-surfacing are sources of anxiety and distress. Therefore, media coverage produces a temporality of stigma, allowing it to erupt intermittently and create pains of anticipation and dread. This links with discussion found in Chapter 6 on the space and time of prison. However, it also links with discussion that will be found in Chapter 8, where the pain, in this instance- stigma, is not constant or always intense; furthermore, it is not always a prominent or consuming feature in families' lives. Instead, it lurks in the background and sometimes resurfaces, at which time it is experienced as distressing.

Yet Zena commented that though the extensive and unwanted media and community attention was "hideous", it was also, somewhat oddly, beneficial:

> "Actually, after a while, having everyone know was actually a lot easier, because there was never this awkward moment of people being like 'Oh do you have a brother?' And I'd have to be like 'yeah', and like heart racing, 'Oh my god, they're gonna ask me' blah blah blah'." (Family member interview transcript)

As discussed in Chapter 2 which reviewed the literature in this field, most if not all, prisoners' families experience stigma, and this finding held true in my own research. I have discussed the additional stigma some families experience due to the nature of the offence. Mass media appear to have a role in reinforcing and exacerbating this stigma. The role of the media and media coverage and effects on families is noticeably absent from the academic literature.[83] It is, however, is a theme increasingly raised by voluntary sector organisations who work with families.[84] A further theme that arises in this research, one which remains rather otherwise hidden, are the interactions between families, and the role of this also in shaping and intensifying stigma. Other families, either deliberately or inadvertently, can have a shaping influence on other families' experience of stigma, and are capable of both minimising and heightening it. Moreover, to cope with stigma, families employ a number of 'stigma management' (Condry, 2011 [2007], 81) techniques which include limited disclosure and keeping the offence a secret, avoiding certain situations and avoiding intimate conversations with others where revelation would be expected, and even denying their family member's culpability. These techniques have varying degrees of success, but none of these is apparently capable of fully protecting a family member from experiencing stigma. Finally, while stigma constitutes a hardship in itself in the sense of shame a person feels, it can also be responsible for causing many more hardships, both self and externally imposed. These include isolation, lying, or withholding information from friends and loved ones (in the case of Dee), castigation by others and material deprivations in terms of housing (as in the case of Bob) and job impacts.

## Everyday pains: "families suffer" (Jamie)

I will now provide an overview of some of the more general everyday pains of imprisonment for families before moving on to how my research adds detail to these.

### *Care work*

[83] Condry briefly mentions media coverage in her book (Condry, 2011 [2007], 81), and comments that it worsens existing pains. However, given this only brief mention, it is not a central theme in her study, though this may be simply due to a limited word count.

[84] In Scotland, this was raised at Families Outside's national conference in December 2015, and is a theme often raised and discussed in the Cross Party Group (for families affected by imprisonment) parliamentary meetings which I attended (2014-2015).

Given women's traditional dominance in the domestic sphere (Scott, 2009: 77) and given the disproportionate number of men incarcerated, it is often female family members who are expected to take on this care work when family members (of both sexes) are imprisoned and who do indeed take this on (Scheyett, 2012).

During my fieldwork, I got the sense that many of the younger women visiting male partners were experiencing this gendered division of labour, even if they did not (at least appear to) view it as particularly burdensome. These women visited very frequently (every day if their partner was remanded), and were faithful suppliers of money and clothing to their partner. Centre staff raised this in interviews, but viewed this gendered expectation to be deepened by these women's cultural backgrounds; there was limited room for these women *not* to 'stand by their man':

> "The wee lassies are just trying to do their best to please their man; it's the world they live in. Whatever your man says, that's what goes; you keep your man happy, and dinnae let another woman go against what the man says because then you'll be a shan bitch! *laughs*. You hear them say that to each other! 'She says that's shan because I'm no gie-ing him any money'." (Staff member A, interview transcript)

In my interview with staff member H, we discussed how families in the visit room often put a "brave face" on in order not to alarm prisoners. This staff member situated this behaviour in the broader social context in which these women live:

> "Yes, it is the caring element…the concept that for a lot of our visitors, especially the female visitors, the communities that they come from, this is essentially seen as another element of caring…you look after your kids, you look after the elderly and you look after your man, no matter what. And so, if you don't come and visit your partner in prison, then you're not caring for him. And that's very much one of the burdens placed on you as a woman." (Staff member H, interview transcript).

In these cases, it was difficult to determine if they willingly took on these burdens, or were pressured into doing so by these gendered expectations. Irrespective of the specific cultural backgrounds of these women[85], there are wider social expectations imposed on prisoners' families, regardless of their gender composition. As discussed in the introduction of this thesis, prisoners' families have become part of the "penal machinery" and have been "co-

[85] The assumption that these women are from communities in which strict gender roles are enforced and women are expected to be loyal and supportive of their male partner under most circumstances, is not an unproblematic one. However, there is certainly room for future work to examine this.

opted as tools" to help prevent re-offending (Scott and Codd, 2010: 152). This also relates to discussion in Chapter 5: families admitted that they sometimes felt obliged to visit their family member, for a number of reasons.

Indeed, various family members, including men, complained about the care work prison imposed on them. For example, Jake (whose son was imprisoned for a short sentence) complained to me: "We also have to deal with all of his stuff…income tax, and you know… *sighs*. Exactly why they can't have access to dealing with that kind of stuff inside, I don't get it". On another occasion, Jake said: "We're coming here; handing in money etc.…it's just crap!" Moreover, I vividly remember one visit when Bob tried to hand in property for his father, but inadvertently outwith official hours. He was furious and declared he was "fucked off with this place"; he had carried two heavy bags full of property on the bus, and would have do a repeat trip tomorrow. Many, if not all, family members take on this everyday care work in order to support prisoners. The state's co-opting of families adds to the burdens of carrying out care work: the arbitrariness of this one seemingly trivial example of Bob lugging around heavy bags of personal property conveys just how burdensome (literally) this expectation can be, and often is. Yet this burden is imposed and taken on by families, almost unquestioningly by both the state and its institutions, and by families. In light of the over-representation of men in Scotland's prisons[86] and the fact that it is predominantly women who visit, this care work burden is disproportionately borne by women, but the wider burden imposed on and taken on by 'the family' must also be recognised.

### *Painful separation and relationship strain*

Imprisonment creates separation, which unsurprisingly is often experienced painfully by families. Relating to discussion in Chapter 5, this separation may be amplified when visiting. For example, Serenity commented:

> "I don't like coming here". I probe why. "It's not really here; it's just that it reminds me that Paul is not at home." (Family member interview transcript)

Reflecting on visit room goodbyes, Judy said:

[86] Approximately 95% of Scotland's prisoners are male (Scottish Prison Service, 2016g).

> "And then he gets taken away, and I have to stand and wait, and then I mind 'Oh yeah, I've to go back out. I have to go back out into the big bad world again…without him'. For a couple of seconds, I do feel like all I want to do is cry, but I just don't. I refuse. I'm one of them that refuses to cry in public. If I'm gonna cry, I'll wait 'til I'm at home *laughs*." (Family member interview transcript)

Yet separation can lead to other problems. Katie explained that if your partner is in prison, you "can't have much of relationship" or a "proper one" like a "man and woman would have outside of prison". Katie experienced a great deal tension in her relationship because of the imprisonment; 'the imprisonment' in Katie's case involved her partner serving multiple short term sentences during their relationship. These tensions manifested in one visit session in an accusation of infidelity:

> "I had a visit a couple of weeks ago, and he was accusing me of cheating on him. I was absolutely fuming, and shouted at him, saying 'How dare he say that!' I just said 'Right, Elsa [daughter], we're leaving and we just left'. Then I came back to the Centre, and I was all worked up like, and then I just cried. Staff member H was good with me.
>
> "He [Katie's partner] phoned a lot later that evening and apologised. He'd heard about other women cheating on their partners, and having men around to the house. But I'm not like that, just because other women are. He was getting paranoid and all these stories were fuelling it." (Family member interview transcript)

This excerpt demonstrates the emotional support members of staff offer to families when in need, and the difficulties with having only very public visiting suites at times of heightened emotion, as already discussed in Chapter 5. It has been known for some time (Freedman and Rice, 1977) that prisoners often have unfounded fears of infidelity, but how the non-imprisoned partner experiences and reacts to an accusation is under explored. This excerpt again draws attention to the unilateral direction of prison phone calls discussed in Chapter 6 and the associated powerlessness. Leaving the visit early was one of the limited options available to Katie, yet this also meant that Elsa's contact with her father came to an abrupt end. In this one example, all of these individual pains converge. These are all

consequences of the prison induced separation; separation which in itself can be deeply painful.[87]

Where a family member's support of a prisoner is a source of concern or disapproval for others within the family, tensions and conflict are a typical consequence. As discussed, Bob experienced these, but he was not alone. For example, despite visiting a prisoner with an OLR, (as a reminder, an order handed out to those believed to be particularly at risk of serious sexual and violent offending), Judy was a woman very much in love, and told me: "the second I see him, I'm not joking, it's like I forget that we're in the jail". However, she also shared that her family was concerned about her relationship. They feared that given his OLR she would "end up leading a very lonely life". They were also concerned that Judy and Patrick's relationship was one-sided financially: Judy handed in money for Patrick every week to help Patrick keep in contact with her through phone calls and letters. Judy conceded she understood their perspective but said "at the same time, if they really, really looked, at how much being with him, hearing from him, whether it's by letter or by phone call, if they were actually around when I hear from him, they'd see how much it ups my spirits." She then cited a recent example where a conversation with Patrick 'perked her up', and she said, that it made her think the relationship could not be one sided because 'Why would he go to all that effort?' Although Judy remained committed to Patrick and their relationship, this struck me as a definite waver; through the way she shared this with me, it felt as though she was trying to convince herself. Thus, even Judy's relationship was not immune to the restrictions imposed by the prison. In addition, Jake shared his and his wife's concern about neglecting their other adult children by investing so much time visiting their son: "We don't want to upset them either you know by... 'cause they could begin to say, 'Why are we spending more time with him?'" Therefore, maintaining family relations with someone in prison can cause many and varied kinds of tensions, including those that are very subtle, with family members who are not in prison.

Woven through these narratives is a common thread: these family members are also doing time, serving the sentence and more broadly, suffering. Jane summarises the situation for many:

[87] In the following chapter, I will explore the situations where families do not experience separation (and imprisonment more generally) exactly in this way and will consider the explanations for and implications of this.

> "Everybody else is affected. And 'cause…I spoke to my mum this morning, and she said you know: 'When I'm in here, I know you're in here'. You do the time with your family and that's just how it is. It doesn't just affect the person; it affects everybody." (Family member interview transcript)

When a person is in prison, those that love and care for them tend to experience distress. Among other things, prison exacerbates existing problems; it generates its own dynamics of insecurity that impacts families; and imposes on loved one's burdens and expectations of placing their needs secondary to the needs of the incarcerated loved one.

## Conclusion

This chapter adds to the wealth of literature, cataloguing the pains of imprisonment experienced by the families of prisoners, with data from my own study offering further evidence of these. However, it has also aimed to highlight the nuance and complexity of these pains, and emphasise that the extent and even acuteness to which they are experienced, are not evenly distributed across families. These are shaped by various factors including the offence and its seriousness; the length of the custodial sentence (though of course there is a relationship between these); previous experience of the criminal justice system and/or imprisonment; the age and gender of the family members, and many other factors. In so doing, this chapter has also aimed to emphasise the heterogeneity of prisoners' families and their experiences of imprisonment. This is a theme which I will develop in Chapter 8, where I will focus on the perspectives of families whose experiences do not fit neatly into what has now come to be established as a common set of familial pains of imprisonment.

# Chapter 8: Rethinking the pains of familial imprisonment

## Chapter outline

This final findings chapter involves a re-consideration of the pains of imprisonment for families. I draw primarily on the data from my own research, supplementing this with less emphasised elements of others' work in this area to argue that not all families experience imprisonment's pains in the same way, and that discussion solely focused on pains fails to accurately, and fully, represent many families' experience of imprisonment. I explore both the explanations for and the critical implications of this.

## The diversity of experiences

As previously discussed, Morris' (1965) landmark study offers a detailed account of how prisoners' partners experience imprisonment (with associated consideration of the wider family impacts). To give more detail now, based on her participants' experiences, Morris identified eight types of family situation (1965: 24-25). She later consolidated these into three groups in her later work with Thomlinson in 1972: "families with a problem", that is, families for whom incarceration is a distinct crisis; "problem families", for whom criminality figures among a cluster of several serious difficulties (such as poverty, substance abuse, or domestic abuse); and families "showing symptoms of instability and disorganisation before imprisonment that the departure of the husband may alleviate the problem, at least temporarily, and the wife may be in a better position to manage than previously" (Comfort, 2008: 215-216). Morris attempted to capture the diversity of families' experience, and in so doing, demonstrated that "confinement may not represent a crisis for all families" (Comfort, 2008: 9).

Comfort parallels Morris' categorisations in her own categorisations of the experiences of women affected by partner imprisonment. In her study, the first category are women who have a problem; the incarceration of their partner represents the "central problem" in their lives and their lives are otherwise characterised by stability and security (Comfort, 2008: 183). In contrast, Comfort's second category of women experience incarceration of their partner feature as one thread of a complex web of difficulties. In the US context of her study, where black and Latino men are disproportionately incarcerated, women partners

regularly encounter and battle with racism, as well as intergenerational offending and their partners' recidivism. Many of these hardships are compounded by other disadvantages which include poverty, inadequate family and social services and abusive relationships. Comfort argues that these women lack the social and economic capital to protect themselves from secondary prisonisation. She suggests alternatively that these women are "groomed" from early ages for secondary prisonisation through their contact with imprisoned kin and associates. In addition, these women have "scarce opportunity" to form relationships with others who are not in some way connected to or embroiled in the institution (Comfort, 2008:183-184). Prison visiting and maintaining contact more generally, become part of the reproduction and normalisation of prison use itself. Yet my own analysis here is that this may also be the case that the process of prisonisation occurs more straightforwardly not only due to these women's sustained engagements with the prison, but also due to their repeated engagements with *other* (state) institutions. As regards the third category of women, Comfort observes that the prison imposes a "semblance of order" on the "tumultuous and troubled existences" of these women. For them, the prison and criminal justice system offer protection, as well as stability, control, and safety in their relationships (Comfort, 2008: 184).

Though it would be possible to parallel Morris and Comfort's categories in this study, these categories have been referred to convey the heterogeneity that these researchers found both in prisoners' families and their experience of imprisonment, a diversity echoed in my own study. In this chapter, I argue that although it is often said that families are a diverse group, this recognition of diversity is not always translated into how families are discussed in various spheres: for example, in research, in policy, in practice and in political discourse. Morris' and Comfort's categories are useful ones but I have chosen different terms and categories- or simply different ways of explaining how different families experience imprisonment differently- based on who I spoke with in the specific Scottish context of my research. Further, the work of Morris and Comfort has also been highlighted because these authors also usefully situate families' experiences within the broader context of their lives. However, I take this further and in duly situating imprisonment within this broader context, I also demonstrate empirically how the experiences of imprisonment and wider life experiences of life are (in some cases deeply) inter-connected.

**Time for a re-think?**

As Comfort notes, the bulk of recent research exploring families' experiences "departs significantly from Morris' tenor in that it adopts a prosecutorial approach by portraying the correctional system as a monolithically negative force in the lives of inmates and their families" (2008: 9). I would add that the tone and language often employed to describe these experiences not only cements this narrative, and cements it as the dominant one, it also adds layers of negativity to it. This is a narrow depiction of families affected by imprisonment and one which fails to capture the complexity and nuance of the experience. It also, ironically, re-victimises families not only through the language employed, but in its failure to recognise the resilience of families in dealing with these effects.

As introduced in Chapter 1, families may be "traumatised" by arrest and subsequent imprisonment (Cunningham, 2001), and imprisonment is cast overall as a "traumatic" experience for families (for example, Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999). By virtue of the imprisonment, families are thrust into "peril" (Breen, 1995). Families are left to deal with the "aftershock", and experience "overpowering feelings of helplessness" (Prison Reform Trust, 2016: 3, 4). Loved ones are "lost to incarceration" (Fishman, 1981). Specifically, this loss is likened to bereavement (Condry, 2011 [2007]), with associated feelings of grief. The stigma of imprisonment shapes how the loss is felt. Unlike other losses in our society, such as death, the loss experienced here by the person 'on the outside' may be "disenfranchised"; that is, it is a loss that is not or cannot be openly acknowledged, publicly mourned, or socially supported" (Arditti, 2005: 253). The normal social outlets for grieving are denied to the families of prisoners (Fishman, 1981), where this loss is not socially validated (Arditti, 2005).

Regarding children specifically, while there is some acknowledgement, as with families in general, that existing disadvantage can combine with the disadvantage brought by imprisonment (for example, Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999; Travis and Waul, 2003), and connections are drawn, the narrative is also one of trauma. The children of prisoners comprise a "large group of victims" (Shaw, 1987: 6) and these "left behind" (Travis and Waul, 2003; Reeves and Heptinstall, 2011) children are said to experience their own distinctive harmful effects. Children "always find the loss of a parent as a traumatic event, regardless of the circumstances of the parent's departure", and this trauma causes further harm, even disrupting proper developmental growth (Travis and Waul, 2003: 16). The children of prisoners generally experience a "multitude of negative emotional and psychological behaviours" (Sims, 2000: 946). Though the language of "outcomes" is

common in the neo-liberal landscape and also in this particular context of the prison (namely, offender outcomes), in some of the work in this area, children's futures are also discussed in terms of "outcomes" (Arditti, 2005); by virtue of the imprisonment, these children's outcomes are expected, or even guaranteed, to be poor. In short, the dominant narrative is that imprisonment significantly reduces the life chances of these children. Indeed, a Barnardo's report on children's experience of visiting, commented that the experience of parental imprisonment has a "significant impact on these children's life chances", yet because they are often hidden from official figures means that they are also 'hidden' from "the services that they desperately need" (Barnardo's, 2014: 2).

However, this focus on the spectacle or drama of imprisonment means that the everyday realities and pains are invisible or overlooked. In promoting this single narrative of trauma, it becomes difficult to see how even joyful events also occur alongside the pains, or how the everyday experience of imprisonment may be more akin to inconvenience and strain than to intense pain. What is also overlooked is how the imprisonment becomes accommodated into daily life. In separating out imprisonment and focusing on its awfulness, it becomes much harder to see how it can become part of families' lives, and even quite easily so for some families. My research has found both that imprisonment does become part of lives, and that it is not always experienced as traumatic by families.

Academic literature that conveys imprisonment as a monolithically negative experience, to use Comfort's term, for families, shapes and in turn may echo the discourse in policy and political spheres. For example, in the context of Scotland, this narrative has been picked up in the publications and web pages of voluntary sector organisations, including Families Outside (Families Outside, 2016). It is also actively taken on by the SPS in its discussion of imprisonment's wider impacts (Scottish Prison Service, 2016a). Knudsen has also recently commented how this narrative of trauma has been taken on by "certain charities and media sources" in relation to affected children. She observes how the assumption of trauma for children rests, problematically, on a "very specific representation of a child of a prisoner" and their pre-imprisonment lives: for example, an assumption that the incarcerated parent lived with them prior to imprisonment or that he or she was a primary caregiver and financial provider. These representations of the pre-imprisonment lives of children may bear little resemblance to the reality for many (Knudsen, 2016: 3). Murray has also cautioned making *assumptions* of imprisonment's effects on children; he specifically referred to the oft cited concerns about children's mental health or children's

anti-social responses to parental imprisonment (Murray, 2005). Yet unlike the assumptions of trauma, cautions such as these are not frequently found.

I will probe possible explanations for why this dominance has occurred, but there is a need to broaden our understanding of imprisonment, and appreciate the complexity of the experience for all those involved. As will be discussed, this has been explored by scholars exploring imprisonment's effects for prisoners, but this has not yet been fully extended to the field of prisoners' *families*. Before I discuss my critical points, I wish to highlight several things.

The points introduced here are not intended to undervalue this important work which offers rich insights and has, more importantly, helped to raise the profile of prisoners' families. It should be clear, both from my overview of the literature and from this entire thesis, that prison tends to inflict, sometimes major, harm on prisoners' families; this is a finding which my own research knowledge very strongly supports. Yet for some families, the experience of pain may be different and sometimes more complex, than how it is portrayed in the literature; in addition, for various reasons, they become resilient to its impacts. We could do much better at specifying the nature of harm, and this requires critical accounts of the time and space of imprisonment and family life, and the more overall experience of imprisonment for families.

The literature acknowledges that the extent of harm inflicted on families depends on an array of factors including the existence and extent of existing disadvantage; the implication is that some of these factors may lessen the adverse impact of imprisonment. In addition, the literature also makes reference to the heterogeneity of prisoners' families and thus opens up the idea that some families may be affected to greater degrees than others. Therefore, in many respects, the idea that imprisonment is a "monolithically negative force" in families' lives, and the language and tone employed to convey this idea, is both appropriate and justified. Furthermore, when there are hints that it is not appropriate or justified, caveats are provided. Yet, this idea dominates the discourse on families affected by imprisonment, and this dominance is problematic. Families are still assumed and said to experience imprisonment as a traumatic life event. To draw once again on temporality, this also locates imprisonment within a fixed time frame, with imprisonment cast as an 'event'; yet this contrasts with the experience of imprisonment for many as part of lives over long periods of time, and as part of the ebb and flow of lives. The dominance of imprisonment

as having uniformly traumatic effects means that this becomes the default view of how imprisonment affects families. However, this study reveals that, as with Morris' and Comfort's study and elements of others' work, other 'types' of family and other experiences also exist which are qualitatively (and even quantitatively) very different. To draw on Morris' expression, some, even many, families do not experience confinement as a crisis. Yet these families' experiences are obscured and under-represented in academic and policy debates.

### *Outline of re-think*

There are likely to be multiple reasons for why imprisonment's pains are not felt uniformly, and why discussions of the pains of imprisonment for families do not capture the wholeness of experience for all, if any, family. However, data from this study and others suggest that these may be distilled into three principal, but closely overlapping, reasons. Firstly, imprisonment is normal for a particular family, which may or may not be connected to coming from a particular community in which rates of imprisonment are comparatively high. Secondly, pre, and post imprisonment life[88] is also painful, rendering the imprisonment to be one pain among many. Thirdly, there are numerous 'outside' non-prison spaces, places, contexts, and interactions which are nevertheless (as in, despite their 'outside' positioning) experienced as imprisoning, meaning some of the pains which are considered to make imprisonment so painful (and which are sometimes considered to be characteristic of and unique to the prison) are not necessarily exclusive to it. In addition, families may be already well acquainted with these imprisoning experiences 'outside'. After briefly exploring situations where imprisonment conveys benefit or respite, this chapter discusses each of these reasons in detail.

## Family situations where imprisonment offers benefit or respite

As Morris (1965) notes, and others (for example, Hagan and Dinovitzer, 1999; Comfort, 2008) have since acknowledged, there are situations where the imprisonment of a family member constitutes a welcome development. As in other situations where temporary

[88] As already mentioned, and as will be discussed, the assumption that life can even be placed into 'pre' and 'post' imprisonment chapters for all prisoners and their families does not map onto all families' experiences of imprisonment. However, although I critique this dichotomy, I recognise that it is an appropriate and applicable one for many families. I also concede that it is a dichotomy I also slip into using myself.

absence arises, benefit may be conferred and the absence may not be felt, at least entirely, as loss. For example, the imprisonment may give the outside family member, often a woman, greater control over their household (Comfort, 2008:161). The experience of benefit is commonly tied to the situation where there has been domestic abuse in the home prior to incarceration.

In this study, domestic abuse was explicitly mentioned in only one interview: Sophie revealed that her partner was remanded for assault against her. However, she said that "the reality" was that she was "battering *him*". Given the nature and dynamics of domestic abuse, Sophie's reluctance to admit her partner's abuse and instead self-blame, is not surprising. Members of staff expressed concern to me about the power and control exerted over some of the women visitors by abusive male partners. Therefore, I got the distinct sense (and regrettably nothing more concrete than a sense) that domestic abuse was not uncommon in these families' lives. Yet these women's frequent presence in the Centre also demonstrates that these women continue to visit. As discussed in Chapter 5, visiting demands time, financial expense, and emotional labour of families, and these are heightened for family members who are frequent visitors. Sophie, for example, visited her remanded partner every day. These women also tend to hand in property and money for their partner; sacrifices may need to be made to facilitate this. As Sophie explained: her husband did not have "a penny", but neither did she; she elaborated that the £3.50 daily bus fare quickly "adds up" and that she recently had to resort to using a food bank. Therefore, although the prisoner is removed from the home, his (or her) damaging influence is not. It seems that there is scope for future research to interrogate the idea that respite is offered by imprisonment, such as in instances where there is domestic abuse occurring in the home. This also connects with Chapter 6's discussion on the porosity of the prison boundary.

Further, it is also possible to imagine a number of other family situations where the removal of a partner may make life easier for the remaining family members. For example, where a partner has drug or gambling problems; where a father is immature and does not take fatherhood seriously, by choosing to spend more time with friends rather than with family or by spending lots of time playing video games; or where a partner has unpleasant friends. Lastly, while not conveying benefit per se, a simple lack of closeness prior to an imprisonment may mean that the absence has a minimal impact on family life (Chui, 2010). Therefore, there are situations where the imprisonment of a family member brings benefit, which can include respite.

**Prison as normal**

In preceding findings chapters, I reflected upon how prison alters and disrupts family routines. In order to maintain contact with their incarcerated loved one, families must to some extent alter their family routine to fit in with the inflexible routine of the prison.

Yet, many offenders receive short term sentences, and may serve several of these throughout the life course; this is dubbed in Scotland, where it is a characteristic pattern of imprisonment, 'doing life by instalments' (Armstrong and Weaver, 2010). In other words, these offenders experience "persistent punishment" (Armstrong and Weaver, 2013). In Armstrong and Weaver's study, for some participants short term custodial sentences were imposed and served with such frequency that they had lost count of how many sentences they had served. Such was the ubiquity of prison in their lives, these participants actually found it easier to calculate how many months they had spent outside, rather than inside (Armstrong and Weaver, 2010: 9). Armstrong and Weaver accordingly observe: "being in and out of prison was, for many participants, akin to the experience of being in and out of the office, or school; a regular life activity that had to be balanced with, and which intruded on, time devoted to other needs and interests. Participants adapted strategies for managing other parts of their lives around a regular schedule of prison stays" (2013: 291).

*This* study has uncovered how this extends to the families of these offenders who are, in a sense, vicariously persistently punished. Given the diversity of the families included in this study, 'persistent punishment' is broadly construed. In some cases, one particular family member has been persistently punished; in others, multiple family members have been punished; in others again, multiple family members have been punished repeatedly. These continuous encounters with the prison mean that imprisonment may become a routine feature of families' lives: it is not only a case of renegotiating family routine; prison has gradually become *the routine* and prison (re) fits into family life. In this study, there were many examples of normalisation and routinisation; some were obvious but often they were very subtle:

> "Douglas' mum arrives from the visit, along with an older cousin. The older cousin wonders why the boy is not in school. Douglas was on a visit today to his new high school; he is going to be moving to his Gran's- he tells me he listens to his Gran!

> The cousin tells him: 'You need to go to school to get a good education so you don't end up in jail'. Douglas says 'I'm never going there' (Fieldnotes)."

This interaction was striking at the time, but even more striking when I had left the field and begun data analysis. It prompted me to reflect on my own experiences as a child and young person. As I recall, in my own childhood and adolescence, adults encouraged my friends and me to 'stick in at school' so that we could go to university, get a 'good job' and 'be successful'. Failure to succeed at school would result in failure to secure these socially desirable milestones. 'Getting the jail' because of failing in formal education featured low on the priority list never entered into the equation; even if those adults had this concern (itself highly unlikely), it was never articulated. However, for Douglas' family, the consequence of poor educational attainment was not the attendant failure to obtain these symbols of success, it was instead seemingly inexorable prison time. Moreover, specifically the expectation was that involvement in offending would be so serious or so persistent, that custody would be warranted. However, this interaction also reveals what the implications of normalisation of the prison are. On the one hand, it is desirable for the prison to be de-stigmatised as a place to visit family, particularly when consideration is given to how stigma is experienced by families, as discussed in Chapter 7. On the other hand, the very fact that it becomes entirely normal is of course problematic, particularly given that Scotland's prison population is drawn disproportionately from the poor (Houchin, 2005).

In another visit session, two young women sat next to me, and asked if I worked in the Centre. I introduced my research which prompted them to share their thoughts about visiting; they invited me to write these in my notepad. Each had a young child with them, and one was accompanying the other to hand in property:

> "One of the women recalls how different both the Centre and the jail are now, compared to before [an unspecified time]. She tells me that when she was wee she used to come here with her mum to visit her step dad. There was no Centre, and the entrance to the prison was in an entirely different place to where it is now, and was accessed via steps…

> "…The visitor with the older baby tells me that her friend asked her if she would 'chum'[89] her to the jail, and tells me that her joking response was "Eugh, no' again, I've had enough of that place!" This visitor tells me that she used to visit her boyfriend here. He was imprisoned for five years for attempted murder, and he is now out of prison (they are still together).
>
> "…One of the visitors says to the other: 'Ken, Martin? He's got the jail now'. They leave when they see someone they know arrive in the Centre and say goodbye." (Fieldnotes)

For these women, although imprisonment was not pleasant ('no' again!'), it was a normal feature in their own lives and had been since they were children. Moreover, as was hinted at, imprisonment was also a normal feature in the lives of those in their wider social networks.

This wider normalisation also emerged in an interview with Serenity. Serenity had supported various (male) family members in her lifetime, which spanned a mere 26 years when I met her. These family members include: her father, her brother, her former partner, and her partner at the time of our first interview. During one of our interviews, Serenity accepted a call from her friend. After the call, she told me that her friend's boyfriend was now also 'here' (at HMP Edinburgh). Her friend will be visiting on Tuesdays, and she herself visits on Wednesdays. Serenity explained that they are going to look after each other's children when the other is visiting; Serenity's mother currently looks after her children. Both Serenity and her friend seemed unfazed at having to arrange child care around these visiting slots. There are parallels with Armstrong and Weaver's work (2013): these women arrange child care to accommodate prison visits with the same easy familiarity they arrange it around work, appointments, leisure activities, and any other regular activity in each of their families' lives.

However, shortly after these interviews, Serenity and Paul's relationship ended. Serenity revealed that he had not treated her as well as he should have, and the catalyst for her ending the relationship was the discovery that Paul had sold the property she had bought him to other prisoners. Serenity told me that she was now in a relationship with another visitor, Steve. Serenity commented that it was "weird" because Steve was not a "bad boy";

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[89] In fact, it was common for visitors to be accompanied by friends while visiting or handing in property and money. I observed this on a number of occasions during fieldwork.

he had never been to prison, except to visit. Serenity met Steve and got to know him in the Wednesday Club. Although Serenity no longer visited Paul, she continued to attend this Ingliston visit on Wednesday afternoons; she and Steve visited Steve's brother. Therefore, for Serenity, even when a partner or family member was not in prison, visiting someone in prison remained part of her routine. Significantly, visiting and the Centre, was a site for generating new family relationships.

Prison and imprisonment become normalised and routinised through families' sustained engagements with the prison; a place that came to be part of lives and a site in which their lives developed including, as Serenity's story shows, the creation of new family relationships. Judy told me:

> "Em, so when I first started coming here, I was a little bit intrepid. Em that was years ago when it was my brother that was in jail for the first time…even if he [Patrick] did end up having to go back inside *again*, it wouldn't faze me as much, because I've had the prior practise with my brother. So in a way, I think that's why it doesn't bother me so much that he's in there. Because I've been so many times to visit for when my brother was in here." (Family member interview transcript)

Judy reveals here that her brother has been imprisoned more than once. The adage goes that practice makes perfect; practice in this context means that Judy knows how to respond and adjust to a prison sentence. The prevalence of imprisonment in the life course of some family members could scarcely have been more pronounced. As Sophie's account highlights, entire lives can be spent visiting and supporting family members in prison:

> "… I've been coming for 20 odd years here. Now there you go, there's my life. All my life is coming to prisons. And it wisnae always my husband. It was my twins, I've got twins that are 20-year-old, and it was their dad at the time." (Family member interview transcript)

These narratives accentuate the reality for many families: they will often support, and often have supported, multiple family members during spells of imprisonment. These insights reminded me of an ethnographic observation noted during the fieldwork for my MSc, where I observed one visitor simply ask another: "Who are you here to see today hen?" (Foster, 2013). So ordinary was prison in lives, that this visitor could have been visiting any number of friends or family members. In another fieldnote, this time from my doctoral fieldwork, I note that a visitor arrives and comments to Centre staff behind the desk: "I've

no been here for a long time!" This visitor identified that she needed to re-acquaint herself with the visiting process, yet there was a sense that she would become quickly re-accustomed to it; a straightforward reorientation.

Some family members openly expressed their hope that this would be their last time visiting: "he's learned his lesson" or "he's learned his lesson…this time". This may imply the tenacity of a cultural belief in the transformative potential of imprisonment; so tenacious it is that even the most jaded of families express some belief that the prison may represent a 'turning point' for their loved one. More cynically, it may be that while these families have hope, they know better than to expect these hopes to be realised. They may hope also partly because they know that society expects them to hope that their loved one will not re-offend, but again do not trust to hope. Indeed, many families seemed resigned to the imposition of another custodial sentence or a recall[90], in the foreseeable future. Consequently, when Centre staff wished them well in their 'last' visit, these family members replied: "I'll be back". Such accounts are common; they pepper my fieldnotes:

> "A mother and father with their two children are sitting in the Centre. Staff member A recognises the man and wonders where she knows him from. It then dawns on her that she knows him from the Children's Visits: 'He must have gotten out!' She tells me: "they are a really nice wee family…he is good with the children." (Fieldnotes)

A fieldnote entry three weeks later was:

> "The mother is back in the Centre; her partner has returned to HMP Edinburgh." (Fieldnotes)

Therefore, even where family members wish for an alternative scenario- of a life free from imprisonment- they do not expect this to materialise. This demonstrates that these families experience the imprisonment to some extent painfully- they do not want imprisonment to continue to be a stable feature in their lives. Yet this is not a narrative of trauma, crisis or catastrophe. Moreover, these families are not shocked by the arrest or subsequent imprisonment; in fact, it may be more surprising for them if arrest or imprisonment does not occur. These narratives are instead narratives of normalisation: it is the presence and not absence of prison which is normal. It may not be these families' *optimal* normality, but

[90] A prisoner may be recalled to prison for several reasons. This may be for breach of a licence condition, or the commission of another crime.

it is all the same, entirely normal. As I will shortly discuss, in the context of lives governed through a number of intrusive institutions, prison is just one more to experience. Wishing prison was not part of one's family life is as quixotic as hoping social services or poor quality housing was not either.

Children too may experience imprisonment as normal and routine. Most of these family members whose experiences are shared in this chapter (and indeed throughout this thesis) have experienced prison visiting from a young age. The literature which focusses on children's experiences of visiting often focusses on the harshness of entry: for example, the "huge glowering building", the lengthy security process, the passing through of multiple metal gates and doors, and the search procedure which may involve a sniffer dog (Ronay, 2011: 192). Although children did discuss, sometimes at length, each of those processes of entry, they tended to describe these in terms of the inconvenience they posed (as discussed in Chapter 5), rather than as inflicting trauma. This is not to say that these are not traumatising, or cumulatively traumatising (and there are links with secondary prisonisation here); however, many of these children are frequent visitors and seem to be fully accustomed to these processes, and the inconveniences they may bring. Many have visited other family members, and many have visited from infancy, perhaps even in utero.

Furthermore, in the same way that children become accustomed to the inconveniences of visiting, they may also become used to imprisonment. Mazza observes that if fathers reside with their children at the time of the arrest, the "equilibrium of these households is severely shaken" and therefore "panic and confusion reign" (2002: 522). While there is truth in this for some households, staff member H suggested an alternative reality for some families:

> "…it is a bit disingenuous sometimes when the rhetoric around children visiting prisons is that 'these are poor wee souls that are brought into big scary prisons and they don't understand what's going on'…For a lot of those that come from when they're babies, it would be almost more interesting to see what they're like when dad's at home after they get out" (Staff member H, interview transcript).

As suggested by staff member H, these children may not feel the effects of separation particularly acutely, nor may their mother suddenly experience single parenthood; their father may be in and out of prison and they may become entirely used to this, and their mother is used to parenting largely alone. Staff member H makes this observation on the basis that she sees the same families visiting on and off. However, this fits with academic

understanding of the revolving door of offending and as will be discussed, the wider meshwork of institutional control (which includes but is not limited to the literal prison) in which these families are embroiled. Indeed, like their parents or adult family members, children may also be accustomed to other similar processes; for example, being interviewed by a social worker; hearing a teacher speak negatively about themselves and their family in their presence; having themselves and their family openly criticised by class mates. I will return to this discussion later but children, like their adult counterparts, may become entirely used to the prison and to experiences of other negative processes and institutions.

As discussed in Chapter 7, it is often the case that children do not know, at least entirely, what is going on. However, as was also demonstrated in Chapter 7 and as suggested by staff member H, these children are by no means completely unknowing, and they often also demonstrate (sometimes surprising) levels and depths of knowledge about the idiosyncrasies of prison life. Returning to Mazza's point then, prisoners tend to reside with their children when at home. Yet for many prisoners, the prison is *also a home*; this is because being in their family home may be an infrequent occurrence. This supports others' work on visit rooms (Comfort, 2008; Moran, 2013a) and my own discussion on the performance of family in this space (Chapter 6): due to the performance of family in this space and the temporal investment in it, the visit room becomes home like. Yet for the prisoner, who lives, sleeps, eats and works in the prison, the prison as a whole becomes a home; for many it is a home that they will return to, often more than once. There are echoes of the discussion found in Chapter 6: in the visit room, families find new places in which to 'do family' and 'do home'. The prison becomes home like through the sharing of typical family activities; an observation made by other scholars (again, Comfort, 2008; Moran, 2013a). The prison also becomes a home as a result of the amount of time spent by prisoners in the prison, compared to their family home, as highlighted in Armstrong and Weaver's work. This also relates closely to Armstrong's more recent scholarship with Andrew Jefferson who comment that while prison does not constitute an ideal or 'first choice' home, it can be homelike; moreover, it is "as much of a home as any number of other precarious spaces in which the poor find themselves corralled" (2017).

Therefore, imprisonment becomes a normal and routine feature of the lives of many families, and it does so through families' repeated engagements with the institution. While the literature portrays the prison as an overwhelmingly negative force in families' lives, and often adopts the language of trauma to convey this, this narrative does not accurately capture the experience for all families. Imprisonment is not a shock or trauma for all families; it is a

relatively normal event in their lives and the prevalence of it in of their lives helps them to become resilient to its impacts.

**Imprisonment can be painful, but so can life**

As many scholars call for (for example Jefferson, 2014), the prison should not be viewed in a vacuum; the broader social context in which imprisonment is imposed and done should always be borne in mind. As already discussed, Scotland's prison population is largely drawn from the most socio-economically deprived communities of Scotland (Houchin, 2005); in short, there is a history of disadvantage and exclusion long before prisoners become confined (Wiltshire, 2010), and also, long after. Given the nature of family relationships, families equally share these disadvantages. Many prisoners' families' scholars acknowledge prisoners' families' existing disadvantage (e.g. Murray, 2007; Breen, 2008). Yet despite these repeated calls for an appreciation of this broader context or repeated outlining of this broader context, much contemporary research continues to fail to take full and proper account of the pre-existing conditions these families experience (Comfort, 2008: 9). In so doing, these studies fail to capture the whole experience of imprisonment for some families. There is no question that imprisonment compounds these existing disadvantages, but these disadvantages must also not be under played. Moreover, it can be difficult to distinguish these pains from those specifically created by imprisonment.

Indeed, staff member A tells me that *she* was "traumatised" when she started working at the Centre. She said Douglas (now aged eleven) had been at the Centre since he was very small. He was four when she started working at the Centre. One day he was running around the Centre quite happily, shouting: "Last five minutes! Last five minutes!"[91] Staff member A expressed: "He's so used to being in a prison; it's just in his head". This example highlights the normalcy of prison in Douglas' life. However, Douglas' circumstances also draw attention to the other disadvantages that are often experienced by families. I learned that Douglas experienced many of these[92] which included the experience of multiple familial imprisonments, but also: poverty; having an alcohol and drug dependent mother whose addictions were present in her pregnancy with Douglas; domestic abuse in the home; and suffering generational unemployment and welfare

[91] This is what prison officers say to signal the end of the visit. This also acts as a signal to visitors and prisoners that it is time to exchange their goodbyes.
[92] These are the disadvantages I had knowledge of; there may of course be others.

dependency. That it is difficult to disentangle these problems experienced by children from the problem of imprisonment is not a point I am alone in making (Scharff-Smith, 2014: 55). While this point has been flagged up in other work, the present study affords an opportunity to dwell on and explore the complicated meanings and implications of the situation.

In Chapter 7, we saw how Katie's resisted her daughter Amy's teacher's assumption that Amy's behavioural problems were directly (and solely) attributable to her father's imprisonment. Katie is raising her four children, all aged under ten years old (one of whom is just a baby), effectively as a lone parent. Katie is economically disadvantaged and living on benefits; she is experiencing social work intervention and has frequent appointments to attend; and she has a chronic and sometimes debilitating illness. Katie is experiencing these issues with quite limited support from others, with the exception of a handful of trusted friends. There is no question that her partner's imprisonment exacerbates these issues. However, throughout the children's lives, her partner has been in and out of prison; Katie in fact met her partner through a prison letter writing scheme. These problems may be as much as product of structural inequality and Katie's circumstantial disadvantages as they are a product of her partner's imprisonment(s).

Staff member H shared her experiences of supporting two women who were experiencing homelessness. The first woman had two young children and had been in homeless accommodation for the past two years, and expressed her concerns about how this was affecting her children. The staff member describes the other woman's situation:

> "Then the other one we had is a woman who is coming to visit her partner, who is in a hostel for women in the town. She's had previous drug abuse issues, and is finding it quite difficult to be in a hostel environment and not partake [in recreational drug taking], and is also finding it quite difficult being in the hostel because she's separated from her dogs, and her dogs are living with her friend who is also a drug user. So if she wants to go and visit her friend or her dog, she's surrounded by drug use. And when she's in the hostel, she's surrounded by drug use. And she's also separated from her family, her family's out through the West [of Scotland] somewhere. And she's here, on her own, and the only person she has to visit is the partner, and the partner I believe is I think it may be, that both are being abusive to each other in that relationship…but I've got responsibility for looking after her." (Staff member H, interview transcript).

This woman's circumstances are especially difficult and upsetting, but such circumstances are equally not unheard of. This narrative conveys how the imprisonment, while still constituting a problem, is indeed one problem, among many, very serious problems. Moreover, the imprisonment may even be the most stable feature in an individual's life: for example, in offering a clear timetable of visits, supportive staff, and a comfortable waiting environment; an observation Comfort (2008) also makes.

Furthermore, as highlighted with Sophie's narrative, imprisonment compounds existing financial hardship. As discussed, imprisonment and prison visiting create additional financial burdens for families. Given the cumulative burden of these, this is likely to impact all families, but is likely to hit hardest families who are financially precarious. While for obvious reasons, families sometimes hide their financial disadvantage, families' experience of this was very apparent, particularly to Centre staff. Staff member G told me:

> "We've got one lady who's got two children and she'll say to me 'Can I have, can I have, can I have? I'll pay you next week', and she always does, you know, but obviously they've got no money and they need to feed the kids. We've got one in at the moment as well and we just gave her some stuff because she's got nothing…" (Staff member G, interview transcript).

Staff members' D and F told me: "We had one girl who was suicidal because of the benefit cuts- she'd been sanctioned". Staff member E commented:

> "I think there are people who are quite hard up, and like Staff member F particularly watches out for people and she'll give them a wee bit of toast or a sandwich and I would do the same as well. If I know anybody's really sort of, and they wanted or needed a sandwich, I'd just give them it." (Staff member E, interview transcript)

Although I have already discussed the financial situation of families, it is worth re highlighting here. This also affords the opportunity to counter the tendency to pity this group, and instead focus on the structural dimensions of their situations.

Therefore, while imprisonment still represents a problem for families, it is one problem among many. Prison is not the focal point; it cannot be because there are many other problems requiring, sometimes urgent, attention: for example, finding out what has happened when a benefit payment has not been paid; finding the money to pay for their child's meal while visiting; and finding suitable and affordable housing. This is not to say

that less (structurally) disadvantaged families do not experience problems. In addition, it is stressed that not all of these families experience all types or layers of these disadvantages; there is considerable nuance and to suggest otherwise involves making the same generalisation that I have criticised others for making. Nonetheless, the central point is that these families are often experiencing multiple disadvantage. Although the literature makes reference to this and also urges us to not consider prisoners' families' experiences in a vacuum, the reality is that their experiences *are* considered in this vacuum. Scholars, policy makers and voluntary sector workers often make the prison and imprisonment the focal point of these families' lives, but this is not necessarily what families do themselves: this is partly because they, as described above, have become accustomed to imprisonment in their lives, but it is also because the imprisonment represents one problem among many. This I will shortly argue is part of a wider 'over focus' on the prison. This 'over focus' is also an isolated one; it fails to draw connections between this myriad of issues and how they ultimately interact with each other. This blinkered vision arguably means that we fail to see and appreciate how 'the prison' acts and is present beyond physical prisons. Another side effect is that we give too little attention to the other problems (constituting metaphorically, other prisons- i.e. other forms of confinement and oppression) that families' experience. These were visible from fieldwork, but family members also chose to raise and discuss these in interviews. Of course, others, notably Wacquant (2001a) have drawn attention to these other problems, and have argued that the communities in which families live prior to confinement within the prison, closely resemble the prison environment. In many respects, I am advancing this line of argument. However, even in Wacquant's influential account, the problematic binary discussed in Chapter 6 re-appears: the prison and outside, and the assumption that neat demarcation between these is empirically sound. Another assumption is that this literal prison is the only prison that exists when in fact there are multiple outside experiences that are experienced as imprisoning. My argument, as will be shortly be explored, is that there are numerous experiences that are encountered by families beyond this literal prison that are also experienced as imprisoning, and that families' repeated interactions with these shapes their experience of imprisonment.

**Imprisoning experiences 'outside'**

In Chapter 6, I referred to Comfort's blurring of the distinction between inside and outside by arguing that families are secondarily prisonised. I used this to support my argument that inside and outside cannot be neatly separated precisely because neat separation does not exist in the lived sense of families, and of prisoners. More broadly, in earlier findings chapters, I explored how the prison can prisonise the legally free. I also explored how the prison extends far beyond the spatially bounded site, and discussed how it interferes with and disrupts life at home.

Now I will explore how circumstances of outside life for prisoners' families closely resemble features commonly associated with literal imprisonment. In short, in these families' lives there are spaces, places, contexts, and interactions which may also be considered to be, as they are experienced as tantamount to, prisons. I then use this to support my argument that there are other prisons that families' experience and indeed may be well-acquainted with. I suggest that the nature and temporality of the pain created by the imprisonment, and its overall experience, plays out differently when other structures in people's lives feel imprisoning; in other words, families' experiences of these other prisons influences their experience of literal imprisonment.

As noted by Jefferson (2014), Nils Christie referred to the 'imperialist tendency' to call "anything and everything prison", and cautions against this, urging us to fully recognise the "specificities of prison, its shame and its pain". However, as Jefferson notes, the idea that the "dynamics and effects of confinement" observed in the prison may also feature in "other social contexts" is "gaining ground" (2014: 45). Baer and Ravneberg portray prisons as "every day, lived-in spaces" and do so through highlighting the ways that prison reminds them of non- prison surroundings. In doing so, a "deeper understanding of the nature of confinement" can be gleaned (2008: 207). There is growing recognition then that confinement is not exclusive to the prison. I wish to extend the thinking here to consider other features of literal imprisonment which may be mirrored in structural disadvantage and (associated) state intervention; and to consider how families of prisoners often experience these, as well as the literal prison in their lives.

In the prison, a prisoner is first and foremost confined. However, he is also watched, and he is controlled: for example, his daily routine is strictly managed by the prison regime; his

food, his clothes, his movements and so on are all strictly controlled by the prison. He is in prison partly for punishment but partly for rehabilitation: he is forcibly confined in order to be made better, improved, corrected and fixed. As already mentioned, the enclosure is moral as well as physical (Sykes, 2007 [1958]). According to Foucault (1995 [1977]), we are all part of, and subject to, a panoptic and disciplinary society. Foucault sets out modernity as comprising a carceral archipelago of disciplinary institutions, forming a continuum where the prison- and its 'perfection' of confinement, surveillance, regulation, moralising, fixing- is at the most heightened and concentrated end. Foucault and his interpreters (for example (Donzelot and Hurley, 1980) would qualify social institutions of (heteronormative) marriage and family, education and employment as disciplinary islands of the archipelago. While I would agree, I would also argue that these islands are not separate, with effects independent of each other: prisoners' families' experiences of these institutions are interactive and affect how they experience imprisonment. Specifically, families' experience of frequent state involvement in their daily lives, largely perceived in negative terms, means that these families are already experiencing characteristic qualities of prison itself: intrusive forms of control, surveillance, regimentation and temporal organisation, top down imposed powerlessness, unpredictability, to name a handful; they are experiencing these before, during and after their experience of the literal prison.

There are many causes and consequences of poverty. It is often, even typically, accompanied by social exclusion; indeed, Levitas (2006) describes the separation of these as a difficult conceptual task. The UK's Social Exclusion Unit defines social exclusion as "a shorthand term for what can happen when people or areas suffer from a combination of linked problems such as unemployment, poor skills, low incomes, unfair discrimination, poor housing, high crime, bad health and family breakdown" (The Social Exclusion Unit, 2004). However, this social exclusion is also reproduced by the constant portrayal of families through this lens.

Social exclusion often leads to those who are excluded becoming entangled in various state institutions, and this includes but is not limited to the prison and wider criminal justice system. While we all have interactions with various state institutions, the families who experience multiple disadvantage may experience these with greater frequency. In the same way that the experience of waiting when one is poor is an everyday experience, with multiple waits for different things (housing, health services, employment (see Auyero, 2011: 9), experiencing extensive state involvement in one's life, is also an everyday

experience. Moreover, their interactions may be negative rather than positive or neutral ones and may be frequently so, as powerfully suggested by staff member B:

> "Yeah, it's [the imprisonment] just another, without sounding totally trite, it's another nail in the coffin for families…because they suffer so badly, and they have *such* negative interactions with a lot of organisations, a lot of the state organisations, teachers, sometimes social work departments but not all families have social intervention, the police definitely, the prison staff definitely." (Staff member B, interview transcript)

State regulation of the (poor) family, is not a new phenomenon (Donzelot and Hurley, 1980, Levitas, 2012), and neither is the "questioning of the moral fibre of the poor" that often underlies it (Gillies, 2005: 838). Its most recent variant is found in this rhetoric of social exclusion and its associated policies. As Davies points out, 'social exclusion' became a feature of British policy lexicon with Mandelson's announcement of the government's plan to establish the Social Exclusion Unit. He continues: for Mandelson, "to be socially excluded was to be part of an underclass, lacking the means to participate in economic, social, cultural and political life" (Davies, 2005: 4-5). Governments tackle exclusion by intervening in families' lives. Even where the reasons underlying intervention are well intentioned or even justified, consideration should be given to how people experience this intervention. Consideration should also be given to how this social exclusion agenda assumes a deficit model of families; families are considered to be lacking in some (or very many) way(s) and are treated as such. It is here where parallels can be drawn with experience of the literal prison. In these institutions or in families' interactions with institutional actors, families may experience: hanging around and waiting; being treated disrespectfully by others, perhaps by those in power; stigma caused by association with the institution or intervention; being confined; being watched; and being controlled. I will now draw on just two examples: poverty and social work intervention, to convey how this plays out.

As discussed already, prisoners' families are often poor; a situation which imprisonment may have worsened but is unlikely to have created. Being poor involves struggling daily to maintain or even acquire the most basic standard of living. Yet being poor also involves experiencing stigma and shame stemming from this experience of poverty (Shildrick et al., 2012). Relatedly (at least for some families), recipients of out of work benefits and those dependent on welfare also experience stigma and shame as a result of this; the

stigmatisation of those claiming out of work benefits by no means being a new phenomenon but one which has recently intensified (Patrick, 2014); this may in part be attributed to the growing 'valorisation of paid work' which in turn has led to the construction of non-workers as problematic, leading to further exlusion and involving both the moralising and demoralising of these individuals (Patrick, 2012). The relationship between stigma and shame in this context is complex: Baumberg argues that the stigma of claiming benefts does not necessarily result in shame (if, for example, a claimant perceives his or herself to be deserving of receipt of benefits), but shame is likely to occur in social interactions where others, (with benefit officers provided as an example), act as though claiming benefits is stigmatised, or where claiming benefits devalues status (Baumberg, 2016: 183). In addition, those who are in receipt of state benefits report difficulties in making claims, and experiencing long waits for appointments, calls and payments (Shildrick et al., 2012: 179). As discussed in Chapter 6, waiting and power are inextricably tied and being made to wait by someone or something conveys very clearly that he, she, or it, holds (sometimes substantial) power over the other, and I would argue are ways in which lowly, or lowlier, status is conveyed, and arguably also felt.

Furthermore, as mentioned by staff member B, a state intervention often encountered by prisoners' families is social work intervention, in the form of child welfare intervention. The involvement of social work in families' lives was not a fact many families revealed. This is not unsurprising given the stigma of this intervention: research has indicated that even where efforts are made to ensure that those using these services are treated with respect, stigma remains part of the experience of these services. In addition, perceptions of stigma increase as the intrusiveness increases, or where services are compulsory rather than voluntary (Colton et al., 1997). Another reason why this information remained hidden was due to the fact that I was a relative stranger and researcher. However, lengthy periods of ethnographic observation coupled with many informal interactions with Centre staff privileged me with the knowledge that many of these families experience social work intervention. For example, staff told me that visitors often discussed their concerns about social work involvement in their family with them. As mentioned in Chapter 7, Katie is very busy, and she juggles, among other things, taking children to various extra-curricular activities and to the prison to visit their father. However, staff member A explained that Katie was taking her children to these activities to please social workers. Whenever I met Katie, she, unsurprisingly, always seemed very harassed. Yet this example reveals how Katie's family life is being shaped by both social work and the prison. Katie moulds her

family life and her children's activities to fit with the demands and expectations of both institutions. However, what is also revealed here is the interconnectedness of these institutions. By virtue of her partner's imprisonment for drug related offences (which triggered child protection concerns), social work is involved in her life. Yet given the prison's emphasis on maintaining family bonds, Katie is impliedly expected to bring her children to visit their father so that their family bonds are 'maintained'. However, prison visits may clash with Katie's social work appointments or her daughters' various extra-curricular activities; even if there are no outright clashes, fitting these activities in proves challenging and may be very stressful. Katie's often, even typical, harassed state would suggest that it is, and understandably so.

Therefore, it is not only the lack of things that distinguishes poverty; it is almost too many things: too many demands, rules, agencies, and places to be. All of these things offer and create opportunities of being presented and treated as lacking in some way: of being judged as a bad parent worker, partner and woman [93]; and of having one's sense of self-worth slowly ground down and diminished. The prison is well known for doing this, but literature also documents how experiences of state intervention (for example, social work intervention) or structural disadvantage (for example, poverty) can have the same or similar effect, or trigger other experiences which do this. Nonetheless, again there is a lack of linking between these. How do families' experiences of each shape their experience of the other?

I have argued here that there are many other 'outside' experiences that are experienced as imprisoning; there are many other ways of being held down, of being punished, of being watched and controlled. Moreover, social exclusion is tantamount to over inclusion in state forms of surveillance, intervention, and discipline; the literal prison is the obvious example and the site in which these are at their most concentrated, but there are various others. Prisoners and their families are worn down by the prison (to different extents), but they are worn down by many other institutions and interventions which interfere with their lives; those which are purportedly trying to make their lives 'better' and 'fix' their alleged, and much maligned, failings. The literal prison is one prison, and it is awful in very many

[93] See, for example, Gillies (2005) for an exploration of the inculcation of middle class values onto working class parents through parenting interventions, and the moralistic undertones that can be part of these.

ways, but so too are these outside experiences, interventions, and institutions in which the poor are, seemingly, inexorably caught in and which are experienced as imprisoning.

**Accounting for social exclusion and poverty in accounts of familial imprisonment**

It seems important to attempt to reflect on why the narrative of imprisonment as traumatic has either trumped, or at least predominated, over all other narratives.

Some academics researching experiences of families with a family member in prison have acknowledged that the participants involved in their studies suffered fewer existing disadvantages and held higher socio-economic status than what may have been expected, given what is known about the socio-demographic characteristics of prisoners (Condry, Kotova, and Minson, 2016; 632, this was acknowledged specifically Kotova's study discussed). In addition, in Condry's (2007) research with families of those imprisoned for serious offences she observed: "the relatives I met could be described as working or middle class, but most were not what might be described as 'socially excluded', in contrast to both the general prison population and some of the families I observed at prison visitors' centres" (Condry, 2011 [2007]:13). Moreover, "almost all participants had not visited a prison before" (Condry, 2011 [2007]: 58). Condry observes that for the family members in her study, offending and crime, especially serious offending, was not or had rarely been a feature in their lives prior to the offender's imprisonment (2011 [2007]: 32). In general, these family members were not excluded and were not accustomed to familial offending or imprisonment. Yet she acknowledges that the majority of the general prison population have experienced a "lifetime of social exclusion" (Condry, 2011 [2007]: 13).

This is of course just one example. However, what this example does is highlight, as Condry does, a pertinent methodological question. As I mentioned in Chapter 4, ethnographic methods, and a general more ethnographic strategy to recruiting interviewees helps to protect against self-selection bias to some extent. In my study, many of the family members in my study had visited not only HMP Edinburgh before, but had visited other prisons across Scotland, and indeed in some cases, prisons in England and Wales also. For example, Samantha, who had visited partners and friends in different prisons told me, revealingly: "This is *the* best jail I've come to!" before she proceeded to tell me the negative aspects of the other prisons she had experience of visiting, and the positive aspects of HMP Edinburgh. Moreover, many family members in my study were

experiencing various disadvantages. This fits with what we know about prisoners' backgrounds and (previous) experiences of the criminal justice system. Excluding two adults, all of the family members in my study who came to be interviewed were recruited ethnographically: through spending lots of time in the Centre, hanging around, and gaining visitors' trust. The two family members (Jake and Jane) who responded to my leaflet via email, and who then arranged to be interviewed had had no previous interaction with the criminal justice system or prison. Neither Jake nor Jane experienced structural disadvantage, and their narratives were very much narratives of trauma.

As someone who self-identifies as middle class, and as I outlined in Chapter 4, I admit that I came to this field assuming imprisonment would be experienced chiefly as a trauma. This assumption was partly based on my preliminary reading of the literature but was equally drawn from my expectation about how *I* would feel if it was *my* family member imprisoned, and as difficult as it is to admit, this is a classed expectation. However, my chosen methodological approach seemed to be successful at capturing a diversity of experiences. Indeed, a key contribution of this study is that it is bringing to light this long overlooked narrative. However, that this narrative is obscured both demonstrates and reinforces class inequality. These families are typically discussed in the language of victimhood: these 'poor families' are said to be traumatised. In reality, these families tend to demonstrate extraordinary resilience and deal with imprisonment with the same strength that they deal with other disadvantages they face. Moreover, they are busy, hardworking, diligent, caring, thoughtful, insightful, resourceful, but demonstrate these qualities in ways not valued in the current paradigm, with its emphasis on paid work and socially acceptable (middle class) parenting (see, for example, Gillies, 2005). In addition, their lived experience is obscured by the experience of other families of prisoners, who while absolutely deserving of recognition and support, may not suffer the same structural disadvantage. Moreover, to draw on Comfort's point, these families' (who do not experience structural disadvantage) existing capital equips them with the ability to access support easily and also readily. This helps them to navigate and offset some of the negative effects of the experience. While more disadvantaged families tend to be resilient, again they suffer the disadvantage of both being persistently overlooked, and also stereotyped in research.

Finally, as Condry outlines, the majority of the general prison population are socially excluded and have been for some time, if not their entire lifetime; logically, it follows that

their families are also socially excluded. We know that this is scenario is played out across many countries, including Scotland. However, if most prisoners and their families are socially excluded, but in most cases do not share their experiences with researchers (or are not given the opportunity to share their experiences given methodological constraints), this problem is far greater than first appears, not only in terms of the numbers involved but in terms of the impacts.

**Conclusion**

This chapter is entitled 'rethinking the pains of familial imprisonment': what are we re thinking?

For some families, prison is a normal and routine feature in their lives. It is normal and routine to either go to prison or to be affected by another family member's imprisonment, or even both. It is also normal and routine for this to occur more than once in one's lifetime, and for multiple family members to be embroiled in the prison (and wider criminal justice) system. While scholars have acknowledged that imprisonment might be a frequent occurrence in families' lives, including in the lives of children (Scharff-Smith, 2014: 56; Shaw, 1987: 41), discussion has not then followed on how this normalisation and routinisation means that families can become resilient to its impacts, and how the very fact that it is normal, takes away much of the fear and anxiety surrounding it. Yet if the experience of imprisonment is *not* a crisis, trauma, or catastrophe, and instead is experienced as routine, banal even, *this* is traumatic, and specifically, *socially traumatic*. In other words, given the nature of imprisonment, we would expect it to be traumatising. If it is not traumatising and is instead experienced as routine and normal, questions are raised regarding the social trauma that is being perpetuated and lived in Scotland, and disproportionately experienced by Scotland's most disadvantaged communities.

Indeed, for most families, this normalisation and routinisation of prison in their lives is closely linked to their socio-economic disadvantage. There are echoes of Houchin's report: "if you are a man and come from some of our communities, not only is it likely that you will remain poor, you will be unemployed and will have poor health; it is also likely that you will spend part of your life in prison. The increased probability of spending time in prison is both a consequence and indicator of the deprivation of the community from which you come" (Houchin, 2005: 23). I extend this to the families of prisoners. In other words, prison is the reality of poverty.

Yet, there are other realities of poverty. Indeed, when speaking with affected families about the prison and imprisonment, there were other narratives of pain found in life outside that emerged. These experiences were closely linked to their experience of poverty and social marginalisation.

Another reality of poverty is that families become enmeshed in a large number of bureaucratic state institutions. In these institutions families may experience: hanging around and waiting; being treated disrespectfully by others; stigma caused by association with the institution; being confined; being watched; and being controlled. While the experience of imprisonment features all of these experiences in their most concentrated form, the imposition of these experiences is not exclusive to the prison. There are other experiences which are experienced as imprisoning. While we may all have some interaction with these institutions, just like waiting (to draw on discussion found in Chapter 6), some people find themselves in these institutions more frequently and have more negative interactions within them, than others.

In summary, it is noted by many scholars that prisoners and their families often face structural disadvantage such as poverty and experience extensive institutional intervention in their lives. It is also known that imprisonment makes existing hardships such as these worse. However, few have properly explored, at least from the perspective of the families of prisoners, how these hardships interact with and shape their experience of imprisonment. These hardships can mean that these families are very resilient to imprisonment's impacts. However, these hardships are also experienced as imprisoning. Families' experience 'the prison' when a loved one is sentenced to imprisonment, but they have other experiences which can also be experienced as imprisoning. The literal prison is just another prison (in effect) that families experience and adapt to. Yet, in resolutely focusing our gaze on the prison, these other imprisoning experiences are overlooked, and processes of exclusion are perpetuated. These processes of exclusion are also perpetuated by the tendency to discuss these families in demeaning ways via disabling discourses. Although well intentioned and in many instances justified, describing (all) families as traumatised 'victims' fails to acknowledge the resilience families have and repeatedly demonstrate. This reinforces an underlying narrative that such families are lacking in various ways, by various institutions and by various people. The language of deficit often appears in the discourse surrounding prisoners' families; it is actively adopted by those aiming to 'help' families. Not only is this discourse and associated language problematic, it misrepresents some, even many, families' experiences of imprisonment.

The arguments put forward in this chapter, and in the preceding Chapters 1-7, will be summarised in the following chapter, Chapter 9, which concludes this thesis.

# Chapter 9: Conclusion

## Chapter outline

The research underpinning this thesis sought to uncover how families experience the imprisonment of a family member, with a focus on their experiences of visiting their loved one in prison. This chapter summarises the arguments presented in this thesis, re-iterates the original contribution this thesis aims to make to the field, before briefly reflecting on the implications posed by the findings presented.

## Summary of thesis

In Chapter 1 I introduced the research which underlies this thesis. I outlined the key arguments contained in it, and outlined the original contribution this thesis aims to make to the field.

I began Chapter 2 by introducing the field of prisoners' families research, and set this against the context of high rates of imprisonment worldwide. I then provided an overview of some of the key themes contained in the literature on imprisonment's effects for the families of prisoners, which included discussion of families' experiences of prison visiting. I also introduced the argument that the tendency of this literature to focus on the experience of imprisonment as a negative event, and describing it in terms of trauma, poses problems.

In Chapter 3 I provided the context to the research upon which this thesis is based. I discussed the evolution of prison visitors' centres in the UK, and then focused on the field-site underpinning this research, discussing in detail HMP Edinburgh, the Centre at HMP Edinburgh and the overall visiting process for families visiting loved ones confined in it.

In Chapter 4 I discussed the reasons underlying and my experience of using three distinct qualitative methods for this research: qualitative interviews; ethnographic observation and a creative method with children (specifically a drawing and talking activity I developed). I aimed to offer a frank and reflexive account of my experience of using these methods, and

as part of this also charted my journey into this doctoral project, considering also how this may have shaped the resulting research.

Chapters 5 to 8 discussed the findings which emerged from this research. In Chapter 5, I discussed families' experiences of visiting their family members at HMP Edinburgh. I began this chapter with a brief exploration into families' motivations to visit, highlighting the complexity that sometimes underlies the desire to see their loved one face to face, and discussed the feelings of anticipation families can have immediately prior to a visit. After exploring the transport and financial considerations associated with visiting, I moved on to discuss in depth families' visiting journey, from their arrival at the Centre through to the time they spend in the visit room, and discussed the interactions, processes, and experiences in between these spaces. I explored: how when visiting, families are compelled to obey numerous rules which they often perceive as being unnecessary or overly strict; how officers may treat families disrespectfully- for example, as though they too are offenders; how families experience surveillance through being watched and having movements limited and managed, through for example the waiting process and restrictive seating arrangements; and how as a product of the environment, families can find their interactions with their imprisoned loved one artificial and constrained. I adopted the lens here of secondary prisonisation (drawing on Comfort's work) to conceptualise families' experiences of visiting the prison; I demonstrated how families become 'quasi prisoners' through various processes and experiences that they encounter when visiting the prison.

Despite these many burdens associated with visiting, families highly value visits, particularly the children's visits offered at the prison. The relaxed and family oriented nature of these visits is appreciated by families, and families particularly enjoy the opportunity to engage in activities together during these visits. The Centre also emerged as a key site of support, not only in its provision of a designated waiting space, but in the formal and informal support offered by its staff. Moreover, the Centre emerged as a site in which families developed their own informal support networks; networks which seemed to be particularly important to the families of those convicted of sexual offences. Overall, the groups formed by families are essentially friendships, involving the giving and receiving of support. Moreover, in some instances, these friendships are not confined to the Centre; some families keep in touch and even socialise between visits.

However, I also demonstrated how visiting, and other methods of keeping in touch (for example, through phone calls) are means by which the prison exercises its institutional power. Discussion of this led me to make another critical argument which I put forward in

Chapter 6 (a chapter I organised in two parts) which focused on how the prison alters the space and time of families: by this I meant, the sites in which 'family' is performed, and how families' time is divided up and spent, not only in relation to the time spent with the prisoner in the visit, but how the prison shapes how families spend their time in preparation for a visit, and at home. I drew on the theories of the total institution (Goffman, 1991[1961]) and liminality as recently applied to the experiences of prisoners' and their families (for example, Moran, 2013a, 2014), and while recognising the potential of these frames, I discussed how my research on prisoners' families exposes the prison as more fluid, moving into and out of lives, just as lives move into and out of it. I demonstrated this fluidity by discussing in detail how the prison creates new sites for families in which to 'do family', such as in the visitors' centre and in the visit room itself, and with, for example, the emergence and practice of new routines in these spaces; and how the prison alters family time. I argued that the alteration in relation to time, includes taking time away from families, through the imposition of multiple and sequential waits (see Figure 3 in Chapter 3 for a visual representation of these).

Yet I also introduced the argument in Chapter 6, which I developed in Chapter 8, that for many, the prison's spatial and temporal reorganisation of family life is experienced 'outside' through, and alongside, other forms of state interventions in their lives. These share similarities to the institution of the prison and may also be experienced as imprisoning. These parallel experiences include: feelings of powerlessness, such as in relation to being made to wait (perhaps for a long time and often); moralising treatment, such as by society for experiencing these interventions in lives; and the requirement to obey demands and rules which appear needlessly strict, excessive and which may be subject to change at short notice, which may in turn reinforce feelings of powerlessness.

Throughout this thesis, I have demonstrated how imprisonment imposes many pains on families, in addition to the pains and inconveniences attached to keeping in touch, including through visiting. I focused on these pains in Chapters 7 and 8, but I approached the chapters with different emphases. In Chapter 7, I built on the negative effects discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. I discussed the distinct experiences of children affected by imprisonment, discussing their (varying) degrees of knowledge about the imprisonment and prison life. I also explored how children experienced the absence of the prisoner, and how the accumulation of difficulties may contribute to behavioural problems at school. I then discussed the stigma associated with imprisonment, which included discussion of how stigma is shaped, and often magnified by, intense media coverage. I also discussed the

unique stigma and pains experienced by the families of those convicted of a sexual offence, and showed how wider societal perceptions of certain offences have implications for the families of those who perpetrate and are convicted of them. I concluded Chapter 7 by discussing some of the more general pains experienced by families that impact on daily lives, such as taking on care-work and experiencing strains and pressures on their relationships.

Throughout this thesis, I have also evidenced and drawn attention to the diversity of family members and families, and their overall experience of imprisonment. In building on this salient theme of diversity, in Chapter 8, I discussed how the pains and negative effects of imprisonment, are experienced differently by different families. In this chapter I argued that are three key, and closely overlapping, reasons for this. The first was that prison is normal and routine for some families and family members, made so by previous experience of imprisonment. In other words, families experience the "persistent punishment" (Armstrong and Weaver, 2013) that has become familiar in the penal landscape, vicariously. For example, in this research, Serenity experienced the imprisonment of various people whom she was close to over the course of her life (she was 26 years old at the time of fieldwork): specifically, she had experienced the imprisonment of her father and brother while growing up, and had been in romantic relationships with men who had served custodial sentences in her adult life. She met her current partner- a visitor- after separating with her most recent partner, who was imprisoned at HMP Edinburgh.

In Chapter 8 I also acknowledged how not all families experience multiple familial imprisonments, and how the experience of imprisonment may involve more distant connections, or those considered more distant by a bias towards certain models of family, such as nuclear families. However, I observed that for these families familiar with imprisonment and well-rehearsed at accommodating imprisonment into their lives, imprisonment does not come as a shock, and it is not experienced as traumatic. Instead it is experienced as normal and routine, and is (re)slotted (back) into lives.

The second reason I suggested to explain how the pains are experienced differently, was that for these families, including a number of those I got to know, wider life circumstances can also be very challenging. Lives may involve among other things; living in inadequate housing and perhaps also in a stigmatised community; experiencing acute financial difficulty; and being stigmatised for experiencing these circumstances, compounding the challenges faced. While I acknowledged that the form and severity of structural

disadvantage varies between families, I argued that these families tended to experience some form of this. This fitted into my larger argument that exclusion has consequences: it prompts state over inclusion in families' lives. This results in, among other things, families being required to be at certain places at certain times (with consequences for non-compliance of this); being watched and scrutinised; and facing wider societal stigma for experiencing these interventions. I therefore suggested that the experience of imprisonment for these families is simply another state intrusion to navigate and adapt to.

The last reason I proposed to explain why pains are experienced differently (and which linked with discussion on the reach of the prison that I provided earlier in this thesis but particularly in Chapter 6), was that these state interventions experienced by families may also be also experienced as imprisoning, given the commonalities discussed.

Despite this, as I observed in Chapter 2 and made further reference to in Chapter 8, the literature tends to portray prisoners' families as experiencing imprisonment as a traumatic event, and portrays this as being the experience for all families. I argued that this is problematic for several reasons, before finally suggesting possible explanations for the origins and persistence of this narrative, and reflecting on the potential implications of this.

**Contribution of thesis**

This thesis has aimed to offer new insights into an already rich and steadily growing body of work. These insights have been presented throughout the text and include, for example, how the prison's moral community (Sykes, 2007 [1958]) extends to families in the visitors' centre; how a parent's decision not to reveal the truth about the prisoner's absence may be rooted in their own experiences of what knowing can involve; and in how the families of those convicted of sexual offences experience unique difficulties prompted by the stigma surrounding such offences, and in how they navigate these challenges.

However, it has endeavoured to make the following broader, original contributions to the field:

In situating a study entirely in a prison visitors' centre, this thesis has offered an in-depth account of families' experience of being in and spending time in this space, offering novel insights into how visiting families experience a prison visitors' centre.

This thesis is unique in how it has drawn out and explored how the prison alters the space and time of families, and of how families in turn experience this alteration and its effects.

The study's methodological originality enabled a range of perspectives and experiences to be captured. A wide range of family members were included in the research, encompassing a range of familial relationships and connections, including but not solely those which are the traditional focus of research attention; namely, the women partners of male prisoners. In so doing, a detailed and nuanced picture of families' experiences of visiting, and of wider imprisonment, emerged. This picture includes the gendered burdens of care-giving and relationship strain (often associated with the experience of women partners of male prisoners). However, it also includes insights drawn from this diverse group, where different ages, genders and familial relationships naturally lead to different experiences: such as a teenage girl being bullied at school because of a brother's violent offence (Zena); a father wanting to show his son he cared in little ways, but trying to be careful to balance this attention with his other children, made difficult by the temporal investment required to keep in touch with a prisoner (Jake); a son dutifully visiting his father while struggling to deal with his own horror at the underlying offence and the conflicting emotions he felt towards his father, and while dealing with the repercussions of the offence on his own life and that of his wider family (Bob); and a young woman making sure she remembers to wear lots of perfume when she visits her mother, so that some of the scent can literally rub off on her mother and offer some comfort (Jane). This inclusion of the broad range of familial voices, including children's voices, in this research has contributed to developing our understanding of how families experience prison visiting and imprisonment in general, (supported by the richness of the detail captured), and of how these different relationships and different life circumstances shape experiences.

Lastly, this thesis has offered an alternative and critical account of families' experiences of the familial pains of incarceration; first in how it has countered the narrative that imprisonment is necessarily experienced as a traumatic or overwhelmingly negative event, and, relatedly, in how it has connected the experience of imprisonment to wider, and sometimes interconnected, experiences of imprisoning circumstances and institutions.

***Implications of research for policy and practice (in brief)***

In addition to the theoretical and academic contributions this thesis has aimed to make to the field, the findings from the research also have implications for policy and practice. While being a small-scale study with obvious parameters and limitations (as outlined in Chapter 4), these implications largely support and reinforce the wisdom of current approaches in policy and practice, but call for these to be more ambitious in scope and provision. Some of these implications are now briefly outlined.

This study has highlighted the role and potential of prison visitors' centres in supporting, in numerous ways, visiting families. The families, including children, involved in this study valued the Centre at HMP Edinburgh- valuing it simply as a space; valuing the activities and support offered within it by staff; and valuing the other support enabled through the provision of a designated waiting space, such as providing families with the opportunity, where needed, to develop their own informal support networks through time spent with each other, in this space. These findings suggest the need for additional investment in prison visitors' centres, building on the recent financial investment provided by the Scottish Government (2015b), but also investment through extending provision of these important spaces to all prisons across the SPS estate, which lends support to the rationale of the NPVCSG.

The research has demonstrated the value families attach to visiting in general, despite the problems inherent with the process, but the particular value families attach to children's visits which are family oriented and much more relaxed, when compared with normal prison visits. The findings suggest children's visits should be prioritised and offered in a more consistent way across prisons, as part of the SPS' avowed commitment to encourage *meaningful* [emphasis added] family contact (2016f).

On the topic of the problems associated with visiting, while many of the issues cannot be addressed given the inherently restrictive setting, others can be resolved or improved. An example of this is improving prison officer training. While there are many examples of good practice in the interactions between prison staff and families (as raised by the families themselves), a common complaint among families, and a phenomenon observed too by Centre staff, was negative treatment by prison officers to families. This may be improved by more comprehensive training for prison officers, particularly for those whose roles require close and frequent interaction with visiting families.

Finally, while there is recognition across spheres that prisoners' families are not a homogeneous group with uniform experiences of imprisonment[94], this has not translated into how families and their experiences of imprisonment are discussed, given the ubiquity of the narrative of trauma, as has been examined closely. Findings from this research suggest the need for a firmer translation of this recognition of heterogeneity, into discussions of families' experiences, so that all experiences and all narratives, of trauma or otherwise, are given due attention. These findings would also caution against the *blanket* application of 'trauma informed' practice in this field (Prison Reform Trust, 2016), while recognising the value of *focused* application of this practice.

## Afterword

This thesis has documented how imprisonment inflicts on prisoners and their families a myriad of negative effects, some of which are far reaching and lasting. This thesis supports arguments from penal reformers calling for the high rates of imprisonment to be reduced, with the sparing use of prison a sensible starting point (Weaver and McNeill, 2007); based on the scale of these harms, these rates must be reduced substantially and swiftly. These pains are encountered by many families because imprisonment itself is painful and this pain extends beyond the prison boundary and beyond the person incarcerated.

However, this thesis has shown empirically the diversity of both families themselves, and their experiences of incarceration. As part of this diversity, it has suggested, in contrast to a common message in literature, that for many families', imprisonment is normal, routine, and familiar; it is part of life and may have been for quite some time; and it is just another pain to deal with in a life where structural disadvantage and the experience of other intrusive state institutions, are equally normal, routine, and familiar, and where such experiences may also be experienced as imprisoning.

In my PhD proposal, I quoted the title of the Colin McConnell's 2012 SACRO lecture, "Re-thinking prisons: Doing Justice to Doing Time" (McConnell, 2012). In this proposal, I suggested that in order to do this, "we must know what 'doing time' means to all those affected by it", with the, rather bold, implication that my proposed doctoral research would help to uncover this. From my empirical work, I would suggest that to do justice to doing

[94] I wish to stress the hugely valuable and tailored support given by practitioners to families who seek and receive this support.

time, we must understand and fully recognise what 'doing life'- that is, living day to day- is like too for families affected by imprisonment, and we must recognise the interaction between the experience of imprisonment and experiences of life. Families' experiences of imprisonment must be situated and understood within the broader context of their lives. In so doing, what also emerges is a realisation that the prison cannot be viewed as the primary cause of, or solution to, the difficulties faced by families who encounter it in all cases: as Katie said, "it's not just about the imprisonment…"[95]

[95] In response to a teacher's suggestion that her daughter Amy's disruptive behaviour at school was due to her father's imprisonment. Katie suggested that there can be "other things going on" too, leading people, in this case Amy, to "snap". This was discussed in Chapter 7.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Centre Leaflet

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

**What is it like visiting a family member in prison?**

Who am I?

I'm Rebecca. As well as being an arts and crafts worker in the Children's Corner, I am also a PhD student at Glasgow University. A PhD is a type of degree where instead of going to classes, I do a three year research project and write a report.

I am looking at what it's like visiting family member (or someone close to you) in prison. Part of this research involves me observing the day to day life of the Centre. I am also interested in hearing about your experiences of visiting.

This could be:

- What's it like getting here?
- What do you think of the Centre?
- What do you think about the visit room?
- What are the good bits and bad bits about visiting?

These are just some examples. There are no right or wrong answers here. Anything that you would like to share would be very valuable.

I am interested in hearing from adults, young people and children. For children, we can do some drawing instead. You can speak to me alone, or with friends/family, if you would like to share your experiences together. This will all take place here, at the Centre.

Why?

When a family member is sent to prison, this can have a lot of consequences for the family members on the outside. A big part of keeping in touch with one another is through visiting. At the moment, we don't know a huge amount about this, so this project aims to help find out more.

Do I have to take part?

Absolutely not! There is no pressure to take part in this research at all.

Yes I would like to take part…

Great, thank you!

- You can either speak to me direct (I am in the Centre a lot). Or you can ring me or email me: on: 0XXXX XXXXXX/ r.foster.1@research.gla.ac.uk. If this doesn't suit, you could tell a member of Centre staff that you're interested, and then we can arrange a time to meet. Thanks for reading!

# Appendix 2: Information Sheet for child participants

Information Sheet

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

You should be able to say what you think in lots of different ways

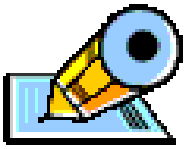
*U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child: Article 13*

SCCYP
Scotland's Commissioner for Children & Young People

Hello! I'm Rebecca.

I'm learning about what's it like to come here, when you're visiting someone you love.

Would you like to draw a picture showing me here, the Centre, or draw a picture of over there? Can tell me a bit about what you're drawing?



## Appendix 3: Information Sheet for parents of child participants

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

# What is it like visiting a family member in prison?

**Drawing activity for children interested in participating**

**Information Sheet for parents/guardians**

Hi, I'm Rebecca and I am a PhD student at the University of Glasgow. A PhD is a type of degree where instead of going to classes, I do a three year research project and write a report.

My research is looking at the experience of the families of prisoners. I am looking at families' experiences of visiting the prison in particular. Children are obviously important members of families, and their experiences of visiting might be different to adults'.

As you may/may not know, I am an arts and crafts worker at the Centre. This is completely separate from this research. If you choose not to participate in this research, it will not affect the services you or your child receive here.

I am interested in doing a drawing activity with your child, which you or your child have expressed an interest in participating in.

**But, you or your child can change your mind now, or any time!**

**'Need to knows':**

- Participation in this activity is voluntary, both for you and for your child.

- Even if you or your child agree to take part, either or both of you can change your mind at any point. If this happens, the drawing and informal chat will not be used as data.
- If you or I sense that the child is distressed by the activity, I will stop the activity immediately.
- I will keep the terminology vague and will make no direct reference to the prison. I will use terms such as ; “here in the Centre’’; “over there”, with some pointing gestures.
- The picture and audio recordings of an informal chat with your child may feature in my final report and in the presentation of my findings, but it will not be possible for you or your child to be identified.
- The activity will take place in the Centre.
- You can either be present at the activity or can be elsewhere in the Centre, but within viewing distance
- The activity will take about 15 minutes

Any questions?

If you have any questions, you can ask them to:

Me, the researcher, Rebecca Foster

r.foster.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Or my research supervisors: Dr Sarah Armstrong Sarah.Armstrong@gla.ac.uk

Professor Michele Burman Michele.Burman@gla.ac.uk

This research has been approved by the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee and by the Salvation Army Research Team. If you have any questions relating to ethical issues, you can contact the College Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston at muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk

## Appendix 4: Consent form for parents of child participants

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

# What is it like visiting a family member in prison?

Parents' Consent form for Children to participate in drawing activity

Please tick as appropriate

- ☐ I confirm that I have been provided with an introduction to the research and understand the contents of the information sheet I have been provided with.
- ☐ I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- ☐ I understand the drawing activity is to allow my child to share their experiences of visiting here. I consent to this on their behalf.
- ☐ I understand that my child will draw a picture and describe what it means to the researcher. I consent to this on their behalf.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher will make sure my child is consenting to do this activity him/herself. If at any point my child is unhappy about participating, the activity will stop straight away.
- ☐ I understand that the researcher will make sure that the place of visiting is kept vague: "visiting here" rather than "visiting prison"; "what it's like here [the Centre]?" and "what's it like there [the prison visit room]?", which may involve using pointing gestures.
- ☐ I understand that the activity will take place in the Centre
- ☐ I understand that I can be present during the activity, or can sit nearby within viewing distance of this.
- ☐ I understand that my child's picture and words (recorded by an audio device) may feature in the researcher's final report and in the presentation of her findings, but understand it will not be possible for my child or me to be identified. I agree to this usage.
- ☐ I understand that activity will last around 15 minutes.
- ☐ I agree to my child participating in this activity.

Parent of participant:

Print name:

Sign name:

Date:

Researcher:

Print name:

Sign name:

Date:

Please note that this consent form will be anonymised too.

Thank you very much.

## Appendix 5: Information sheet for adult participants

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

# What is it like visiting a family member in prison?

### Information Sheet

Hi, I'm Rebecca and I am a PhD student at the University of Glasgow. A PhD is a type of degree where instead of going to classes, I do a three year research project and write a report. I am also, as you may/may not know, an arts and crafts worker at the Centre. This is completely separate from this research.

My research is looking at the experience of the families of prisoners, here in Edinburgh. I am looking at families' experiences of visiting the prison in particular.

### 'Need to knows':

- You'll be asked about your experiences of visiting. There are no right or wrong answers; any information you give me will be very helpful for my research.
- You can pause or leave the interview at any point; you are under no obligation at all to participate.
- If there is a question you are not comfortable about answering, that is completely fine. You can say 'I don't want to answer that', and we will move onto the next question.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form so that I know you agree to take part. Though you can change your mind at any point.
- As long as it is ok with you, I will audio record the interview. This is to make sure I have an accurate record of what you have to say.
- The recordings will be transcribed (written up), and some of the words you say may be used in my final report and in the presentation of my findings. However, it will not be possible to identify you. Instead, you will be identified with a pretend name, which you can choose yourself if you like.

- The interview will take no more than 30-45 minutes of your time. It can be done all at once, or in 10 minute sessions over different days. It can be longer or shorter than this, depending on your wishes.
- The interview will take place in a private space in the Centre.

**Things to remember**

Taking part in this interview is completely up to you.

It is ok to change your mind, at any stage.

Taking part will have no effect on the services you receive here at the Centre.

Is the research private?

In general, anything that you tell me is private. The only instance where I will have to tell someone else is if you tell me something which suggests that you or someone else is at risk of harm. Here I will tell the relevant person so that advice and help is given.

Records of the interview will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and on my password protected laptop. So all of the data will be kept safe and secure.

Any questions?

If you have any questions, you can ask them to:

Me, the researcher, Rebecca Foster

r.foster.1@research.gla.ac.uk

Or my research supervisors: Dr Sarah Armstrong Sarah.Armstrong@gla.ac.uk

Professor Michele Burman Michele.Burman@gla.ac.uk

This research has been approved by the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee and by the Salvation Army Research Team. If you have any questions relating to ethical issues, you can contact the College Ethics Officer, Dr. Muir Houston, at muir.houston@glasgow.ac.uk.

# Appendix 6: Consent form for adult participants

University of Glasgow | College of Social Sciences

## Consent Form

**What is it like visiting a family member in prison?**

Please tick the boxes as appropriate

- ☐ I confirm that I have been given an introduction to the research, and understand the contents of the information sheet I have been provided with.

- ☐ I confirm that I have had the opportunity to ask questions.

- ☐ I understand that my participation in this study is **voluntary** and that I may end my participation in this study at **any** point, should I so wish.

- ☐ I understand that I do not have to answer a question if I do not want to.

- ☐ I confirm that I have been informed that my interview will be recorded by audio equipment. I agree to this being used.

- ☐ I confirm that I have been informed that notes from the interview(s) will be typed up on the researcher's password protected laptop, in a secure data file.

- ☐ I understand that the researcher may use some of my words in her research report and in the presentation of her findings. I understand that these will be anonymised and it will not be possible to identify me.

- ☐ I understand that the interview will last for about 30-45 minutes. The interview can take place in one session, or in a series of 10 minute

sessions. The interview can be shorter or longer than this, depending on my wishes.

- ☐ I understand that the interview will take place in a private area of the Centre.

Participant

Print Name:
Sign Name:
Date:

Researcher

Print Name:
Sign Name:
Date:

Please note that these consent forms will be anonymised too.

Thank you very much.

# Appendix 7: Staff interview guide

Interview themes (Staff)

For use after information sheet has been read, consent form signed, and there has been an opportunity to ask questions.

Hi [name], I'm Rebecca, as you know!

I'm just wondering if you can tell me how long you've been working here at the Centre...

This might seem a bit daft since I do know a bit of what your job involves. But do you mind telling me again please (and there might be things I don't know!), what kinds of things does your job involve day to day...

Ok, great. Well, as you know, I'm looking at the families' experiences of visiting. What are the kinds of things do you find the families experiencing during visiting?

Big question I know. We could break it down a bit…

Prompts:

Getting to the Centre

Financial issues with visiting

The environment/atmosphere in the Centre

Anxieties/emotions

Distinct concerns for particular groups of visitors e.g. first time visitors, visitors who are coming alone, children etc

Experiences of waiting

Interactions with other families during the visit (at whichever stage)

Kinds of support/services offered by the Centre- why did they come about? How are they received?

Experience of the visit room

Visitors' interactions with Scottish Prison Service staff

Not getting into the visit

Based on answers…is there anything you think that could/should be changed?

Fantastic. Thanks so much, you have been really informative, and helped me a lot. Is there anything else you think I should be aware of/include in report/is important to look at in greater detail?

So I think that's us done now. How are you? Was that ok? Thank you. But if you want to talk to me again another day, you can do that. Even if it's just to tell me something that you forgot to tell me that you think is important I know, or to ask me questions.

Thanks!

# Appendix 8: Adult family members interview guide

Interview themes (Adults)

For use after information sheet has been read, consent form signed, and there has been an opportunity to ask questions.

Hi [name]. Well I'm Rebecca as you know. And also as you know I'm wanting to learn about how family members find visiting the prison.

I'm wondering if you can tell me a bit about what it's like visiting here. The good bits and the bad bits, and ok bits.

That's quite a big question I understand, so we could maybe break it down a bit:

- So how long have you been coming here for
- What's it like getting here?
- How do you find the Centre? Do you like it as a space? Good bits/bad bits?
- What's it like waiting? What kind of things do you usually come here?
- What's it like in the visit room? Good bits/bad bits?

Based on answers…is there anything you think that could/should be changed? What would make it better for you? Remember that I am not promising to change anything (that isn't within my powers), but I am trying to learn about what visiting is like in as much detail as possible because we don't know enough yet.

Fantastic. Thanks so much, you have been really helpful, and helped me a lot. Is there anything else you think I should be aware of/include in report/is important to look at in greater detail?

So I think that's us finished now. How are you? Was that ok? Thanks for your time.

You can talk to me again if you like, any time that suits you. Even if it’s just to tell me something that you forgot to tell me that you think is important I know, or to ask me questions. Thanks!

# Appendix 9: Participant observation guide

Observation Proforma

- Space:
  - Layout
  - Aesthetics: decoration/brightness/how comfortable e.g. seats/ what's on the walls- information boards. How often are information boards looked at?
  - What are the different areas (e.g. soft play, children's corner, café area) and how are they used?
- Who uses the Centre? How often?
  - Prisoners' family members and friends? Current/former or either?
  - Scottish Prison Service (SPS) Staff?
  - Families Outside staff?
  - Salvation Army chaplain?
  - Social workers? Defence agents? NHS workers? People otherwise unconnected to the Centre coming in for food/to engage with someone etc?
- Activities
  - How is the space used? E.g. having a cup of tea, a time to make private phone calls, a time to chat to other visitors/friends, a time to play with children?
  - How do different groups use the Centre? E.g. first time visitors, regular visitors, visitors coming alone, children, teenagers.
  - Are there more formal activities? E.g. support groups? Smoking cessation classes?
- Emotions
  - How do people seem to be feeling, and does this change before/after the visit?
  - How do staff interact with visitors? If SPS use the Centre, what are the interactions like between Centre staff and families?
  - How do the activities/events change the atmosphere, if at all? E.g. hustle and bustle v calm. How much does the timing of the visits influence the atmosphere?
- Specific events and the time sequence of them (typically events which are not as common)

- For example, someone being refused a visit (this could be for numerous reasons)
- Police coming to the Centre (there's been a problem in the visit room/there is problem with a visitor in the Centre etc)
- Organised events e.g. 'Police Event' day, NHS dental hygienists delivering oral health sessions.

# Glossary: Scottish dialect presented in thesis

Bairns: Children

Cannae: Can't/cannot

Chum (verb): accompany someone somewhere e.g. 'chum me to the jail'

Doon: Down

Daei-ing: Doing

Gie-ing: Giving

Howk: Dig/get information from. In Bob's narrative, 'howk' was most likely used as a synonym for 'punch'

Hen: A woman; used affectionately

Ken: Know

Lassies: Girls

Mind: Remember

Nae: No

Nip heid: Annoy someone

No: Not

Noo: Now

Oot: Out

Shan: Not right, unfair; used more in Edinburgh than in other parts of Scotland

The West: The West of Scotland

Trackies: Tracksuit bottoms

Wee: Little; often used when referring to children or life as a child, e.g. 'wee ones'; 'when I was wee'

Wouldnae: Wouldn't/would not

Yer: Your

Source: Various

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Legislation

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Other

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child