Chapter 7

Exploring 'betwixt and between' in a prison visitors' centre and beyond

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Introduction

In order to maintain relationships with their loved ones, family members will often spend a great deal of time (as well as expense and emotional labour) visiting their loved one in prison. When visiting inside the prison, visitors occupy the liminal space of the visit room. Though technical outsiders and legally free, they must accede to the institution's demands; they are in a position of being neither free nor prisoner, but are somewhere in between. As Moran (2013) observed, others have referred to this 'state of in-between-ness' in carceral space, albeit using different terminology. For example, Comfort described the visiting suite as being the "border region of the prison where outsiders first enter the institution and come under its gaze" (Comfort 2003, 80), and Arditti described the visiting room as a "portal" (Arditti 2003, 116). Whereas this prior work has considered in some detail the liminality of the visit room in a variety of penal establishments, the limited range of work on liminal carceral spaces beyond the prison has tended to focus on the experience of these spaces *by prisoners* (e.g. Moran et al (2013) on prison transport, and Allspach (2010) on transcarceral spaces for released prisoners). Very little consideration has been given to the liminal nature of spaces *beyond* the prison and their experience by *non*-prisoners, despite the fact that these are spaces intimately connected to the prison and often geographically proximate to it, yet also, simultaneously, separate. This chapter addresses this lack by focussing on the spaces of prison visitors' centres, described by Breen as "bridging the gap between two very different worlds" (1995,

99). While research has hinted at the liminality of these spaces, as yet, they lack critical exploration – an oversight perhaps attributable to the inconsistency of their provision.

The chapter opens with discussion of the 'total' institution, its application to the prison, and its critique. A lens of liminality is then applied, allowing focus on *the in-between*, to briefly explore how the prison is experienced by prisoners, before analysis centres on the experience of prisoners' families. In discussing prison visitors' centres as liminal spaces, the chapter outlines the nature of visitors' centres in general in the UK and Scotland, before focussing on one in particular - the Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh (henceforth 'the Centre') which was the site of the underpinning research. Through an exploration of the spatial organisation of the visit room and the Centre, it suggests that the affective dimensions of these spaces for the families who use them contribute to their experience as liminal or in-betweens. Situating this space-specific between-ness in the context of prisoners' families' experiences when spatially and temporally distant from the Centre, the chapter proposes that prisoners' families experience multiple liminal states during their loved ones' incarceration.

Having first outlined its dual theoretical framing, the chapter discusses the role and provision of prison visitors' centres, before describing research methodology and context. The substantive body of the chapter then covers the multiple liminalities identified through qualitative and ethnographic fieldwork with prison visitors.

From 'total institution' to liminality

Total institution

Goffman suggested that the total institution is a "place of residence or work where a large number of like-situated individuals, cut off from their wider society for an appreciable period of time, together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (Goffman 1991

[1961], 11). Inmates' daily activities are tightly scheduled around strict clock time; their movements are carefully monitored by staff (Goffman 1991 [1961]). 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 wife, cliffs, water, forests, or moors" (Goffman 1991 [1961], 15). Thus, these spatial barriers also signal an exclusion of interaction with the outside world. Prisons provide a "clear example" (Goffman 1991 [1961], 11) of total institutions, but army camps, concentration camps, psychiatric institutions, among others, can also be deemed total institutions.

In recent years, this notion of the prison as a total institution has been subject to both scrutiny and challenge. Increasingly, scholars argue that the boundary between the prison (the inside) and the outside is blurred, and that instead, there is an 'inter-penetration' between inside and outside (Farrington 1992). Farrington argued 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 (Farrington 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[i] will enter and leave the institution many times. This is a rather simplistic summary, but it offers a glimpse into the reasons why the prison's walls are now considered porous.

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; Goffman

himself recognised the 'semi-permeable' nature of these spaces. Schliehe argues that the mounting critique of his theory tends to present an exaggerated version of it, one which bears little resemblance to his detailed micro-analyses on these closed spaces. She accordingly suggests we look much more closely at Goffman's underlying analysis rather than dwell on the chosen term, since Goffman himself acknowledged its limitations (Schliehe 2016). Indeed, closer inspection of the text does suggest a more nuanced picture of the institution's 'totality'. Moreover, the text itself offers rich insights into prison life, insights which continue to resonate with the contemporary prison experience.

Despite this, the view of the prison as 'total' lingers, even dominates, in certain spheres. Arguably, a commonly-held public view of the prison involves the offender being both literally and metaphorically 'cast out' from society, forcibly held in a hermetically sealed space. Criminologists have argued that in recent years we have seen a rise in 'populist punitiveness' or 'penal populism'[ii]; the idea that members of the public are supportive of more severe criminal justice policies and sanctions (for example, lengthy custodial sentences). Public attitudes to punishment are highly complex (Matthews 2005), with some evidence suggesting that the public are selectively, rather than consistently, punitive (Green 2006); other evidence indicates the malleability of these attitudes and suggests that these can be tempered through the provision of more accurate information about crime and punishment (Hutton 2005). Nonetheless, it is arguable that 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. Indeed, Farrington (1992) suggested that this was the prevailing image of the prison in twentieth century USA, and offered various reasons for why this image was never 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 ever came (Farrington 1992). While the

prevailing societal view may be of the offender cast out and confined with limited contact with the outside, this is not the lived experience of imprisonment for the families in this study.

Although the prevalence of this view of prisoners as 'outcasts' cannot be blamed on Goffman, the prevalence of the concept is problematic. If the prison is completely sealed-off from wider society, its harmful effects would be inflicted 'only' on 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 (2001, 5) noted, both how "external forces" flow into the prison and affect prisoners, and also how these forces "flow out" to deliver the myriad social consequences of imprisonment - far reaching and pernicious effects of punishment. These 'collateral consequences' (Hagan and Dinowitzer 1999) are for the most part deeply harmful and unevenly distributed; they disproportionately impact disadvantaged communities from which the prison population in many jurisdictions, including the UK (Murray 2007) and within the UK, in Scotland, is largely drawn (Houchin 2005). Therefore, it is important from not only a theoretical viewpoint, but also from a penal reform perspective, that we appreciate the permeability of the 'not so total' prison (Farrington 1992).

Liminality

Although by no means a panacea to the difficulties of conceptualising the character of the prison, liminality is a useful concept here; like the total institution, it is at risk of being so widely applied to such a broad range of experiences that it is in danger of meaning very little.

Van Gennep (2010 [1960]) initially introduced the concept of liminality to anthropology, reflecting on the distinct stages of ritual experience, and their attendant rites of passage. In such rites of passage, the liminal is the middle stage of transformation, between

the beginning of a transformation (the 'pre-liminal') and before the transformation's completion (the 'post-liminal'). In this post-liminal period, 'transformed' individuals re-integrate into society with their newly-ascribed status (Moran 2013). In van Gennep's version, the liminal stage can be fleeting or lasting, but it is not permanent; there is an expectation that the liminal period will come to an end, to be succeeded by another state in the same way that the pre-liminal stage preceded the liminal.

Turner (1967) reworked van Gennep's theory, focusing his attention specifically on the liminal stage (Thomassen 2009). For Turner, transitional or liminal beings were "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). Liminal beings can be individuals, entire social groups and societies; there can also be liminal spaces and liminal periods; liminality can be applied to both space and time (Thomassen 2009). Each of these liminal 'conditions' share one important characteristic: all are *in between* one thing and another; between one place and another; or between one identity and another. As Thomassen notes, the "key feature" of liminality is transition (Thomassen 2009, 15).

Since van Gennep and Turner, the concept of liminality has continued to develop, and it has been posited that in some cases, transition either cannot or does not manifest. Criminologists and carceral geographers have used liminality to shed light both on prisoners' experiences of imprisonment, and on specific prison environments. By virtue of their incarceration, prisoners are excluded from society, but at the same time they remain part of it. Turney (2015) described prisoners as being 'betwixt and between' given their current separation and isolation from families, yet anticipated reunion upon release. Jewkes (2005) compared the experience of a life sentence with chronic or terminal illness, in that both experiences can be characterised as near-permanent liminal states. In her exploration of liminality in prison visit rooms, Moran (2013) identified a stasis of liminality, with

individuals 'stuck' for some time, having repeated encounters with the liminal space of the visit room. Although for these prisoners and visitors there was no immediate post-liminal 'transformation', she argued that there could be a "cumulatively transformative effect" of these repeated encounters, even if this took a significant period of time to manifest. Thus, even where there is stasis, there is still some movement in the form of repeated and potentially transformative encounters. In her discussion Moran noted that visits could have a transformative effect for both prisoners and visitors (though as we will see, the binary of 'prisoner' and 'prisoner's family' is not always appropriate). For prisoners, visits provide (sometimes literal) tastes of home that remind them of pre-liminal life. They also help them focus on a future post-liminal life of return to the home (Moran 2013, 348) and can thus contribute to 'transformation' from a rehabilitative perspective. When they enter the prison, visitors experience a "pre-liminal detachment" from life outside, experience the liminality of the visit itself, and then have a post-liminal experience of return to their outside life; this cumulative transformation can be a negative one: repeated and sustained encounters with the prison impose a form of prisonisation: time spent inside can harm visiting families (Moran 2013, 348; Comfort 2008, 28).

The negative effect on prisoners' families of repeated contact with the prison can be characterised as the 'secondary prisonisation' familiar within criminological enquiry. Moran (2013) discussed the distinct liminal spaces of prison visit rooms, exploring how 'inside' and 'outside' meet, with prisoners coming "face to face with persons and objects originating in and representing their lives on the outside", and visitors also experiencing the institutionalisation of the 'inside'" (Moran 2013, 343). This institutionalisation essentially denotes the 'prisonisation' (Clemmer 1958); the processes by which prisoners adapt to, and become part of, the particular prison subculture. Visitors experience a diluted but still potent

7

version of this prisonisation or institutionalisation, termed by Comfort '*secondary prisonisation*' (2008, [emphasis added]).

Comfort described the partners of prisoners as simultaneously both captive and free, being 'quasi inmates' (2008, 15). Codd also made reference to this liminal state when she commented that partners, whilst being "technically and legally free and autonomous" are "enmeshed in the power of the penal system" and so "exist somewhere between the two" (2003, 18). Though Comfort's study was in the USA, and Codd's in the UK, each with its distinct penal culture, the observed experience of secondary prisonisation was also prominent in the Scottish context of the study for this chapter.

Incarceration, as Turney (2015, 501) pointed out "is liminality *par excellence*". Using liminality in the prison context allows us to see how imprisonment disrupts prisoners' lives and identities. However it also enables a better understanding of interactions across the prison wall, and shows that imprisonment also inflicts a liminal state on prisoners' families. Prisoners' families are not a homogenous group: their experience of imprisonment is as varied as is the prisoner's. Given the heterogeneity both of families and experiences of imprisonment, the liminal states discussed here are neither exhaustive, nor mutually exclusive.

Visitors' Centres

Although jurisdictions vary, in general, prison visits take place in designated 'visiting rooms' within prisons. In contrast to visit rooms, visitors' *centres* are those facilities in which visitors stow belongings prohibited from entry to the prison itself, wait prior to entering the prison for their visit, and in which they may 'decompress' as they collect their belongings after the visit ends (Families Outside 2010).

Visitors' Centres themselves vary greatly: some are little more than 'add-ons' to prisons both in terms of their architecture and their role; some simply offer a waiting space while others carry out basic administrative functions, as required by the prison they serve (Mills and Codd 2007; Woodall, Dixey, and Kinsella 2012) such as booking in visitors. Others, like the Centre at HMP Edinburgh, are purpose-built, aiming to provide an array of 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* in England and Wales, and *Families Outside*[iii] in Scotland). Staffing arrangements differ between visitors' centres, each with different compositions of paid staff and volunteers (Families Outside 2010), and centres' operational budgets also vary considerably (Mills and Codd 2007).

There is no legal requirement for a UK prison to have a visitors' centre. However, visitors' centres' potential to support families both through imprisonment, and in other ways, (signposting relevant services) is now increasingly recognised (Loucks 2002). 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 prisoners and prison staff (Woodall et al. 2009). The growing recognition of the importance and potential of visitors' centres in Scotland is reflected in the recent creation of a National Prison Visitor Centre Steering Group (NPVCSG) whose purpose is to develop a strategy for the establishment and support of a Visitors' Centre for all prisons in Scotland, and the announcement in November 2015 of a Scottish Government award of £1.8m to visitors' centres in Scotland to support their work (Scottish Government 2015).

Currently, seven of Scotland's fifteen prisons have a Visitors' Centre. All are managed by voluntary sector organisations, working in partnership with the Scottish Prison

Service (SPS)[iv]. At the time of the research for this chapter, the Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh was managed by the Salvation Army, on behalf of the Onward Trust. [v]

Research Context and Methodology

The research for this chapter explored the experience of imprisonment for prisoners' families, and focussed particularly on how families experience prison visiting. Fieldwork conducted within the Centre at HMP Edinburgh explored the dynamics and experiences of visiting through extensive ethnographic observation over a nine month period, supplemented with semi-structured interviews with eight members of staff who worked at the Centre, and twelve adult family members who used it. Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and coded for analysis. In order to elicit visiting children's distinct experiences, the creative method of drawing was deployed. As with all creative and visual methods, drawing is considered to be appropriate for the "cognitive and communicative skills" associated with being a child (Mitchell 2008, 70) since unlike more traditional methods it does not place too great a reliance on verbal and written communication skills. Yet such methods are not inherently 'child-centric' and issues of power, authority and difference need to be integrated into both the analysis, and the process itself, where possible (Mitchell 2008). Moreover, there are a number of specific considerations relating to drawing; for example, drawing is often undertaken at school, making it difficult to cast out sometimes problematic connotations, such as children feeling pressured to 'draw well'. However, of all the methods available, drawing appeared both the most sensitive to children's needs and competencies, and the most feasible given the research parameters and the research setting.

Seven children participated in my research by sharing their views and experiences in this way. I provided blank white A4 card and a variety of coloured pens and pencils, asked

them to draw the Visitors' Centre and/or the visit room, and as they were drawing, encouraged them to talk me through 'the good bits, 'the bad bits' and 'the alright bits' of each space. Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the drawings, methods and attendant practical and ethical considerations in as much depth as they deserve, a small sample of the children's' drawings are provided and briefly discussed[vi].

The Visitors' Centre at HMP Edinburgh

HMP Edinburgh, managed by the SPS, is a large (capacity 870) prison located on the outskirts of the city of Edinburgh. The prison primarily accommodates convicted and remanded adult men,[vii] but also a small number of adult women; prisoners are serving long term and short term sentences, life sentences, and some have received an Order for Life Long Restriction (an OLR).[viii]

As outlined in its Mission Statement for the Centre,[ix] the Salvation Army as operator aims to provide a "supportive, friendly and non-judgemental environment", and to support visitors at "their point of need." Located within the prison environs; the Centre sits directly in front of the prison and next to the car park, but is geographically separate from the prison itself, with no connecting tubes or tunnels. It is architecturally distinct from its prison neighbour, built as a later addition to the prison complex, by architects addressing a brief which 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". The distinction between these two spaces was intended to make clear the independence of the Centre from the prison (Hoskins Architects 2016).

Internally, the Visitors' Centre is large, bright and open. The strong emphasis on families in the architects' brief is manifest in two separate areas for children; a children's soft-play area and an outdoor play area. Centre staff were equally committed to this and also

created the 'Children's Corner', decorated with educational posters and children's art work, with 'child size' tables and chairs and children's books and converted an un-used room into a play room. There is also: a large office used by Centre staff, by Families Outside staff, and for meetings; and a canteen (offering refreshments to all Centre users and staff), as well as areas of seating arranged in both café-style (tables and chairs), and in booth-styles, affording greater privacy. The Centre offers visiting families a comfortable and versatile space.

Although the Salvation Army has its own ethos and aims, it works in partnership with SPS staff at HMP Edinburgh. This is best demonstrated by the 'booking in' of visitors carried out on behalf of the prison; visitors are asked to report to the Centre at least thirty minutes before their booked visit, to allow sufficient time for their details to be processed, and for them to go through security checks within the prison and then make the short walk to the visit room. The Centre itself must follow the prison security rules, such as ensuring that visitors store valuables in the lockers provided, and checking approved forms of identification. When visitors first arrive at the Centre, a staff member checks that they are on the list for the relevant visit session. This information is then relayed to SPS staff at the prison reception desk (HMIP 2009), and approximately fifteen minutes prior to official start time of the visit, a Centre staff member makes a tannoy announcement calling the visitors through to the prison. With visitors often keen to arrive early enough to ensure that they can start their visit on time, this process inevitably requires some waiting, which visitors may do inside the Centre, or outside in the car park. Although one might expect that visitors would find the waiting onerous, both this research and a recent inspection of HMP Edinburgh (HMIPS 2013) suggest that many do not mind having to wait. Many family members reported that they enjoyed the social elements of waiting, and that this time had a tangible benefit, which may lessen some of the burdens by imprisonment. However, the act of waiting, and particularly unavoidable waiting in the prison context, is inextricably linked to lack of power and agency (Gasparini

1995, Griffiths 2014), that must be critically reflected upon; indeed I have begun to do this elsewhere (Foster 2016).

Multiple (spatial) liminalities

By paying attention to the different spatial contexts of liminality, we can observe both its multiplicity, and the differences in its spatial expression. In this section, by considering the different spaces in which prison visitors experience secondary prisonisation - interpreted here to be an indicator of liminality that breaks down the binary distinction between that which is 'inside' and 'outside' of the prison - we can trace the spatially contingent nature of these experiences. We thus consider first the visit room, within the prison proper, and then the Visitors' Centre, before widening our spatial lens to encompass a broader range of liminal experiences beyond the environs of the prison.

Both visit room and Visitors' Centre are liminal spaces, but each with different degrees of inside and outside presence and convergence – it is to these two spaces that we now turn.

The visit room

Perhaps the most tangible and keenly felt liminal experiences pertained to the visit room within the prison itself, and were due in part to its spatiality. Prisoners' and visitors' movements within the visit room are strictly controlled, and thus affect both how they occupy the space, and interact within it. Describing the visit room as "horrible", one visitor referred the restrictive seating arrangements which inhibited physical contact and prevented private conversations; an experience powerfully conveyed in children's' drawings, which demonstrated the contrast between the Visitors' Centre and the visit room (Figures 1-3):

Figure 1: Pryha, Visitors' Centre

FIGURE 1 HERE (approximate area)

Figure 2: Pryha, Visit Room

FIGURE 2 HERE (approximate area)

Figure 3: Amy, Visit Room

FIGURE 3 HERE (approximate area)

In Figure 1, Pryha has drawn the circular tables and chairs in the Visitors' Centre. The tables and chairs 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 Figure 2 and 3, Pryha and Amy have drawn the tables and chairs in the visit room itself. 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 (Figure 2). Physical interaction and movement between family and prisoner are both limited and controlled; where seating arrangements were discussed, all family members including children, complained about these restrictions.[x]

In the visit room, visitors are compelled to obey prison rules, even those they view as needlessly stringent or superfluous; for example, Jake lamented the fact that he was not permitted to share a chocolate bar with his imprisoned son: "It just seems so silly". Visitors accede to the demands of prison officers and accept that (even subtle) self-regulation of

appearance may be required. Visitors are subject to and subjects of, the surveillance of the prison, where the "slightest movements are supervised" and "all events recorded" (Foucault 1995 [1977], 197). They are forced into a "position of subservience in relation to the prison" (Codd 2003, 7).

Visiting her imprisoned mother, Jane gave a particularly vivid account of her quasi-prisoner status 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…" She described one situation where this status was acutely felt: "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 [worn by women prisoners at HMP Edinburgh to identify them during visits] here! I have my freedom so, I'm not concealing anything'". Yet she did not verbally express this, fearing that even such small act of resistance would have negative repercussions for her mother.

The Centre

Although the visit room perhaps manifests as the most constrained and restrictive, prison-like liminal space encountered by visitors, with prison staff and their rules ever-present, this convergence of inside and outside is also clearly demonstrated in the Centre, and specifically by the individuals present within it. While the Centre predominantly caters to visiting families, their use is by no means exclusive; although serving prisoners, the most obvious 'insiders' do not enter the Centre, SPS uniformed staff use it on a regular basis, and there are other visual and aural portents of the neighbouring 'inside': lockers for prohibited items; formal tannoy announcements; legal and health workers waiting to enter the prison to cater for prisoners; and SPS notices outlining prison rules. Perhaps most conspicuous of all, at least

to the knowledgeable eye, is the presence of newly-liberated ('libbed') prisoners, who upon release are encouraged by SPS staff to go to the Centre in order to make a phone-call to arrange a lift home; they then wait until someone arrives to collect them. Families thus reunited sometimes share a snack or light meal in the Centre, before making their way home together. Although libbed prisoners usually made their status known to members of staff, it was, quite poignantly, immediately apparent: HMP Edinburgh's practice of giving libbed prisoners clear plastic bags for their personal belongings enables their immediate identification[xi].

These overt markers of the 'inside' of the prison – SPS staff, signage, and libbed prisoners, are balanced in the Centre by very visible markers of its 'outside' status. These include: the presence of non-uniformed Salvation Army staff in civilian clothes; children's play facilities and artwork; non-SPS information boards offering help and advice; and a small café offering fresh and nutritious snacks and meals. Moreover, there is an active and concerted 'bringing in' of the outside. The Centre interprets its remit of providing support to families very broadly, providing formal and informal support through dedicated Parents and Children's' Support Workers (intended to facilitate positive and meaningful family contact); arts and crafts sessional workers (providing activities for children while they wait for visits); 'Meet the Police' and 'Meet the Fire Brigade'[xii] events for children; two Families Outside charity workers, and through their everyday interactions.

Although these more formal interventions still represent institutions such as the police which may, for some families, be uncomfortably reminiscent of the prison service, families described the Centre as 'feeling' very different to the prison visit room. Many likened it to a community centre, and attributed to this to the atmosphere and the friendly, non-judgemental and supportive staff. Another visitor made an overt distinction between the Centre and the visit room: "It doesn't feel like a prison here". The Centre's environment and atmosphere, as

well as its focus on families and children and fostering positive interactions, contrasts starkly with the prison visit room (though examples of good practice exist); this suggests that a degree of separation between the prison and the Centre has been achieved.

Yet this separation is by no means complete. The institutional markers described blur the inside-outside distinction; a direct reference to liminality was explicitly made by a member of Centre staff: "…we try and make it as easy a transition as possible into the prison, and we have this sort of liminal space here where they're coming in from the outside, and they wait here to get ready for their visit, and then they go into the prison itself…" Physically separate from the prison but within its environs, and managed by a voluntary sector organisation in partnership with the SPS, the Centre occupies an in-between position in multiple ways, as a gateway to the prison (and exit from it). Free to move around within the Centre, booked-in visitors risk forfeiting their visit if they leave the prison environs. Institutional markers remind them of their rights and responsibilities in the spaces they are about to enter.

So far, this analysis has mirrored scholarship which has tended to see the liminality experienced in connection with imprisonment as exclusively spatially encountered within the prison and its immediate environs. Although these demarcated experiences are experienced by some families (and prisoners), they do not exhaust the range of liminalities encountered by prisoners' families, in particular. Some prisoners' families' lives are characterised by perpetual, and sometimes even permanent experience of liminality, with families not only occupying liminal spatial sites – visitor centres and visit rooms – but also having lives marked by (periods of) between-ness, connected to the imprisonment of their loved ones. Visiting families experience liminality both in explicitly bounded spatial terms when visiting

the prison, but also in ways which are more spatially fluid: through in-between relationships, identities and lives.

The home

Comfort rightly looks beyond *in-prison* experiences, to uncover the ways in which prison interferes with and disrupts life in the home. She notes that even when partners of prisoners are not within the confines of the prison, they are "subjected to secondary prisonisation via institutional management and exploitation"; partly because the methods for staying in touch "require surrendering the private domicile as an extended site of penal control" (Comfort 2008, 97).

In the case at hand, many families explained that on the days that they visited the prison, the full day could be taken up with planning, travelling, waiting, the visit itself, and then the return journey home. For example, Zoe explained: "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". This one vignette demonstrates both the now well-documented sacrifices, strains and "inherent obstacles" (Tewksbury and DeMichele 2005, 308) of prison visiting, and how families arrange and re-arrange family life around the unbending prison timetable. Moreover, it demonstrates how quasi-prisoner status transcends the prison wall, and imposes itself on families' homes and lives beyond it.

Phone calls to the prison also exemplify this point. As with most prisons in Scotland and elsewhere, since prisoners do not have (legal) access to mobile phones, they make calls home at phones situated in their respective communal hall. Visitor Dee recounted the numerous problems with the phone-call policy. The first issue is that she cannot initiate a call herself: "You have to wait 'til they phone you". The second is that she has little or no control

18

over when (or whether) a call is made: "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…" The last is being unable call back to add to the conversation with another anecdote or piece of news that had been temporarily forgotten, or to resolve an argument: "…if you fall out, you can't phone and say what you think or… if they hang up…you can't do anything, so it's all kinda left…" This enforced waiting, and in some cases forced confinement in the home in order to wait for the (sometimes long-overdue) call, impacts upon families' daily activities, which to Comfort's mind signals the extended reach of the penitentiary into the home (Comfort 2007).

The experience of domestic spaces rendered liminal by the extended reach of the prison, and punctuated by encounters with the prison visit room and visitors' Centre, brings into focus the shifts in identities and relationships which accompany a period of imprisonment. For many families, imprisonment does not end family relationships (Fishman 1988). However, by its very nature, it disrupts and changes the relationships prisoners have with those on the outside. Visitor Katie remarked: "You know it's very hard with your partner being in prison. You can't have much of a relationship. Well you can…but you know what I'm saying. Not a proper one, as a man and woman would have outside of prison..." Relationships change, and they may remain in that altered state until release, whereupon they may return to their pre-imprisonment form.

Codd (2003) discussed the way in which prisoners' identities are (re)negotiated, with aspects of their 'inside' identities taken on, and aspects of their 'outside' identities denied. She argues that prisoners' partners (and this could be extended to others with whom they have relationships) also (re)negotiate their identities. Codd focuses on women partners' identities as the archetypal 'good' wives and mothers, and notes that imprisonment disrupts this identity, making the care-giving associated with these roles much more difficult to

provide. There are known problems with the concept of identity (Brubaker and Cooper 2000), but the changing of relationships and associated of roles as highlighted by Codd (2003) is important to note.

Families visit prisoners for a whole host of reasons, but one of the most common to emerge in this study was to show that they cared for the prisoner, and convey that he or she had not been abandoned. Serenity explained: "You cannae leave them there [in prison] with nothing; you just cannae dae it", which meant that she continued to visit frequently, despite the considerable time and effort she had to exert in order to do this. Jake told me that in addition to enjoying spending time with his imprisoned son, he also visited "out of a sense of duty as a father". He elaborated, "I don't want him to have sort of games playing in his mind where he thinks that nobody cares. I want him to think that we are kind of with him, as it were, and support him as much as we can". Other ways of demonstrating care and of fulfilling care-giving roles are in the handing-in of money and property to support the prisoner; these are carried out on a regular basis by virtually all of the families encountered during this research. These material gifts often represented family members' own material sacrifices (Christian, Mellow, and Thomas 2006). Relationships enter liminal states, before often problematic attempts to resume previous relationships and roles upon release.

Permanent liminality

Although for some a prisoner's release promises the possibility of a post-liminal transformation from the limbo state of separation, for others such a prospect is either distant or even beyond reach. As Jewkes (2005) has noted, prisoners serving life sentences, with no known release date, are in a (near) permanent liminal state. Given that many prisoners maintain relationships with those on the outside their families too are arguably in this state. For example, prison visitor Judy is in a relationship with Patrick, a prisoner who has been

given an OLR. Neither knows if Patrick will ever be released, and even if he is, he would be subject to the strictest monitoring. Despite their frequent visits and contact, the OLR leaves Judy and Patrick stuck in their respective liminal states.

For other families, rather than the prospect of an indefinite prison sentence, it is the pattern of persistent offending and repeated incarceration which delivers a permanent or near-permanent liminal state. With the 'revolving door' of reoffending and associated prison 'churn', many individuals repeatedly switch status between 'prisoner' and 'free', and their families' statuses also switch between 'prisoner's family', and 'former-prisoner's family'. For some, the frequency and repetition with which they experience this alternation of identity renders their status effectively liminal. Their attainment of a post-liminal state is repeatedly thwarted by either actual custodial sentences or recalls[xiii], and by the constant anticipation of them.

Fieldwork for this chapter showed that some family members were (almost) certain that their imprisoned loved one would not re-offend: 'he's learned his lesson' or, 'he's learned his lesson…this time'. Yet many more expected incarceration to recur, and many families were witnessed who, having met a libbed prisoner on release, were returning to visit their loved one serving a subsequent sentence or following recall. Whilst some fully expected to return to the Centre, others resolved that if another custodial sentence was imposed, they would not visit again, suggesting that some relationships were conditional, and featured ultimatums. Serenity said: "…But if he [her partner] comes back in [to prison], no way am I coming back. That's it".

The continual presence of the prison for some families could scarcely have been more pronounced. Sophie recounted:"… 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." Serenity,

interviewed while visiting her partner, said:"…I spent a lot of time visiting jails when I was a kid. I spent my eighteenth birthday in a jail visiting my dad; I had a big badge on…" She had also visited her older brother in prison, and previous partners. Judy, partner to Patrick with an OLR, poignantly reflected: "Even if he did end up having to go back inside *again*, it wouldn't faze me as much, because I've had the prior practice with my brother [also a former prisoner]. 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…" The adage goes that practice makes perfect; practice equips Judy with the skills to deal with the imprisonment of a loved one.

A full exploration of the nuance of these experiences is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is clear that such accounts are not uncommon; they pepper ethnographic field-notes, for example: "A mother and father with their two children are sitting in the Centre. [Centre staff member] 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 that they are a really nice wee family and that he is good with the children". Three weeks later the mother was back in the Centre; her partner had returned to HMP Edinburgh. Such moving examples help to explain why so many of the visitors, when staff wished them well in their last visit, replied: 'I'll be back'.

For these individuals, the experience of incarceration reaches into their domestic homes and into the very substance of their lives, sometimes over an extended period. Yet in their narratives they return over and over again to the experience of the prison and its closely associated spaces to express the nature of that connection. In other words, although the experience of secondary prisonisation may be dispersed and distributed, it is narrated through discussion and description of encounters with the prison – or with the prison-like spaces with which visitors come into contact – the visit room and the visitors' Centre. For these families,

there is a sense of weary acceptance that since imprisonment and prison visiting has long been a central part of their lives, there is no reason to believe that the future will be different.

However, the growing familiarity with these spaces – the notions of being practiced, of being un-fazed by them – speaks to an emergent critique of the dominant discourse in prisoners' families literature that prison is a "monolithically negative force in the lives of inmates and their families" (Comfort 2008, 9); a critique which I explore and advance in Foster (forthcoming). These narratives support the work of Morris who, in her influential study with the wives of male prisoners in 1960s England found that families' experience of imprisonment was diverse, and not all families experienced it traumatically (Morris 1965). There are a number of reasons for this, including a suggestion that imprisonment becomes a normal or routine feature of many families' lives within communities; and, more ominously, that the negative effects of incarceration are difficult to distinguish from the multiple disadvantages already experienced by many families.

Layered liminalities

The preceding passages have discussed the multiple liminalities that characterise visitors' (and prisoners') encounters with what has been termed the 'total institution', operating in relation to different spatial contexts such as the visit room, the Visitors' Centre, the domestic home and so on. Through this broadening spatial lens it has become clear that differently-nuanced forms of liminality are experienced by these individuals as they encounter these different spaces, and as the prison differentially penetrates and colours them, rendering practices, feelings, and even lives as liminal in various ways.

Throughout, though, there has been a sense in which the designations of prisoner and visitor, or prisoner and prisoner's family, are unproblematic. Real life is of course much messier than this, and the fact that some prison visitors have also served prison sentences

complicates the nature of liminality in each of these spatial contexts. For example, Sophie well-rehearsed in the role of prison visitor, was also a former prisoner who has found it difficult to fully escape her past. She described her face as a "face that matches a criminal face", elaborating: "I've got a thyroid problem. And my mum said to me, all the junkies wear their hair doon like that, try and dae that [moves her hair forward to cover her ears] and it makes me…I'm no on drugs. And I've got a sweat tablet… I've got a dry mouth, and it's because it's my thyroid making me sweat. .. I feel like I always get picked oot. It's unfair". In her eyes, her hairstyle, her dry mouth and her sweating give her the physical appearance of someone with a drug problem, which, as she sees it, invites an assumption of criminality, making her more likely to be searched by prison staff.

Another visitor gave near-daily accounts of what she perceived as persecution when visiting due to a past which included custodial sentences, and having more recently been caught attempting to 'pass' drugs during a visit[xiv]. In her view, these two issues compounded each other, bringing closer surveillance and more negative treatment from prison officers. Though her custodial sentences were served some time ago, to her this was immaterial: she suspected that these tales about her past had been spread.

Considering these examples, it may be the case that liminality is a status that applies not only to spaces (such as visit rooms) and life circumstances (such as awaiting a loved one's release) but also to individuals, in that some individuals are in a liminal state of being between free and prisoner, unable, in their encounters with liminal prison spaces, to shake off their past. Researchers have highlighted how the well-recognised stigma of imprisonment attaches to the families of prisoners as well as to prisoners themselves (Lopoo and Western 2005; May 2000). Sophie's account begs parallels with Moran's research with women prisoners in Russia, in which the carceral experience is embodied, and thus goes beyond the experience of being confined in the literal and spatial sense (Moran 2014). The former-

prisoner family members who experience this type of liminal state, are 'marked' by prior periods of custody, preventing them from re-integrating into society even as prison visitors stigmatised-by-association, and further cementing the continued "penetration of the criminal justice system" (Comfort 2007, 272) in their lives, through their family members' persistent entanglement in it.

Conclusion

This chapter has lent support to the idea that the prison has porous walls which allow the outside to enter, the inside to exit, and inside and outside to meet. By deploying in concert the theories of the total institution (acknowledging both Goffman's insights and subsequent engagements and critiques) and of liminality (after van Gennep and Turner), it has explored the permeability of the prison wall, and how the experience of imprisonment for both families and prisoners is or can be liminal.

If a prison visit room is acknowledged to be a liminal space between inside and outside, the chapter argues that a prison visitors' centre is also liminal, albeit with a different and nuanced sense of between-ness. By exploring the spatial and affective dimensions of both Centre and visit room, we see that visiting families traverse multiple liminal spaces, between the prison and the outside world during their visiting experiences. These spatially bounded forms of liminality within discrete and delineated spaces are characterised by different modes of intersection between inside and outside, different visual and aural cues and symbolism, and different rules and restrictions.

More broadly, however, there are a number of different liminal states families can experience as a result of a loved ones' imprisonment(s), which bring the domestic home within the reach of the prison, through the everyday practices of facilitating visiting, waiting for phone-calls, making sacrifices in order to support an imprisoned family member, and so

on. Whilst families are not prisoners, neither are they entirely free – even when far away from the prison gates. Imprisonment means that families' relationships and roles change into a liminal or 'limbo' state that for some may change back again, but for others, will become a permanent state of liminal stasis, with loved ones seemingly always doing time. Finally, some family members' experience of these multiple liminalities is further complicated by their *own* experience of imprisonment.

The concept of liminality is often applied to spaces and sites. However, this chapter suggests that it can also be applied to people, and to periods of time, exploring how different and multiple liminalities are experienced by prisoners' families. The 'pains of imprisonment' (Sykes 1958, 63) for both prisoners and their families are now well recognised, and in many respects, these empirical data verify both the existence and the harm of these particular pains. However, they have also begun to show that experiencing this between-ness itself is a complex, spatially contingent process, and that liminality extends beyond the conventional spaces in which it has thus far been observed. Accordingly, in order to better understand the pains of between-ness, further attention needs to be paid to the complexity and nuance of the experience of prison visitation.

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[i] A term used to describe how some offenders are caught up in a cycle of offending which is difficult to 'break'.

[ii] Though it can be argued that there are nuanced differences between these two terms, they essentially describe the same phenomenon as noted by Pratt (Pratt 2007, 2)

[iii] Families Outside is Scotland's national charity which aims to provide support to families affected by the criminal justice system, particularly imprisonment

[iv] With the slight exception of the Visitors' Centre at HMP Addiewell: HMP Addiewell is one of two prisons in Scotland (the other is HMP Kilmarnock) which is managed by a private sector company under contract to the SPS.

[v] In January 2016 Barnardo's replaced the Salvation Army.

[vi] These methods provided rich data on families' experiences, and although only a small extract is discussed in this chapter, there are more examples in Foster (forthcoming PhD).

[vii] Remanded prisoners are prisoners who are either awaiting trial or awaiting sentence. Adult prisoners in Scotland are those aged 21 years and over.

[viii] Long term sentences are custodial sentences of 4 years and over. Short -term sentences are custodial sentences of fewer than 4 years. The Order for Lifelong Restriction (the OLR) constitutes a sentence of imprisonment, or as the case may be detention, for an indeterminate period (Criminal Procedure (Scotland) Act 1995 Section 210F). These orders are imposed for those offenders deemed to be very 'high risk'.

[ix] At the time of field-work (pre Barnardo's takeover), the Salvation Army's Mission Statement was displayed on various posters located in the Centre.

[x] However, HMP Edinburgh offers, in collaboration with the Visitors' Centre designated 'Children's Visits' to qualifying families (for example, there are child protection criteria that must be fulfilled) twice weekly. In these family oriented visits, both family members and prisoners can move around freely (even though the tables and

chairs remain fixed). Moreover, the visit centres on an activity the families can do and share together, such as doing arts and crafts. Families, including children enthusiastically discussed these visits.

[xi] The most recent inspection of HMP Addiewell, another Scottish prison, outlines that prisoners are given a "discreet rucksack" rather than a plastic bag for this purpose (HMIPS 2015, 73).

[xii] Members of Centre staff invite members of the Police Force and Fire Service respectively to the Centre for an afternoon. Police officers and fire fighters show the children what their jobs involve interactively (for example, children are invited into police cars and to put the siren on, and to meet police dogs), and help with activities centred on these themes. These include completing worksheets, drawing police officers and their dogs, and icing cupcakes.

[xiii] A prisoner may be recalled to prison for a number of reasons. This may be for breach of a condition of licence, or the commission of another crime.

[xiv] Prison slang; term used to describe the passing of prison contraband (for example, illegal drugs) between visitors and prisoners, and between prisoners themselves.