

# Pain in police detention: A critical point in the ‘penal painscape’?

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## **Abstract**

In this paper, we analyse pain in police detention and the extent to which Sykes' pains of imprisonment framework usefully informs this. This analysis is based on extensive in-depth qualitative research in four custody facilities in four English police forces. In parallel to Sykes, we found that detainees felt cut-off, as if they had nothing and had lost control, which were respectively akin to the deprivation of liberty, the deprivation of goods and services, and the deprivation of autonomy. However, moving beyond Sykes, police custody was also uncertain, anticipatory and liminal, and entailed insecurities derived from the material conditions and soundscape. All of these pains of police detention were furthermore enabled or minimised by how staff employed their authority. The synergy between the pains of police detention and the pains of imprisonment arise, in part because police custody has much in common with imprisonment. As such, police custody can be seen as an initial and thus critical point in the 'penal chain' or perhaps even the 'penal painscape', in which institutions within it have punitive tendencies in common, linked to the delivery of pain. This has implications for the police's role in society and the role that the pain-punishment nexus plays in this. Pain in police work has traditionally been understood as largely physical in form and rooted in the use of force. As the pains of police detention show, these pains can be more situated, subtle, routine and far-reaching in their effects, potentially extending to other areas of police work.

Key words: pain; police detention; Sykes; uncertainty; liminality

Word count: 11, 629

## Introduction

In this paper, we examine pain in police detention.<sup>1</sup> Whilst links have previously been made between the loss of liberty, goods and services, and autonomy (Skinns, 2011: 202-4), sustained consideration of pain in police detention is limited.<sup>2</sup> We therefore scrutinise in more depth the relevance of the pains of imprisonment conceived by Gresham Sykes. This was also due to our growing sense of the prison-like feel of police custody. Sykes' "enduringly popular" book, *The Society of Captives*, has inspired a rich literature on the pains of imprisonment and the inner workings of prisons (Reisig, 2001). Its focus was a 1950s maximum security men's prison, the New Jersey State Prison, and though the research that followed has expanded our horizons, encompassing other locations, institutions and inmates (e.g. Cox, 2011; Frois, 2017: chapter 5; Symkovych, 2017), police detention is only now coming into view.

In drawing on Sykes' work, our primary purpose is to explore the utility of his conceptual framework for police custody, examining the extent to which it can be applied to this setting. As shown below, some aspects of these pains of imprisonment map across, but there are also limitations, in part due to the different context in which he was writing. As such, it was necessary to find additional ways of conceptualising pain in police detention. Therefore, whilst we drew on Sykes' pains of imprisonment and on the preliminary ideas mapped out in Skinns (2011: 202-4), we were also alive to the ways in which the empirical evidence may require alternative theoretical perspectives linked to uncertainty and liminality, and to the material conditions and soundscape of police custody. This theoretically innovative approach entailed both deductive and inductive forms of reasoning, and the drawing together of literature from police and prison studies. A secondary aim of the paper is to examine whether police custody may be seen as an initial point in the "penal chain" (Fassin, 2018: 176-7; Fassin, 2017: 26), or indeed, in what we have called the 'penal painscape', and, further, what this reveals about the police's role in society and the part that the pain-punishment nexus plays in this.

The main arguments we make are that, firstly, the synergies with Sykes are possible because police detention as a key institutional representation of police work has much in common with imprisonment. Second, we argue that police custody may be seen as an initial and thus critical point in the penal chain and in the penal painscape, in which institutions have punitive tendencies in common, linked to the delivery of pain. This is a key contribution of this paper. These arguments also have three sets of implications. First, the painscape, of which police custody and prison are a part, may extend to other places of confinement. Second, in recognising the importance of punishment (and thus of pain) to police-citizen relations, this suggests that, even though it may be unintentional, inflicting pain is one part of the police's role in society. Third, there is a need for closer engagement between scholars in prison and police studies.

## Inside police detention: key features

For the purposes of this article, the key features of police detention revolve around its relatively short-lived, but temporally significant nature. Under the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), non-terrorist suspects can be detained without charge for up to 24, 36 or 96 hours, depending on the seriousness of the offence. However, on average they tend to stay for 9-10 hours (Kemp et al., 2012; Skinns, 2010). As such, police custody is *structured around time*, particularly through the 'PACE clock', which limits how long someone may be detained without charge. As these timeframes are enforced on detainees, they also necessarily result in a loss of "sovereignty over time" (O'Donnell, 2014: 176).

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the place where those suspected of wrongdoing are taken whilst an investigation is mounted and a decision is reached about what to do with their case which, in some cases, may include taking no further action.

<sup>2</sup> As discussed below, the main exceptions are Harkin (2015), Jones (2011) and Skinns (2011: 202-4).

As an initial gateway to the criminal justice process, police custody is also a place where detainees are in transition, in terms of their legal and moral status, social identities, relationships with friends and family and place in society. However, they have few resources available to them to alleviate the unease this may generate and to reduce the pains of police detention considered below. In contrast to most other detention settings,<sup>3</sup> police custody is characterised by an absence of social relationships between detainees.<sup>4</sup> This is because detainees are routinely kept in conditions of isolation in the cells, meaning that interactions with each other amount to little more than hurriedly shouted conversations down cell corridors, which in some circumstances (e.g. between co-accused suspects) may be prohibited. There are certainly no opportunities to develop informal power through social roles, as was the case for inmates in Sykes' research (1958: 83). This means that staff-detainee relationships become all the more critical, as also noted in other places of solitary confinement (O'Donnell, 2014: 164; Smith, 2006: 506; Rhodes, 2004: 165).

## **Pain, painscapes, punishment and the penal chain**

### *Pain and painscapes*

Historically, pain has been understood in a medicalised way, focusing on the sensory and neurophysiological aspects of it and derived from Cartesian understandings of the split between body and mind. However, since the 1990s social scientists have begun to point to the situated nature of pain which is informed not just by the neurophysiological aspects of it, but by individuals and their particular socio-cultural context, meaning that it can be “both physical and emotional, biological and phenomenologically embodied” (Bendelow and Williams, 1995: 147). By eschewing medicalised views of pain, social scientists have thus recast it as part of social actors' “experience of being in the world” and as “irreducible to the qualities of sensation” (Gonzalez-Polledo, 2017: 3). In particular, pain has been re-conceptualised through the notion of painscapes. This new concept, about which relatively little has been written thus far,<sup>5</sup> has been explicitly used to move beyond the binary distinctions traditionally associated with pain, such as between the body and the mind, and the physical and the social. In relation to chronic pain, for example, painscapes have been defined as individualised perceptions “inflected by the situatedness of multiple actors” (Gonzalez-Polledo, 2017: 11). This definition and also the second syllable of the word ‘*painscape*’, hints at the possible geographical connotations of the term. This is also reflected in the way that campaigners have used the concept online, for example to document and locate the pain associated with mass killings of political prisoners in the Iranian landscape (Justice for Iran, 2019). In essence, the term better expresses the situated nature of pain, whether in someone's immediate social world or in the wider landscape (geographical, legal, cultural, structural), rather than it being solely concerned with individualised physical sensations with only a biological basis.

For the purposes of this article, we use the term ‘painscape’ to emphasise the socially-situated nature of pain in police detention. It is not just a set of physical sensations. Rather these sensations are rooted in detainees' lived experience of police detention and the role that detention plays as metaphorical mirror which is suddenly held up against their lives in the outside world. This may reveal uncomfortable truths, but also that, for example, one's autonomy and liberty is precious, especially if it is unexpectedly taken away. Within the microcosm of police custody, pain is informed by the interactions that detainees have with staff and other criminal justice practitioners and to a lesser extent with other detainees or family

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<sup>3</sup> The primary exception to this is solitary confinement, such as in prison care and separation units or in supermax prisons in the US.

<sup>4</sup> Though inmate isolation may be painful and may exacerbate or lead to mental ill-health (Shalev and Edgar, 2010: 93), it is important not to idealise relationships between inmates. Violent victimization by other prisoners can be taken-for-granted aspects of prison life (e.g. Gooch, 2019).

<sup>5</sup> In September 2019, a search of Google Scholar under the terms ‘painscape’ and ‘painscapes’ yielded respectively 22 and 24 entries each, many of which related to a recently published book called *Painscapes*.

members; the material conditions of police custody (the design, layout, access to natural light and to privacy etc.); and the conditioning effects of time, laws, codes of practice and police policies. The term painscape is also used to express the rootedness of police custody itself in the wider criminal justice process. It is used to locate pain in the “penal chain” in which police custody is one of a number of institutions or painscapes responsible for the delivery of pain (Fassin, 2018). As discussed next, this socially-situated understanding of pain is also implicit in Sykes’ account of the pains of imprisonment in which these pains are grounded in prisoners’ experiences of being deprived of various taken-for-granted aspects of their life outside prison.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Pain in prison and police custody*

In the *Society of Captives*, Sykes (1958) identified five forms of deprivation which, due to their impact on inmates’ sense of self-worth, he saw as generating pain for prisoners. Of most relevance are four forms of deprivation. The *deprivation of liberty* is the most obvious. Sykes (1958: 65) describes this as a “double loss”, as the prisoner is confined to the institution and confined in their freedom of movement within the institution, with this loss of contact with friends and family also being accompanied by moral rejection, social stigma and the foregoing of their claim to being a trusted member of society. In an era of conspicuous mass consumption (Lyon, 1999: 21; Hall et al., 2008: 48-9), the second part of Sykes’ typology, the *deprivation of goods and services*, has a particular resonance. Sykes (1958: 67-70) argues that whilst prisoners’ basic material needs are met in prison (in that they are not often hungry, cold, wet etc.), the absence of the goods and services they aspire to on the outside is experienced as painfully depriving as they erode prisoners’ social identities and the everyday meanings of their lives. Third, the *deprivation of autonomy*, is closely linked to and, sometimes hard to distinguish from, the deprivation of liberty. The autonomy of prisoners is eroded by rarely explained prison rules intended to control prisoner behaviour in minute detail, resulting in “far-reaching dependence on the decisions of their captors and the restricted ability to make choices” (1958: 73). This infantilisation threatens the image that prisoners have of themselves. Fourth, the proximity and unpredictability of other potentially aggressive prisoners were seen by Sykes as leaving prisoners in a state of anxiety. The *deprivation of security* is therefore a further pain of imprisonment, referring to the subjective perception of whether a prisoner feels safe, in light of possible threats from others.

Though *The Society of Captives* has been influential, it has also been subject to extensive critique. For example, it has been regarded as too focused on pain as a consequence of the dynamics *inside* the prison, rather than due to factors outside it (Irwin and Cressey, 1962).<sup>7</sup> In addition, it is seen as too brief and lacking in data and in-depth description (Bushnell, 1959). It is also critiqued because of his: overly parsimonious or perhaps even reductionist approach to the pains of imprisonment framework (Haggerty, 2018); neglect of the diversity of prisons including in relation to gender and race (Miller, 2018; Crewe et al., 2017; Sparks et al., 1997: 44); and failure to recognise the agentic potential of prisoners and their deliberate forms of resistance (Rubin, 2017). However, for the purposes of this paper, there is one particularly salient critique. Sykes’ saw power in a fairly one dimensional way, focusing on its authoritarian not legitimate character (Sparks et al., 1996:68-9), and the potential for it to be “cracked”, for example by the unwillingness of inmates to obey, the fact that prison guards were outnumbered, the inadequacies of punishment and rewards and the “corruption” of the guards (Sykes, 1958: 61).

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<sup>6</sup> There are exceptions to this, however, for prisoners whose lives are characterised by deprivation. For chronic and chaotic drug users, for example, imprisonment imposes a degree of control over their lives which may be more transformative than painful (Crewe and Levins, 2019).

<sup>7</sup> They were particularly interested in the limited consideration given by Sykes (and also Goffman in his account of “total institutions”) to the influence of “criminal codes” existing outside the prison on inmate sub-cultures inside them (Irwin and Cressey, 1962: 145). As such, they see the solutions to the pains of imprisonment as lying outside not just inside the prison.

In spite of these criticisms, his account nonetheless provides a useful way of understanding prison life, which has “longevity, if not immortality” (Sparks, 2018). The applicability of the framework to police work is less understood, though. This is to be expected given the different criminal justice and historical context that Sykes was writing about. There are three notable exceptions to this. Firstly, Harkin (2015) identifies some of the ways that contemporary policing inflicts pain across a range of policing practices, though not in police detention. Secondly, based on an earlier study, which was smaller in scale than the present one, the first author developed some *preliminary* insights into the application of Sykes to police custody (Skinns, 2011: 202-4), on which the present paper builds. Thirdly, Jones (2011) straightforwardly applies Sykes’ framework to the experiences of young men in police cells, court cells and escort vehicles, though without also examining its limitations. By drawing on a wider array of data and by thinking critically about the applicability of Sykes to the pains of police detention, the present paper hopes to plug a gap in the literature, and make an important contribution to what is already known about the painful effects of police work.

### *Pain, punishment and the “penal chain”*

That prisoners experience pain should come as no surprise, given that it is one of the main purposes of punishment. In his classic formulation of the meaning of the term, Hart says that it must:

[I]nvolve pain or other consequences normally considered unpleasant; be for an offense against legal rules; be of an actual or supposed offender for his offense; be intentionally administered by human beings other than the offender; be imposed and administered by an authority constituted by a legal system against which the offense is committed (Hart, 1959: 4-5).

Indeed, Fassin (2018: 32) notes that punishment can in fact be boiled down to pain. However, it should come as more of a surprise that interactions with the police may also contain pain. Except with regard to out of court disposals (such as cautions and community resolutions), which are decided by the police on the admission of an offence, police work, according to Hart’s definition, should not be painful or thus punitive. It does not usually involve offenders who have admitted or been convicted of an offence, and would not normally impose a penalty.

Yet it does contain pain, so Fassin (2018: 37-8) argues. He notes that the empirical realities of police work in which innocent citizens and those around them, are injured or mistreated, thus suffering physical and sometimes emotional pain, does not correspond with normative definitions, like Hart’s. Through a historically situated (genealogical) and ethnographic account of citizen interactions with state institutions, such as the police, courts and prisons, he shows that normative accounts of punishment as informed by Hart (1959) are insufficient for understanding the realities of punishment. In particular, he argues that focusing on legally-defined forms of punishment which take place post-conviction in prison, fails to grapple with the realities of punishment which is both extra-legal and arises across the criminal justice sector from policing to courts to prisons, and is shaped by the economic and ethnoracial status of offenders.

Though Fassin’s account is in some ways problematic,<sup>8</sup> it challenges us to re-consider not only the meaning of punishment but also the definition of the police’s role in society. Research over the last fifty years has exposed the mythological status of the police solely as crime fighters (and by implication as law enforcers). It has also pointed to their importance as, amongst other things, social workers, negotiators, mediators and as safeguarding not just social order but the well-being of individual citizens and wider society (Millie, 2013; Brodeur, 2010: 155; Reiner, 2010: 244; Bayley, 1996; Bittner, 1990: 237; Punch, 1979). The police’s role in contributing to pain and punishment has been given more limited

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<sup>8</sup> Garland (2018), for example notes that in trying to deconstruct the legal definition of punishment, Fassin (2018) removes the possibility of taming arbitrary state power in relation to unlawful violence. It is only by pointing out the illegality of such actions, with reference to legal definitions of punishment, that steps can be taken to address them.

consideration, however. Where it has been explored, pain and punishment have tended to be seen as extra-legal and therefore as a more marginal activity.<sup>9</sup> Consideration of the pain-punishment nexus has also tended to focus on the use of coercion, particularly the use of force, thereby linking punishment to policing through notions of physical pain more so than emotional pain.<sup>10</sup>

Fassin's (2018: 176-7) account also has implications for how we see the interconnections between criminal justice institutions. Through their shared infliction of pain and thus punishment, he sees these institutions as bound together in a "penal chain", by which he means:

[T]he complex network of actors and actions that are involved in the punishment of certain categories of individuals for certain categories of acts that they have committed. The penal chain includes the prison system, the justice apparatus, the police forces, the legislature, the executive, political parties, and even the media and the public ... (Fassin, 2018: 176-7).

We therefore consider here whether police custody as a key institutional form of police work may be seen as the first link in the "penal chain". As argued below, since different forms of pain are central to police custody (some of which are similar to Sykes' pains of imprisonment), this suggests that the punitive aspects of it are hard to ignore. It also points to the possibilities of a 'penal painscape' and pain and punishment being seen more explicitly as part of the police's role in society. This is a further way in which we go beyond Sykes and also bridge the gap between police and prison studies.

## Methodology

This paper draws on the 'good' police custody study (GPCS), which is an ESRC-funded five-year national research study, the overarching aim of which is to rigorously examine the meaning of 'good' police custody. In particular, it draws on the Phase 2 data which was collected between March 2014 and May 2015, in four custody areas in four forces. These were given the pseudonyms Mill City, Stone Street, Combiville and Newtown.<sup>11</sup> In each site, the researchers spent 3-4 weeks undertaking participant observation and then interviewing 10-15 staff (largely police officers, detention officers but also a few other criminal justice practitioners) and 10-15 detainees. In total, the research team spent 532 hours observing and conducted 97 interviews (47 with staff and 50 with detainees). The Phase 2 data were analysed thematically, picking out eleven inductively- and deductively-derived broad themes and a number of sub-themes. However, the present paper focuses on one of these, namely, detainees' reactions to being detained in police custody. The combining of inductive and deductive reasoning stems partly from the mixed-methods nature of the wider research project on which this paper draws. The project employed an "exploratory sequential design" (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018: 84); this meant that qualitative research was undertaken first (in Phase 2), with findings from it being used to develop the quantitative research that followed in Phase 3. The combination of inductive and deductive reason is also grounded in an epistemological position – outlined in Adaptive Theory – in which both are viewed as important, as are quantitative and qualitative research, in order to build as complete a picture as possible of social reality (Layder, 1998).

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<sup>9</sup> Goldstein (1960) discusses informal punishment as product of police discretion; Van Maanen (1978) also notes the use of informal punishment of citizens perceived to be "assholes" by the police through the use of force; Loftus (2010:10) also notes the use of informal punishment for those citizens who fail the "attitude test".

<sup>10</sup> Holdaway (1983: 98) notes strategies of control employed by the police, which may be construed as punishment, such as threats to and the use of force; Choongh (1997: 40-1) examines the social discipline enacted by the police on marginalised suspects; in the US, Kassin (2010) and Leo (2008: 57-8) note the use of threats of and use of force as a form of punishment intended to induce confessions; Kaplan-Lyman (2012) examines the rising punitiveness of stop and frisks of marginalised citizens on the streets.

<sup>11</sup> These are abbreviated to MC, ST, CV and NT, respectively, and combined with either DET to denote detainee, CS to denote custody sergeant or OBS to denote observation notes, followed by a number or date.

## Synergies with Sykes

### *Being cut off*

Detainees in the study expressed a fear of being cut off from human contact and from family and friends in the outside world. Though these fears generally lasted for shorter periods of time than for prisoners, they were otherwise similar to Sykes' notion of the *deprivation of liberty*.

First, detainees expressed fear and worry about being cut-off and isolated from human contact when they were in the cells thus expressing ideas about confinement *within* the institution (Sykes, 1958: 65). These fears were exacerbated by the design of the cells such as the heavy doors and the noise they made when they closed and their austere nature, as well as by detainees' existing vulnerabilities such as mental health conditions like anxiety and claustrophobia. Consequently, on occasions, detainees became visibly upset, for example, shaking and crying at the prospect of solitary confinement, with some detainees begging the police not to place them in a cell. This fear of being cut-off was also compounded by concerns about whether staff would respond to in-cell buzzers in a timely fashion. These were not unfounded given that staff could be slow to respond to these buzzers and would also, on occasions, switch them off.

Secondly, detainees were anxious about being cut-off and separated from friends and family outside the custody area, potentially for long periods of time if they were to be charged, remanded and eventually convicted. This expressed the idea of being confined *to* the institution and the potential loss of emotional relationships as a result (Sykes, 1958: 65). It was not just being separated from friends and family that caused detainees to be upset, they also worried about their family and friends' well-being and the likely impact of their arrest on everyday routines such as collecting children from school or collecting medication for family members. For example, one detainee was observed becoming upset about the bail conditions being imposed on him primarily as they meant he would not be able to look after his son.

Given what is known about the physiological, cognitive, perceptual and emotional effects of enforced isolation on prisoners, some of which can arise after only a few days of solitary confinement (O'Donnell, 2014: 61-2; Smith, 2006), detainees' fears about isolation were well-founded. Whilst there is no doubt that solitary confinement is painful, it is also said to result in a small number of pleasures including clarity of thought and feelings of personal accomplishment (O'Donnell, 2014: 62). However, this double-edged nature of isolation was not found to be the case in the present research. Perhaps because of the more limited periods of detention, detainees tended to focus more on its negative aspects. For some detainees the solitude meant that the reality of their situation – the alleged lawbreaking and its consequences or the reality of their other personal and social problems outside the custody area - began to dawn on them, as the following detainee explained:

*Oh yeah, when I was sitting in the cell the emotions build up straightaway ... you just think this isn't me and you have done wrong and the emotions are there straightaway ... if you get a quiet cell it's just reality comes in doesn't it? Reality hits home and you think shit what am I doing here. CV\_DET6*

As this quotation also illustrates, these moments of reflection whilst cut-off from human interaction and from the outside world also caused detainees to reflect on who they were. This was especially painful for first-time detainees or those protesting their innocence. The internal dialogues of the kind described by the detainee above suggested detainees were struggling to come to terms with being seen or labelled as 'criminal' and the potential for moral rejection and condemnation as a result. This is the most important pain associated with being deprived of one's liberty, according to Sykes (1958: 66). He also notes that inmates are reminded of this rejection and condemnation by "degradations", such as the anonymity of a uniform, and a number rather than a name. As discussed below, these degradations, or "mortifications of the self" using Goffman's term (1961: 26), arose during booking in procedures, such as strip searches. Detainee ruminations about their moral rejection and also "degradation" on booking-



in also conveyed to detainees that even when only suspected of a criminal offence, they may have to forego their claim to being “morally acceptable” and a “full-fledged *trusted* member of society” and thus also to the full complement of Marshallian forms of citizenship (Sykes, 1968: 66). The present research therefore provides further evidence of how the ideals of citizenship can be undermined by the realities of citizen contact with the police (Skinns, 2019: 190).

### *Having nothing*

Detainees also expressed a keenly felt sense that they had nothing in police custody. These feelings of having nothing showed some similarities to the pains associated with the deprivation of goods and services in Sykes’ (1958: 67-70) research. Feelings of having nothing were rooted, firstly, and perhaps tellingly, in police custody being seen by detainees as worse than prison, in that there was no access, for example, to television, regular showers or to opportunities to smoke, make food and drinks or to socialise. Hence, one detainee (and former prisoner) ironically saw prison as the “light at the end of the tunnel” whilst he was in police custody (NT\_DET11). Not only were such basic provisions seen as a way of encouraging penitence by detainees, they were also seen by staff as a way of punishing detainees so that they would not “want to be locked up again” (CV\_DET2).

Secondly, detainees in the research also felt that they had few of the material possessions that would be taken-for-granted outside, such as a mobile phone, the internet, radio, TV, reading and writing materials. Further this meant that they had nothing to occupy their time, resulting in feelings of boredom. The removal and absence of personal items like wedding rings, prior to being taken to the cells, could be particularly distressing, especially if detainees did not understand why these items were being removed. This was evident in the following case:

*One of the most striking cases today was an alleged three-handed theft case, where a son and his parents were brought in for stealing charity bags out of a skip. They are illiterate and the mother has never been arrested before. I am quite moved when she is forced to take off her necklace (“it was me mams and she passed it down”) and she thinks the police are seizing it. She gets really distressed ... Her husband is upset also and is trying to move across to comfort her, but is blocked by the detention officer. The custody staff continue their roles in entirely un-emotional ways .... Not long after removing her necklace, she gets really distressed again when she is required to remove her wedding band ... It is the first time I have witnessed the real distress that removing sentimental possessions at the desk has and you wonder if it is really necessary. In the end, they can’t get her wedding band off and let her leave it on without too much fuss ... (NT\_Obs\_11.9.14).*

In this case, the pain that arose was not connected to the loss of goods per se, rather to “the symbolic overtones” of these items in a culture where material possessions indicate someone’s identity, status and self-worth (Sykes, 1958: 68). They may have therefore been a final reminder to this detainee of her identity, as a potentially innocent citizen, and as an individual human being, before she became a name and a number on the custody whiteboard.

As the case highlighted above also illustrates, the removal of these items was a form of “degradation” (Sykes, 1958: 66), for example, as a result of the public, humiliating and routinised way in which it happened. This suggests that, though Sykes only talks about “degradations” as reinforcing pain associated with the deprivation of liberty, degradation is also critical to the deprivation of goods and services too, and with feelings of having nothing, in the present research. Our understanding of these degradations can be deepened further by considering Goffman’s ideas about the “mortifications of the self”. He notes that those arriving into total institutions are subject to a “series of abasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of self” (Goffman, 1961: 24).<sup>12</sup> This is, in part, through

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<sup>12</sup> A total institution is characterised by inmates’ enclosure away from the outside world, where they experience the imposition of strict rules and regulations. They include institutes for the visually impaired, mental hospitals,

admissions procedures which include being dispossessed of one's property, which is pertinent to the suspect described above, and also through the recording of information about inmates and forced deference to those in charge. Whilst these procedures erode new arrivals' sense of self, they also enable the institution to socialise them into the ways of the establishment. Indeed, these admissions procedures are seen as test of how compliant a new arrival is likely to be later. However, this also means ignoring an inmate's prior bases of self-identification. As Goffman (1961: 26) also notes, these admissions procedures have a formal rationale which is often separate from the real purposes they serve with regards the mortification of the self. In the case of this suspect, the removal of wedding bands was explained in terms of minimising risk, which is a common narrative in police custody (Bevan, 2019: 73-4; Dehaghani, 2019: 101; Skinnis, 2019: 98-99).

In sum, Sykes' account (1958: 68) suggests that the loss of personal effects such as wedding bands in police custody erodes detainees' identity, status and sense of self-worth. However, Goffman (1961: 24) goes further suggesting that through processes of debasement, degradation and humiliation their loss is tantamount to losing one's sense of self. Either way, the sense of having nothing is a profound one for detainees in police custody.

### *Losing control*

Losing control was similar to Sykes' concept of the *deprivation of autonomy*. Some experienced feelings of a general loss of control in custody, the source of which they could not readily identify. For others, these feelings were directed at the lack of freely available toilet paper, and at the lack of access to drinks as and when they wished and to information about their case. For all of these tasks detainees depended on the assistance of staff, thereby generating a sense of helplessness and disempowerment. These feelings were therefore similar in character to those experienced by inmates in Sykes' research, whose dependence on their captors and limited choices were a source of pain (1958: 73). For example, this detainee was upset at having to rely on staff to help him access information about his case and, more importantly, about when he might be released. This was of particular concern to him given that his detention meant he was unable to do the things he would normally do to help his ill wife, which made him feel "useless". He said:

*They [the police] could inform you of what's going on. Inform me. Come to my cell. Before, when I've been arrested, my wife wasn't well and I was in the cells for about 18 hours and she needed her tablets and medication, and she didn't drive at the time and I had to go and get them from the pharmacy. But I'm ringing on the bell to find out what's going on and all they're telling me is, "can't tell you, can't tell you". "But I need to be at home for my wife, I need to go and get her medication". "You can do that when you get released". "But she's not well". So I just want to know what's going on. It plays on your mind and it's horrible, it's a horrible feeling because you're useless. There's nothing you can do." (CV\_DET5).*

The sense of uselessness described in this quotation also captures the infantilising effects of the loss of autonomy described by Sykes (1958: 76, 142), in which the imposition of the rules caused inmates to feel "reduced to childhood's dependence". The detainee quoted above also captures the "incomprehensibility" of the rules and the decisions imposed on inmates noted in Sykes' (1958: 75) research. In the case of this detainee, he seemed unable to understand, and perhaps the police did not fully explain, why his release could not be brought forward so he could go to the aid of his sick wife.

The starkest example of when detainees experienced feelings of losing control was when coercion of different kinds was used, such as when they were subject to intrusive procedures, such as pat-downs, strip searches and intensive questioning about the risks they posed, as well as when force was used.

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army barracks, prisons and monasteries (Goffman, 1961: 15-16). Goffman was interested in the micro-level interactions and power dynamics within total institutions, an approach which was "anticipated" in Sykes work on the pains of imprisonment (Sparks et al., 1997: 50).

Some saw these coercive procedures as something that they had little choice other than to comply with, which could thus be experienced as upsetting and, paradoxically, as something that they railed against and resisted. For example, this detainee became angry and upset at the prospect of being searched:

*He seems quite timid and anxious from his body language and voice. The PC explains that they will search him – detainee gets worried and slightly angry asking ‘take my clothes off?’ The officers say ‘no’. The detainee gets irate at the officers searching him – they explain again, in quite soft voices, that this is just procedure for safety to ensure there are no sharp objects. MC\_Obs\_11.4.15*

The loss of control with regards to strip-searches was especially palpable, particularly when they were based on warning markers on police records (e.g. about concealing sharp objects or drugs) that were out-of-date. This further illustrates the incomprehensibility of the rules to some detainees, which also intensifies their sense of losing control. After all, Sykes (1958: 74-75) notes that failing to explain the rules is, for the most part, a deliberate strategy which is used to convey to inmates that they have no right to bargain with staff, thereby confirming their lack of autonomy. His conceptual framework therefore deepens our understanding of why strip searching is so painful for detainees, aside from the obvious concerns about its potentially humiliating and degrading nature.

## **Beyond Sykes**

Given the different setting that Sykes (1958) was writing about, some of the pains of police detention needed to be conceptualised in ways which go beyond his pains of imprisonment framework.

### *Insecurity*

Detainees in the research did express a sense of insecurity, but it was different to Sykes’ *deprivation of security*, in part due to the specific context of police detention, in which detainees have limited opportunities to interact with other detainees. Unlike for the inmates in Sykes’ research, detainees’ security-related fears were largely a result of the material conditions inside police custody, rather than due to their relationships with other detainees.<sup>13</sup> Police custody was seen as “intimidating” because of the raised booking-in desks, which made staff appear more powerful and thus more frightening, particularly to vulnerable or disabled detainees. One said, for example:

*I think they [the staff at the charge desk] are too high up because ... before they even speak to you they are looking down at you type of thing, and I know they are not but that’s how it seems, like I am up here and you are down there so you better listen. NT\_DET10*

As noted above, other “intimidating” features of the custody environment were the “big heavy” electronic doors which slammed loudly shut, as well as the general noise and atmosphere of the facility, in which it was not uncommon for some detainees to shout, scream and bang for prolonged periods, including at night-time. NT\_DET6 who had had previous, but not recent experience of police custody, connected his sense of fear and insecurity to this noise and the resulting tension in the atmosphere. This had not been apparent when he arrived but when he was being cautioned and released he said that “everybody started to shout” and to tense up. He said “you could feel the tension and it was scary, even for me it was scary, because I have been out of it for so long”. Detainees in Stone Street, which at the time of the research and been described by staff as unfit for purpose, also commented on the unkempt nature of police custody and that it did not look and feel like the custody block was well looked after, which added to their sense of insecurity. The material conditions thus had a representational quality to them, which have also been noted in relation to prisons (Sparks et al., 1996: 308), conveying to detainees

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<sup>13</sup> Sykes does note the importance of the “drabness” of prison, which he sees as an “institutional look” shared also with police stations (1958: 7-8). However, he does not connect this impression of “grinding dullness” and of “an existence lacking in the amenities of life” to pain (Sykes, 1958: 7-8), and certainly not to feelings of insecurity.

that if the cell block was not looked after then perhaps neither would they be and that this was a reason to be fearful. In sum, whilst detainees expressed a sense of insecurity, it was the material conditions and soundscape of police detention, not those who were detained in it, which were a critical influence on these insecurities.

#### *Uncertainty, anticipation and liminality*

Because of the temporal nature of police custody detainees felt that they were in “limbo”. That is, unless they admitted their guilt, they were neither innocent nor guilty and so they worried about what might happen to them. This sense of being in limbo was expressed as uncertainty and anticipation about what lay ahead both in the immediate term and in the longer-term. These feelings were particularly acute as detainees were only just in the system and their memories, both of the turmoil of their arrest as well as of their life outside police detention, were still vivid. In the more immediate future, detainees’ worries centred on knowing how long they were to be in police custody. This contrasted markedly with the idea of living firmly in the present which characterises the experiences of sentenced prisoners in solitary confinement (O’Donnell, 2014: 177-8). In the longer-term, there were a number of aspects of the outside world and their future that were playing on their minds, including: the likely outcome of their case (such as charge, court, prison); the potential impact of the alleged offence on their lives (e.g. on their housing situation and employment prospects) and on their families’ lives (e.g. missing out on their children or on family events).

Detainees’ feelings of uncertainty and anticipation were made worse by the absence of clocks or watches, resulting in detainees having limited means of gauging the time. It also meant that even if they were told that they would be released, say in two hours, this was meaningless to them without a clock to tell them when the two hours had elapsed. As a result, police custody had a *timeless* quality to it. Yet, in common with others in solitary confinement (O’Donnell, 2014: 176) with nothing else to distract them, detainees were also all too aware of the *passing of time*, over which they had next to no influence. These feelings can have a significant impact on important decisions taken by detainees, such as about their due process rights and entitlements.<sup>14</sup> Feelings of uncertainty were therefore infused with conflicting messages about time. Combined with the impositions of the PACE clock discussed at the beginning, these conflicting understandings are likely to have further eroded detainees’ sense of “sovereignty over time” (O’Donnell, 2014: 176) and over themselves.

A sense of uncertainty is not captured in Sykes’ typology of the pains of imprisonment, though it has since been noted in relation to prisoners on remand and on indeterminate sentences (Crewe, 2011; Jewkes, 2011). It can be further developed through the concept of liminality, enabling a better understanding of police custody as a place in which detainees find themselves in transition, especially with regards their social identities. This anthropological concept was first used to conceptualise rites of passage, such as from childhood to adulthood, in which the liminar is seen as being “betwixt and between” (Turner, 1967: 93-110). The liminar goes from a relatively fixed or stable state in society to an “unstructured” one, where they are disconnected from their past roles or statuses. Great symbolism is attached to this liminal period, which provides an “outward and visible form to an inward and conceptual process” (Ibid, pp96). For example, the liminar may be secluded from others, being physically separated in a sacred place, they may be disguised with masks or costumes, or they may be stripped of their “status, property, insignia, rank, kinship position, with nothing to differentiate them structurally from their fellows”, contributing to a sense that they “have nothing” (Ibid, pp98). Having been detached from their past state and then placed in an ambiguous and liminal state, they are subsequently incorporated into new and stable positions in society, in which they are expected to act in accordance with certain norms and standards (Turner, 1969: 80). Beech (2011) takes this

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<sup>14</sup> For example, detainees have been found to be willing to sacrifice the right to legal advice, if it hastens their release from police custody and therefore alleviates their sense of uncertainty about how long they are to be there (Skins, 2009).

anthropological concept and extends its meaning with regards the reconstruction of identity.<sup>15</sup> We consider this in the present paper because it is in-keeping with the foregoing discussion, which demonstrated how other pains of police detention (e.g. ‘having nothing’) also erode detainees’ sense of self. Beech notes that, as result of liminality, the sense of self is “significantly disrupted in such a way that the new identity is meaningful for the individual and their community” (2011: 12-13). Beech (2011) argues that this reconstruction of the self is rooted in three liminal practices – experimentation, reflection and recognition - the most important of which, for the purposes of understanding the pains of police detention, is reflection. Reflection is when the liminar “considers the views of others and questions the self” (Beech, 2011: 6) and is seen as the essence of liminality.

Police custody has the symbolic accoutrements of a liminal space, according to Turner’s (1967, 1969) definition. Outwardly, it involves seclusion and physical separation, and the stripping back of someone’s status in the outside world, for instance, through the use of standard issue police clothing (e.g. rip proof paper suits) and the removal of personal possessions, such that detainees feel they have nothing, as discussed above. Inwardly, it involves conceptual processes, such as identity reconstruction, of the kind noted by Beech (2011). As noted earlier, there was no doubt that police custody was seen by some detainees as a place of reflection, given the large periods of time spent time alone in the cells, facing up to the possibility of a shift in their identity. For example, MC\_DET3 said “the emotion [in police custody] wasn’t good to be honest ... I felt more or less like a criminal and you know when I say criminal, my idea of a criminal is a murderer, a burglar, a rapist”. A number of detainees were simply not willing to accept this shift to a criminal identity (prompted by self-reflection) because they felt they *were* innocent. Hence, rather than accept the ‘criminal’ label they sought to defend their ‘non-criminal’ identity at various points in the process, such as: on arrival in police custody; in the cells; and when charged. As shown in this case, for example, this detainee expressed total disbelief when the circumstances of her arrest were relayed to the custody sergeant by the arresting officer as she was booked in:

*A young woman, looks about 18, comes to the desk. She’s crying ... she becomes hysterically upset when the arresting officer gives the details of the alleged offence. She says, whilst gasping for air, “why are you lying”. She gets aggressive and loud and becomes argumentative with the officers giving the details. The custody sergeant tries to explain that they are simply allegations and that they are trying to investigate it. She would not listen to this ... She was taken straight to the cells, crying loudly ... MC\_Obs\_4.4.15*

In the face of liminal ambiguities, in which detainees felt disconnected from their role and status outside of custody as an innocent citizen, and in the absence of certainty about other aspects of police custody, such as about what was likely to happen to them and when, these protestations at the custody desk were as much about detainees clinging to a sense of certainty, especially about themselves and their identities, as about defending their innocence. Overall this shows that in police custody detainees occupy an in-between space. They are neither a trusted citizen nor an untrustworthy criminal (yet), thereby making police custody a site of liminality par excellence.

### **Enabling pain?**

Having set out the main pains of police detention experienced by detainees, here we consider what enabled or minimised them. Staff-detainee relationships were critical, in light of detainees’ limited interactions with each other. In particular, the pains of police detention discussed thus far were influenced by the varied way staff employed their authority. Thus, in order to understand what enables or minimises the pains of police detention there is a need to explicitly engage with multiple dimensions

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<sup>15</sup> The concept of liminality has also been extended to criminal justice populations and organisations, where researchers have examined the liminal experiences of probationers, prisoners, staff and detainees in immigration removal centres, and female police officers (Bosworth, 2014: 17; Moran, 2013; Jewkes, 2011; Healy, 2010).

of power which, as noted above, is absent from Sykes' account. Here we briefly focus on two of the five dimensions of power found in our project overall.

On the one hand, staff in the present research did act in an authoritarian way, which is similar to the "total power" noted by Sykes (1958: 42). They were found to use or threaten to use coercion against detainees, with some staff also operating with what we have called a sense of 'total police custody'. They acted on the belief that police custody was their territory, in which they had ready access to the cells, as well as to numerous colleagues to assist them if required, meaning that no matter how resistant and antagonistic detainees might be to begin with all of them would comply with the police in the end.

*If they dick around then we will win ... We have tools at our disposal, we have leg straps, we have handcuffs, we can get officers off the street to restrain them and hold them down. It's not ideal, it's not the best but if we need to then we can do it MC\_CS4.*

This sense of 'total police custody' was patently obvious to detainees, who thus saw themselves as in a disempowered position relative to the police, a finding which has long been noted in a variety of other studies too (e.g. Choongh, 1997: 227; Skinns, 2011: 181; Kendall, 2018: 122). Detainees noted, for example, that doing anything other than complying with the police was a waste of time:

*It's just daft little things that nark you, and you think to yourself, well, I can't kick off because they own the key they have all the power so it's a waste of time ... you can't win against them. If you kick off you are getting kept in anyway and they are just going to make your life miserable ... NT\_DET11*

As hinted at by this detainee, this sense of a disempowerment was likely to make the pains of police detention, such as being cut off, having nothing and losing control, all the more palpable and detainees' experiences more miserable, as a result. This form of power was also all the more effective in securing detainee compliance (and thus also in enabling the pains of police detention) because of the conditions of isolation in police custody, which resulted in fewer opportunities, than in prison, for detainees to disobey police directions.

On the other hand, we found the police to employ their authority "softly" showing respect and humanity for detainees (Skinns et al., 2017b: 601-2). They did this, firstly, by building a rapport with detainees, and through the use of humour and light-hearted conversation. Secondly, staff actively attempted to communicate respectfully with detainees by talking to them politely and by appearing to acknowledge and treat detainees as fellow human beings. Thirdly, soft power manifested itself through staff providing regular and accurate updates to detainees about what was to happen to them and when. These forms of soft power had a number of effects on detainee compliance, for example with police procedures. This softer form of power was also likely to minimise some of the pains of police detention, such as those linked to feelings of uncertainty or having nothing. Though detainees were sometimes sceptical about the reasons for staff interacting with them in this manner, such as by showing compassion or by being kind, respectful and recognising them as a fellow human being, it also took the edge off feelings of nihilism and that "you are not worth anything" (CV\_DET12). Liebling (2011) also points to a similar effect in prisons, noting that dignity, respect and humanity can be what make a difference to prisoners' lives, including to whether they survive prison.

## **Conclusion**

Taking both an inductive and deductive approach to theorisation, the primary aim of this paper was to critically examine the applicability of Sykes to the pains of police detention. The foregoing discussion demonstrates that some of the pains of imprisonment noted by Sykes had a near equivalent in police custody: being cut-off is akin to the deprivation of liberty; having nothing is akin to being deprived of

goods and services; and losing control is akin to the deprivation of autonomy<sup>16</sup>. However, other aspects of the pain that detainees experienced could not be conceptualised through Sykes' framework alone. Feelings of uncertainty, which were a predominant part of the detainee experience, were only explicable with reference to liminality (Turner, 1967, 169; Beech, 2011), whilst feelings of insecurity were only explicable with reference to the representational qualities of the material conditions and soundscapes of police detention (Sparks et al., 1997: 308). The need to include alternative explanatory frameworks arose partly because of the different circumstances of those to whom the pains of imprisonment framework was being applied. For example, the short-term uncertainties detainees experienced with regard to what might happen to them and their case would be less likely for the sentenced high security prisoners, about whom Sykes was writing.

Whilst there are differences between police custody and prison, these are outweighed by important similarities, particularly in relation to experiences of pain, which is the first main argument we have sought to make in this paper. Like prisons, police detention is a place in which people are held against their will, which can potentially lead to a legitimacy deficit. Like prisons, police detention can be seen as place in which power has multiple dimensions. It is sometimes hierarchical, but also potentially diffuse, given the range of different criminal justice actors who now work inside police and who share information with the police e.g. about someone's physical or mental health, their use of alcohol or illicit drugs, or about the immigration status. Like prisoners, detainees are disempowered in their relations with staff and also constrained by the regime of the custody areas, indeed, perhaps more so than in prison, given that some detainees saw prison as the light at the end of the tunnel. Like prisoners, detainees are potentially in a place where their lives and identities may start to undergo significant change. Police custody may be the point at which someone begins to be labelled as 'criminal', perhaps unjustly, if they are not subsequently charged or are found not guilty. Regardless, this may in turn impact on their employment opportunities, their housing situation, access to children and to other family members, and on their status in society, more generally.

Most importantly, for the purposes of this paper, like prisons, police detention is also a fraught and volatile place which, using Liebling's (2004: 462) words, "contains and produces pain". These pains also reverberate around and contribute to "aftershocks" in the lives of detainees once they leave police custody, even though their time in police custody is relatively short-lived (Wooff and Skinns, 2017: 13). Police custody has at its core, therefore, a pain-punishment nexus, which has more traditionally been associated with post-conviction prisoners. As such, perhaps it can be seen, not just as an initial link in the "penal chain", but also as a critical point in the penal painscape, in which different forms of pain, some of which are of the kind noted by Sykes in relation to imprisonment, take root in the lived experiences of detainees. Whilst pain and thus punishment may not be a formal and intended effect of being detained by the police, empirically it is ubiquitous and thus one of the critical features of police custody. That police custody is one of the initial and thus critical points in the penal painscape is our second main argument.

There is one caveat, however. The arguments that pain illustrates important similarities between police custody and prison and that this indicates police custody to be a critical point in the "penal chain" and, perhaps even in the penal painscape, may be incorrectly read as implying that police work may only be seen through prism of the prison. Such tendencies have been noted elsewhere. For example, within accounts of the links between prisons and neoliberalism, there is a tendency to view the police merely as a "dragnet" or the "long arm" of the neoliberal penal state (Kaplan-Lyman, 2012: 191). To the contrary, we are suggesting that police custody represents an important and somewhat underexplored site of study, whether from a police or prison studies perspective. Whilst it is at the interface of these two sub-fields, it remains a critical institutional representation of the *police*, in which upwards of

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<sup>16</sup> Of all of the pains of police detention, losing control shows the most similarity Sykes' deprivations, in this case, autonomy.

700,000 English and Welsh citizens will be held each year (Home Office, 2019). As the institutional form of police work, it does have unmistakably prison-like qualities as described above. Nonetheless it is a police institution first and foremost, albeit one that can also be located in the wider “penal chain” or “painscape”. Police custody is similar to prison, particularly when viewed through the pain-punishment nexus, but is also different, for example, because of the legally innocent status of detainees, the short periods of time detainees are held, the absence of relationships with other detainees, and the contribution police custody makes to the crime-fighting status and aspirations of the police.

These arguments have three sets of implications, first, with regard to the boundaries of the painscape we have identified, second, for the police’s role in society and the part that the pain-punishment nexus plays in this and, third, for criminology.

The “painscape” identified here may extend beyond the penal spheres of police custody and prisons to other places of confinement, which are linked together through similarities in the pains of confinement experienced by detainees. In this wider painscape, pain rooted in uncertainty, anticipation and liminality, may be a common feature. Aside from in police custody, this type of pain has been documented amongst prisoners on remand and on indeterminate sentences (Crewe, 2011; Jewkes, 2011). Feelings of uncertainty have also been identified as a key response by those held in immigration removal centres (Bosworth, 2018; Bosworth, 2016; Bosworth, 2014: 185; Klein and Williams, 2012). Another source of pain likely to be found in this wider painscape might be insecurities stemming from the material conditions and the soundscapes of places of confinement. These have been noted as important not just in police custody but also in prisons, for example. Hence, there is a growing body of work which looks at how “colour zoning, maximum exploitation of natural light, displays of art and sculpture, and views of nature through vista windows and bars” may be used to minimise some of the pains of imprisonment and to convey the rehabilitative function of prison (Moran et al., 2017: 121). Similarly, in hospitals and mental healthcare settings, art has been found to have beneficial effects on the stress levels of patients, staff and visitors and on some mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety (Daykin et al., 2015; Dalke et al., 2006; Staricoff et al., 2001).

Given the centrality of pain to the lived experiences of detainees and given the centrality of police custody as a key institutional form of police work, this suggests that how we think of the police’s role in society should be slightly recalibrated. The pain-punishment nexus *is* part of police work (Fassin, 2018: 37-8), alongside other activities that have traditionally been associated with the police (Millie, 2013; Brodeur, 2010: 155; Reiner, 2010: 244; Bayley, 1996; Bittner, 1990: 237; Punch, 1979). To some extent this has been recognised in police scholarship. However, this scholarship has tended to focus on physical pain stemming from the use of force (Holdaway, 1983; Choongh, 1997; Kassin, 2010; Leo, 2008; Kaplan-Lyman, 2012). Clearly these forms of pain are important, not least because of their potentially lethal consequences. Use of force has been consistently implicated, for example, in deaths in police custody, particularly of Black Asian and Minority Ethnic citizens (Hannan et al., 2010). However, the more situated forms of pain which have been considered in the present paper – linked to being cut off, having nothing, losing control, material conditions and uncertainty – have not been fully considered. Though they are subtler than flagrant uses of force, they are also likely to be more routine and to impact on a greater number of citizens. Those who are stopped and searched and the growing numbers of citizens who voluntarily attend the police station for questioning are all likely to experience feelings of being cut off, losing control and of uncertainty.

Recognising the role that the police play in the delivery of different kinds of pain – both physical pain, but also more situated forms of pain described in this article - is important as it encourages police organisations to think more deeply about their impact on citizens. This empirical reality also raises the question of whether pain *should* be part of what they do. In some circumstances the answer is, yes, given the long-noted police monopoly over coercive control and thus their role in responding to “something-that-ought-not-to-be-happening-and-about-which-someone-had-better-do-something-



now” (Bittner, 1974: 17). In order to keep others safe, the police should be allowed to use coercion in a lawful, legitimate, justified, necessary, proportionate and ethical way. As for the more situated forms of pain set out in this paper, there are grounds for arguing that they should be minimised as far as possible in police custody, voluntary attendance, arrest or stop and search practices. This is important because of the legally innocent status of citizens, and in the case of police custody, because of the limited resources detainees have for coping with these pains, in the absence of relationships with other detainees, and especially given detainees’ likely vulnerabilities. Employing softer and more legitimate styles of authority, of the kind described above, in which detainees feel treated with dignity, may be one way of doing this.

Finally, within this publication we have explicitly sought to bring together literature from both police and prison studies. In so doing we have built on the limited scholarship which also traverses the police and prison studies divide (Fassin, 2018; Fassin, 2017; Liebling, 2000). The present paper has hopefully shown that there is much to be garnered by re-examining the boundaries, as well as the similarities and tensions between the sub-fields of police studies and prison studies. Inter-disciplinarity is something that is encouraged in higher education. However, perhaps there is also a need to turn the lens inwards to encourage greater engagement and debate *within* criminology and across the sub-fields that make up the criminological endeavour.

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