



Ministry of
JUSTICE

National Offender
Management Service

An exploration of staff – prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor: 12 years on

Revised Final Report

Alison Liebling, Helen Arnold and
Christina Straub

Cambridge Institute of Criminology
Prisons Research Centre
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AL, HA and CS, Cambridge, June 2011.

Executive Summary

HMP Whitemoor is a high security prison accommodating Category A and B adult male prisoners serving sentences of over four years. At the time of the research the daily prisoner population was around 440 and in June 2009 there were a total of 441 uniformed staff.

A previous study carried out at HMP Whitemoor in 1998/9, published in 2001, (see Liebling et al. *The Prison Officer* 2001; 2nd edition 2010, Willan Publishing) found very positive relationships at the establishment; however, by 2008 a report by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIP) described apparently 'distant relationships' between staff and prisoners. This apparent decline is a clear matter of concern and interest.

With this historic background in mind, the objectives of the current study were as follows:

- To explore the nature and quality of staff-prisoner relationships at Whitemoor.
- To describe the contemporary prison experience in conditions of maximum security.
- To determine whether aspects of the prison's management or practice were making distant staff-prisoner relationships or prisoner alienation more likely

Whilst the research did not set out explicitly to explore relationships between Muslim prisoners and others, the role of faith and in-prison conversions to Islam, or the risks of radicalisation, these became important themes in the research because of their prominence in staff and prisoner experience at Whitemoor.

HMP Whitemoor is a high security prison accommodating Category A and B adult male prisoners serving sentences of over four years. At the time of the research the daily prisoner population was around 440 and in June 2009 there were a total of 441 uniformed staff.

The research began in January 2009, fieldwork was conducted between May 2009 and June 2010, and the study was completed in March 2011. The research design was intentionally largely qualitative, and based on observation, informal interviews and conversations, a dialogue group and extensive one to one interviews with 36 prison staff and 52 prisoners. Quantitative data was gathered through a detailed quality of life survey with 159 randomly selected prisoners and 194 staff in September 2009.

The qualitative data collected provided an in-depth and rich understanding of the experience of life in a maximum security prison for those prisoners and prison staff interviewed and observed. The surveys provide quantitative data on key aspects of a prisoner's quality of life and on staff quality of their working lives.

Summary of main findings

The nature of staff-prisoner relationships

- Good practices and relationships were found in education, the gym, the induction spur, some of the workshops, the Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorder (DSPD) Unit and the Segregation unit.
- Staff did some outstanding work with difficult individuals, and conducted most of their basic security tasks professionally, but 'lightly' (not always engaging with prisoners during the carrying out of such tasks).
- Whilst we found examples of excellent practices and attitudes, and found energy and enthusiasm among staff, staff-prisoner relationships were generally distant at Whitemoor. Levels of trust between staff and prisoners were low; and there were high

levels of suspicion and 'risk-thinking' in the prison. The decline in relationships and trust led to a drying up of the 'information flow' necessary to 'distinguish trustworthiness from untrustworthiness' (see later).

- Signs of disenchantment with prior propensities to use violence among 'high risk' prisoners were sometimes being missed by prison staff. Some individuals spoke at length in interviews and informal conversations about their ideological trajectories, which included moves away from pre-prison identities that went unrecognised within the prison.
- Staff were less confident and sure-footed (as well as less 'professional' around prisoners) than they had been in the first study. Staff were least sure about how to build relationships and police boundaries with Muslim prisoners. There was considerable uncertainty over the treatment of Muslim prisoners and about what they were entitled to, or what was reasonable (for example, the number and type of reading material).
- Staff felt unsupported by managers in this aspect of their work.
- There was a lack of clarity about the purpose of mainstream high security prison regimes for prisoners.
- Prisoners repeatedly told us that 'the best interaction in this jail ... is with the teachers ... in education', and they appreciated their professionalism and work attitude highly.

The contemporary prison experience in conditions of maximum security

- There was a new problem of relatively young prisoners serving indeterminate sentences facing 15-25 year tariffs coming to terms with and finding a way of doing this kind of sentence.
- Prisoners experienced restrictions placed by the prison on finding available ways through their 'existential crisis'.
- Prisoners brought more (oppositional) 'street culture' and frustration with them into prison due to changing social conditions and sentencing practices.
- Prisoners were looking for hope, recognition and meaning at a difficult stage in their sentences. Some prisoners (once they adjusted – a process taking some years) found the change of pace, surroundings and company brought about by a long sentence provided an opportunity to reflect on life, the past and the future.
- The process of identity change was a core aspiration for many, and a major theme in the interviews. This complex process was not adequately supported.
- The need to belong (to a 'family') generated a search for collective identity.
- Prisoners appreciated some of the facilities on offer (e.g., gym, education and workshops) but they were frustrated and felt 'stuck' and invisible in the prison.
- Prisoners felt there was a lack of clarity about the purpose of long-term imprisonment.
- A new population mix, including younger, more Black and minority ethnic and mixed race, and high numbers of Muslim prisoners, was disrupting established hierarchies. Social relations among prisoners had become complex and less visible. Too much power flowed in the prison among some groups of prisoners, with some real risks of serious violence. There were high levels of fear in the prison.
- Some of the (serious) violent incidents were apparently related to faith or ideological disputes but were difficult to disentangle from other forms of prison violence.
- Muslim prisoners talked about feeling alienated and targeted, and some non-Muslim prisoners regarded them as representing risk and a threat to a 'British-White-Christian-Secular' way of life.
- There were tensions relating to fears of 'extremism' and 'radicalisation' in the prison.
- While the risks of alienation, loss of meaning, and violence, were more pressing than the (also real) risks of radicalisation, failure to address the former issues might make the risk of radicalisation higher.

- All groups of prisoners were affected by and talked about the problems and perceptions above.

The role that faith and conversion played in the prison experience

- The above conditions made the search for meaning, new identities, hope, dignity and relationships urgent. Some of the avenues prisoners sought to enable these were constrained.
- Conditions in the prison made participation in Islamic practices the most 'available' option for those looking for belonging, meaning, 'brotherhood', trust and friendship.
- Among the sample of Whitemoor prisoners, conversions to Islam in prison were high, and contributed to the high proportion of Muslim prisoners in the population. Twelve of a sample of 23 Muslim prisoners interviewed in the research (there were 52 prisoners in the sample in total) were in-prison conversions.
- Non-Muslim faith groups were less well provided for at the time of the research.
- Faith 'identities' were being adopted and used in many ways at Whitemoor, including for protection. The main motivations for turning to faith were: sense-making, searching for meaning, identity, and structure; dealing with the pains of long-term imprisonment; seeking 'brotherhood'/family; or 'anchored relations'; seeking care and protection; gang membership; rebellion; and coercion. (The term 'brotherhood' used here meant belonging to the group. It had no broader meaning and was not linked in any interview to any specific organisation).
- There was considerable ignorance and confusion (even among recently converted prisoners) about the Islamic faith. Those with extremist views could fill a gap in knowledge with misinformation and misinterpretation or could point to illegitimate staff practices as a reason for upholding oppositional views. Support for moderate interpretations of Islam was 'muted' at the time of the research.
- There were some intimidating 'heavy players' among the Muslim population, who appeared to be orchestrating prison power dynamics rather than propagating or following the faith. Many physically powerful prisoners 're-established their outside identities' as leaders in the prison and used their (newly acquired) faith status as a tool for establishing influence.
- Non-Muslim prisoners described wearing underpants in the showers on some spurs (out of 'respect' and fear) and some Muslim prisoners described a form of intimidation exerted ('they probably do feel shamed') relating to cooking (especially frying bacon) in the kitchens.
- Conflict and tension existed between and within faith groups.

The role of the prison in generating prisoner alienation

- The new context: a high security prison with no vulnerable prisoner wings, post 9/11 and 7/7, containing several prisoners convicted of terrorist offences, with a younger prisoner population reflecting a fragmented religious and secular society, and attempting to fulfil an obligation to monitor and manage the 'risk of radicalisation', as well as the risk of violence, presented new challenges to staff, managers and prisoners at Whitemoor.
- High levels of fear among staff and prisoners was having a negative impact on all aspects of prison life.
- The lack of professional confidence among staff, particularly in relation to Muslim prisoners, meant that they kept a distance from some. Resorting to 'basic tasks' led to less use of 'dynamic authority'.
- The atmosphere of distrust, together with increased monitoring and risk assessment, resulted in self-censorship and a reduced information flow. The role of the psychology

department in improving both the assessment and positive management of prisoners in partnership with staff (and prisoners) was inhibited by lack of trust.

- Prisoners convicted of terrorist offences warranted increased monitoring; but the need to err on the side of caution meant that Muslim prisoners in general felt they were the 'victims of staff authority'.
- Both Muslim and non-Muslim prisoners felt discriminated against, and that the 'other' group had advantages (non-Muslim prisoners had better relationships with and treatment by staff, Muslim prisoners had better faith-based material provision). There was some white prisoner 'racism'.
- The balancing and encouragement of all faith practices was not weighted heavily enough against the requirement to monitor and reduce the risks of extremism among small numbers of prisoners.
- Sensitivities and lack of knowledge in a new multicultural context, together with the rise in religious extremism, and the rise in ethno-religious conflict globally, led to a risk of faith becoming the new 'no-go area' in prison.
- Staff sometimes viewed any outward appearance of Islam as evidence of radicalisation, rather than a manifestation of faith, and these 'signs' were written up in security reports. Staff perceived Islam as a radical religion; they over-estimated extremism; this 'pushed prisoners together', reinforced their views and gave them more power.
- Staff and prisoners proposed segregation of Muslims and non-Muslims (by prison, wing, and kitchens) in order to curb the 'contamination' influence (that is, conversion, or radicalisation).
- Extremist prisoners did not interact with or come to the attention staff; they had 'runners'. The 'key players all worked together' and 'were powerful' (according to officers). The influence and activities of high-profile Muslims was hard for staff to evidence; other prisoners were instructed by them to carry out particular acts of violence or threat, they kept their distance from staff and avoided interaction with them, and they were polite, civil and outwardly compliant – staff described them as model prisoners.
- Things calmed down for a period after key players were transferred from the prison.
- There were aspects of life at Whitemoor that could be improved considerably. Some of these possibilities were being energetically explored as the research team left the prison.
- Keeping the high security prison 'relational', ensuring the safety of staff and prisoners as well as prisoners' psychological survival, and facilitating 'progress', personal development and positive change, required new and better strategies. Some trust must flow, and be 'placed intelligently', for a prison to work, and as an aid to risk management.

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Abbreviations

ACA	Audit and Corporate Assurance
ACPS	Advisory Council on the Penal System
AI	Appreciative Inquiry
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CALM	Anger Management
C&R	Control and Restraint
CCTV	Closed Circuit Television
CSC	Close Supervision Centres
DSPD	Dangerous and Severe Personality Disorder
DST	Dedicated Search Team
ETS	Enhanced Thinking Skills
HMCIP	Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons
ICSPV	International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence
IEP	Incentives and Earned Privileges
MDT	Mandatory Drug Testing
MQPL	Measuring the Quality of Prison Life
MSL	Minimum Staffing Level
NOMS	National Offender Management Service
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification
OASys	Offender Assessment and Sentence Management System
OMU	Offender Management Unit
P-NOMIS	Prison-National Offender Management Information System
PSO	Prison Service Order
PTSD	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
REAG	Race Equality Action Group
SIR	Security Information Report
SMT	Senior Management Team
SO	Senior Officer
SOTP	Sex Offender Treatment Programme
SQL	Staff Quality of Life Survey
SSU	Special Security Unit
TACT	Prisoners convicted under the Terrorism Act
VDT	Voluntary drug testing
VP(U)	Vulnerable Prisoner (Unit)
YP	Young Person

Chapter 1 Introduction: Background to the research, methods, and aims

The manner in which the Prison Service of this country meets the challenge of containing long-term prisoners in conditions that combine security and humanity will have a lasting effect on the Service as a whole (Radzinowicz, ACPS 1968: 3).

At the end of the day, nothing else that we can say will be as important as the general proposition that relations between staff and prisoners are at the heart of the whole prison system and that control and security flow from getting that relationship right (Home Office 1984: para. 16).

Considerable official policy as well as scholarly interest in the treatment of long-term prisoners in conditions of high security existed throughout the 1970s to the 1990s, often precipitated by major events: such as disturbances in the 1970s and 1980s, and escapes in the 1990s. The lack of any such calamitous events since 2000, some major improvements in official performance, tighter management 'grip', changes in focus, and some tailored alternatives for especially difficult prisoners¹ have led to high security prisons moving off the policy agenda and away from high profile public scrutiny. If there had been a time when, for complex historical and cultural reasons, staff had been unsure of their entitlement to enter and search some prisoners' cells, those days were well and truly over. A new 'professionalism' among staff working in high security prisons has become a basic expectation. Meanwhile, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 2001 in New York and 7/7 2005 in the UK, and the introduction of new and longer sentences for violent crimes (the IPP sentence in particular), amongst other things, have precipitated significant changes in the population mix in high security prisons, as well as in the management challenges they pose. This study represents a timely opportunity to consider some of those new challenges. This study represents a social analysis of some new dynamics appearing in high security prisons, rather than an evaluative report on the 'performance' of Whitemoor prison.

1.1 Invitation and rationale for the research

The research reported here consists of a repeat and development of an exploratory study carried out at HMP Whitemoor in 1998/9 by Alison Liebling and David Price (*An Exploration of Staff-Prisoner Relationships at HMP Whitemoor*). This study had identified the characteristics of role model officers, and described prison officer work at its best. The research resulted in the publication of the book, 'The Prison Officer' (2001; 2nd edition 2010).

The current study was requested by the Home Office towards the end of 2008 following an HMCIP Report describing apparently 'distant relationships' between staff and prisoners at Whitemoor. Since the original study had found very positive relationships at the establishment, this apparent decline was a matter of concern and interest. There was a rapidly changing social context to this finding, characterised by increased prison population size, changing population composition, longer and more complex sentences, increasing gang membership, increasing accommodation of, and expectations among, minority religious groups in prison, and fears of radicalisation in the wake of terrorist attacks. These developments seemed to be altering the contours of daily prison life, especially at

¹ For example, the Close Supervision Centres and the Dangerous and Severely Personality Disordered Units.

Whitemoor, where a high proportion of Muslim prisoners were accommodated.² A lack of clarity about how to respond appropriately to these new challenges became evident in the light of the 2008 Inspectorate report exposing the dangers of perceived discrimination, the distancing of staff from prisoners, apparent pressures on some prisoners to convert to Islam, the following of new risk procedures, and the effects of uncertainty and lack of understanding on staff. Staff reported feeling 'anxiety and apprehension' about their handling of new prisoner groups (HMCIP, 2008). The new difficulties faced by prison staff and managers, as well as by prisoners, were (at the time the research began) poorly understood.³

The original study explored the nature and quality of staff-prisoner relationships and the work and role of prison officers in long-term prisons, but its findings were considered to be of general relevance to the work of prison officers in general. Its aim was 'to improve empirical and conceptual knowledge about staff-prisoner relationships and the nature of prison officers' work'. The research led to a deep understanding of the complex role that staff-prisoner relationships play in prison life, the peacekeeping work that prison officers do, the experiences and needs of long-term prisoners held in conditions of maximum security, and the important use of discretion in accomplishing order in prison on a day-to-day basis.

The original study was conducted after the 1994/5 escapes from Whitemoor and Parkhurst, and following substantial investment in security and training at Whitemoor and other high security prisons. Considerable emphasis was placed on redrawing relationships, improving intelligence, and on all aspects of professional practice at this time. Staff-prisoner relationships were good (for example, most prisoners felt that 90-95 per cent of their interaction with staff was 'co-operative and civil'), and staff were professional in their dealings with prisoners, often combining respectful and 'right relationships' with security and order, as well as providing constructive activities for prisoners. Staff were 'confident, decisive, sure-footed, capable and enthusiastic' (Liebling and Price 1999: 15):

Relationships were described as 'quite close' and they were generally good humoured ... Control clearly rested with staff, but there was a noticeable information flow with prisoners. Staff were physically present almost everywhere in the prison, but were relatively unobtrusive. They were often interested in group work, offending behaviour courses, and other constructive work with prisoners, and prided themselves on creating a 'pleasant atmosphere on the wing' (Liebling and Price 1999: 15).

There were exceptions to the general pattern (the segregation unit, for example, came in for considerable criticism at a later date) and prisoners expressed frustration about inconsistencies in practice, some aspects of staff attitudes, and the lack of 'purpose' experienced by some prisoners on a day to day basis. The prison had two wings for Vulnerable Prisoners, one of which specialised in providing

² The proportion of Muslim prisoners has grown from around three to around eleven per cent of the total prison population between 1997 and 2008 (compared to 3 per cent in the community); Whitemoor held 35-39 per cent Muslim prisoners at the time of the research.

³ Considerable progress in this respect has been made since the 2008 Inspectorate Report on Whitemoor was published. The issues raised in that, and throughout this, report now constitute a major area of policy activity, reflection and development (see, for example, HMCIP 2011).

SOTP. The prison had been undergoing a 'tightening up' period (introducing IEP, Volumetric Control, MDT, and so on) but seemed to manage this without losing legitimacy in the eyes of prisoners.

It is well known that staff-prisoner relationships are fundamental to prison life and that they can go wrong in several different ways: they can be too close, too flexible, too distant, and too rigid (see Sparks *et al.* 1996). They can also be too risk averse and too superficial, and they can be insufficiently or, paradoxically, too trusting (Liebling, assisted by Arnold 2004). Ideally, they can contain and transmit the 'quiet flow of power' (Liebling and Price 2001) that keeps a prison legitimately ordered and its population broadly assenting to the regime. For all of the above reasons, the invitation to repeat the study in a new context was appealing. The Principal Investigator (Alison Liebling) responded to a formal Invitation to Tender and was awarded the contract in January 2009. There were a number of developments made to the original design, which had been primarily qualitative and based on observation, shadowing, long interviews and an appreciative inquiry exercise,⁴ including a stronger focus on the experience of imprisonment for prisoners, revisions to the interview schedules, and the use of a detailed quality of life survey for prisoners and staff.

1.2 Research objectives and key research questions

The aim of the present study was to re-investigate the nature and quality of staff-prisoner relationships at Whitemoor in this new context, with a considerably higher proportion of Muslim prisoners, many of whom felt 'under constant scrutiny', (HMCIP 2008), using the original study as a baseline. The study also explored in more detail the changing nature of relationships between prisoners.

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- To explore the nature and quality of staff-prisoner relationships at Whitemoor.
- To describe the contemporary prison experience in conditions of maximum security.
- To explore the role that faith and conversion play in the prison experience.
- To determine whether anything 'the prison was doing' made distant staff-prisoner relationships or prisoner alienation more likely.

The team's guiding research questions included the following:

- What are the pressures on different groups of prisoners in Whitemoor prison, and how are they experienced? How do prisoners see themselves? Who is 'vulnerable', and in what ways do these vulnerabilities manifest themselves?
- Is it possible to describe accurately and to explain the various types of power relations and staff-prisoner relationships among distinct prisoner groups? What accounts for the existence of these differences? How much trust, of

⁴ Appreciative Inquiry (AI); is an innovative and useful approach to research, including a search for what is life-giving out of what is experienced as painful, in order to move beyond 'existing ... patterns of discourse' (Ludema *et al.* 2001: 189; Elliott 1999; and Liebling, assisted by Arnold 2004). It is largely inductive, begins with exercises aimed at imaginative conversation about peak experiences, and continues into loosely structured interviews. The method is participatory, concerned with theory generation and with the development of sensitising concepts; and it is concerned with 'lived experience', narrative, and meaning. Its aim is to encourage conversation about positive experiences as well as to unearth difficulties and problems. It sets a balanced emotional tone (although it invites emotional expression), and facilitates trust. Conversations using AI tend to have more depth and energy than standard interviews (for further detail and an account of its use in the first study, see Liebling *et al.* 1999).

what kind, exists between which groups in the prison? What fosters and what undermines 'right' relationships? How and why do staff-prisoner relationships become distant? Is this more likely to be the case with new prisoner groups?

- How are relationships mediated by shifting social and political dynamics? What are the priorities of staff and managers, and have these changed? What roles are played by 'security', and 'risk' in the special environment of a maximum security prison?

These questions arose from discussions with the researchers sponsors and from the researchers' own thematic discussions throughout the fieldwork. They were refined as the study developed and the team began to present emerging findings. They steered the analysis of the data

1.3 Methods

The research began in January 2009, fieldwork began in May 2009 and ended in June 2010, and the study was completed in March 2011. The research design was intentionally largely qualitative, and based on observation as well as long interviews with staff and prisoner participants. Its primary aim was capturing meaning and experience. Long interviews are useful where attitudes, values, beliefs and assumptions as well as behaviours are being explored. Extensive, relevant surveys, developed over time, were used in addition.⁵

In writing this report, the research team drew on five main sources of data:

1. Sustained observation (June 2009 to June 2010) mainly on the wings, but also in workshop areas, education, the gym, the chapel area, a segregation (care and separation) unit, the CSC, D Wing, SMT meetings, and at training sessions. During this phase of the research an Appreciative Inquiry exercise was carried out with 13 uniformed staff. Issues arising from this workshop day were incorporated into the staff interviews.⁶
2. An all afternoon weekly Dialogue group ('Cambridge Dialogue') conducted with a regular group of ten to sixteen prisoners, and structured around a series of themes agreed between the participants. (There were ten sessions, between Oct-Dec 2009).⁷
3. Extensive interviews with 52 prisoners and 36 staff, completed between January and June 2010; of around 2.5 hours' duration each, all of which were fully transcribed.⁸
4. Informal interviews and conversations with many other staff and prisoners.
5. Quality of life [MQPL and SQL] surveys carried out with 159 randomly selected prisoners and 194 staff in September 2009. The sample included 71 BME and 84 white prisoners, and represented 36 per cent of the prisoner population. The staff included in the survey were all those who attended a full staff meeting: 109 Discipline Staff; 43 Non-Discipline High Contact Staff;

⁵ For an account of ethical considerations and procedures, and of the research experience, see Appendix 2.

⁶ For example, 'Can you tell me about an incident, time, or place in the prison where the balance of power between staff and prisoners has been just right?', and, 'The Muslim population is very diverse. Can you tell me the most positive aspect the Muslim culture brings to this prison?'

⁷ The themes identified for discussions were: trust, staff-prisoner relationships, risk assessment, life outside, legitimacy, the prison experience, the meaning of prisons research, the role of music in our lives, and faith. Readings were provided in advance of each discussion.

⁸ In total, 220 hours of recorded interview data were gathered. The interviews were much longer than expected.

30 Non-Discipline Low Contact Staff; and 11 SMT members. This figure represented 23 per cent of the total staff at Whitemoor.

Many additional informal, conversational interviews were carried out and invitations to participate in several additional activities were accepted.⁹ A literature review was completed before embarking on the study (available separately from the authors; Kant *et al.* 2009). This work and the continued searching of the literature informed the team's thinking at the analysis stage.

Between June and December 2009 (the 'entry' stage) the team spent a total of 81 person-days in the prison, introducing the research (for example at full staff briefings), familiarising themselves with the layout of the prison, with staff and prisoners, conducting observations, undergoing personal protection training, and facilitating a themed Dialogue (discussion) group with prisoners from three of the four main wings of the prison. Several formal (but exploratory) interviews were conducted with staff and prisoners. This material was used to inform the design of long semi-structured interview schedules for staff and prisoners (included at Appendix 1).

Several of the questions asked in the first study were retained (such as, 'What do you think officers want from you, as a prisoner here?', and 'What do you want from officers?'). Some use of Appreciative Inquiry was also retained, as this had proved successful and important in the first study.

Formal interviews with staff and prisoners were carried out throughout January to June 2010. In about half of all cases, interviews were conducted over two or more sessions because of their length (and the constraints of the prison day). This enabled topics to be covered in detail, but it also involved long gaps waiting for, or trying to organise, opportunities to resume and efforts to restore rapport after a break. In these cases, the first half of the interview was reviewed before proceeding with the second. Prisoners also came 'prepared', and had often thought about the questions further, between sessions. As an interview technique, having second sessions often worked well. Prisoners were pleased to have a planned follow-up, and another opportunity to talk at length without being officially recorded. The research team were asked to write in Wing Observation Books in a few cases, for example after carrying out interviews in the CSC. In these cases team members would note the length of the interview and the willing co-operation of the prisoner.

Throughout the interviewing period, observation, shadowing and informal participation continued. A further 75 person-days were spent in the prison during this period (156 person days in total). In addition to the 'in-prison' days, a number of interviews with (eight) staff were conducted in Cambridge, in response to invitations to staff to spend a longer period of time in more relaxed surroundings.

⁹ The Project Director attended two meetings of the High Security Estate SMT by invitation and presented early findings for discussion at one of these. The second meeting brought together Chaplains and Imams as well as Governors to discuss issues relating to conversion and radicalisation. She also attended three meetings of the Steering Group for a project led by the Cambridge Inter-faith Programme on Effective Community Policing in two London Boroughs. The team presented and discussed the findings of an interim report at a meeting of the SMT at Whitemoor.

1.4 Description of interview sample: Prisoners

A total of 52 prisoners were formally interviewed between January and June 2010. No prisoners from the DSPD Unit (D Wing) were included in the sample. Prisoners ranged in age from 22 to 63. Half the interviewees were serving life sentences. Ten were serving IPP sentences, 11 were serving determinate sentences, and five had been convicted under the common law of Joint Enterprise. Tariff length ranged from four to 35 years, with an average of 15 years: a third of the sample had tariffs of 20 years or more. In terms of security category, twenty-seven (52 per cent) prisoners were Category B, 20 (38 per cent) were Category A and four (8 per cent) were High Risk Category A. Fourteen of the interviewees were appealing their conviction or sentence (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 The prisoner interview sample

Number of prisoners interviewed	52	%
A wing	14	27
B wing	31	61
C wing	6	12
CSC	1	2
average age	32 years	
life sentence prisoners	26	50
IPP sentences	10	19
determinate sentences	11	21
Joint Enterprise	5	10
average tariff length	15 years	
20+ years' tariff	17	33
Cat B	27	52
Cat A	20	38
High Risk Cat A	4	8
appealing conviction or sentence	14	27

Sixty per cent of the interviewees were BME and 35 per cent were white British. When asked about their religious affiliation, 23 of the sample described themselves as Muslim.¹⁰ Other self-reported religions represented were: Roman Catholic, Christian, Rastafarian, Buddhist, and Church of England. Of the 23 Muslim prisoners the researchers were able to ascertain that twelve (52 per cent) had converted to Islam whilst in prison; many were born into a Muslim family; others had converted to Islam outside of prison or explored several different religions and had converted to more than one religion in their lifetime. One of the sample had been Muslim in the past but had since become Rastafarian (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Ethnic and religious affiliations of prisoner sample

Prisoners interviewed	52	%
BME	31	60
White British	18	35
Other	3	6
Muslim	23*	44
(* of whom 12 converted to Islam in	12	52

¹⁰ These categories were imperfect and will be described later.

prison)		
Roman Catholic	11	21
Christian	2	4
Rastafarian	2	4
Buddhist	2	4
C of E	1	2

The Cambridge Dialogue group consisted of 14 regular attendees (seven from B Wing, four from A Wing and two from C Wing). The average number of prisoners present was 11. Ten of the group were BME (71 per cent) and the remainder were white British. Several members of the Dialogue group became our first interviewees and in total, 11 of the group were formally interviewed during the course of the research.

1.5 Description of interview sample: Staff

A total of 36 staff were formally interviewed between January and June 2010, including four Governor grades, several specialists (including one Chaplain) and a range of Officers, Senior Officers and Principal Officers from all areas of the prison. The interviews lasted several hours each. Twenty-five of the sample (69 per cent) were main grade prison officers; five (14 per cent) were Senior Officers; one was a Principal Officer; two were governors and three were specialist staff (from education, the Chaplaincy, and CARATS). Just over 30 per cent (11) of the interviewees were female and one interviewee was BME. Two of the interviewees had been at Whitemoor since it opened. A further nine had worked there for ten years or more. Three of the latter groups had been interviewed in the first study. This continuity was helpful, as the researchers were able to talk at length about how and when the prison had changed. A further 38 staff were involved in group work, formal focus groups, or in shadowing exercises, and many more were engaged in conversations of varying length and complexity.

1.6 Analysis

Fieldwork notes were written up and circulated among the team for discussion and reflection. At several stages during the fieldwork, thematic discussions were held at which a series of themes were devised or revised, organised under headings. This process was both inductive (based on observations and conversation) and deductive (steered by the research questions and original proposal). Once a set of themes were agreed, the interview transcripts were coded and analysed thematically using NVivo. Recordings of whole interviews were regularly listened to, or full transcripts read – thus the analysis was both ‘horizontal’ (thematically led, across interviews) and ‘vertical’ (taking whole scripts, or narratives, and reflecting on what was said). The survey data were analysed using SPSS.

The analysis in this report is thoroughly grounded in what staff and prisoners had to say. Throughout the writing process, literature that seemed to resonate with the main themes was digested. Reflections on the research experience and the quality of the data gathered are included in Appendix 2.

The MQPL survey was conducted at the early stages of the fieldwork period. The quantitative data collected through the survey was used in part to steer and ground the later qualitative explorations. In most cases the MQPL quantitative data supports the qualitative analysis and findings. There are however some examples of

differences between the quantitative data and qualitative findings. For example, there is a difference between prisoners' responses to MQPL survey questions on safety and their accounts in the qualitative research. This is a typical and also well noted discrepancy, with prisoners under-reporting feelings of fear in surveys, yet talking openly about feelings of fear in qualitative interviews (for further information see Bottoms 1999).

The Report proceeds as follows: Chapter 2 outlines the main features of Whitemoor prison and some of the differences in context between 'Study 1' (the original study, conducted in 1998-9) and 'Study 2' (the present study). Chapter 3 presents prisoners' accounts of their experiences of long-term imprisonment. The key themes arising from the interviews were: identity, meaning, and the difficulties of pursuing rehabilitation. Chapter 4 looks at the role played by faith, conversion, and being or 'being seen as' a Muslim at Whitemoor. Chapter 5 describes relationships between prisoners, some incidents of violence, and the problems of fear, safety and trust. Chapter 6 outlines staff perspectives on their relationships with prisoners, with each other, with senior managers and in relation to their work and sense of purpose. Chapter 7 looks at staff relationships with and attitudes towards Muslim prisoners in particular. Chapter 8 concludes the study.

Chapter 2 The Whitemoor context: Then and now

2.1 HMP Whitemoor

HMP Whitemoor is a high security prison accommodating Category A and B adult male prisoners serving sentences of over four years. It was opened in September 1991 and is located on the outskirts of March in Cambridgeshire. The main prison consists of four wings: A, B, C and D; D Wing became a Dangerous and Severely Personality Disordered (DSPD) Unit in September 2000. Each wing comprises three spurs (Red, Blue and Green). C Wing includes an Induction spur and B Wing includes a spur for those prisoners on the enhanced level of the Incentives and Earned Privileges Scheme. Other accommodation includes a 'Care and Separation' (Segregation) Unit (E Wing; with a capacity of 32 prisoners) and the separately built F Wing – a Close Supervision Centre. This was converted from a Special Security Unit and opened in October 2004. This unit can hold up to 14 prisoners. The Operational Capacity of the prison is 448.

One of the significant changes since the previous study has been in the function of the different residential wings. In 1998 two of the main wings (A and B) housed vulnerable prisoners; the DSPD Unit did not exist (it opened on one of the wings then operating as a VPU). The SSU was closed in 2002 and converted to a CSC. Between March and June 2008 C Wing was also re-rolled from a VPU to a main residential wing. These changes meant that staff felt they had fewer options placing difficult or vulnerable prisoners on alternate wings. It also changed the composition of the population, as vulnerable prisoners are often older, less ethnically diverse, and more compliant than 'mainstream' dispersal prisoners. There were plans at the time of the second study to expand the prison with the construction of a Category B unit.

2.2 The prisoner population

At the time of the research the daily population was around 440. There were 148 Category A prisoners, 71 known gang members, seven TACT prisoners, 155 Muslim prisoners, 241 BME prisoners, 331 life sentence prisoners, and 428 prisoners serving sentences of more than ten years (see Table 2.1). The Muslim prisoner population had increased from 91 in February 2007 to 155 in April 2009, when the research began. This increase was attributed, in part, to the loss of the VPU and an influx of 'replacement' prisoners from HMP Long Lartin. The average age of prisoners had decreased since 1998; the majority of prisoners at the time of the research were aged between 25 and 30, whereas in 1998 the average age was 38. The number of Category A prisoners had decreased from 190 to 148.

Table 2.1 The prisoner population, 1998 and 2009

	Total prisoner population	Cat A	Known gang members	TACT	Muslim	BME	Life sentence	aged 21-30	serving sentences 10+ years	average age
March 1998	510	190 (37%)	NK	NK	NK	105 (21%)	155 (30%)	NK	400 (78%)	38
June 2009	440	148 (34%)	71 (16%)	7 (2%)	155 (35%)	241 (55%)	331 (75%)	185 (42%)	428 (97%)	32

2.3 The staff population

In June 2009 there were a total of 441 uniformed staff: 367 were main grade officers, 59 were Senior Officers, and 15 were Principal Officers. This represents a decrease in comparison to March 1998 when there were 479 uniformed members of staff (393 main grade officers, 67 Senior Officers, and 19 Principal Officers). During the course of the research the Principal Officer grade was formally abolished. Some went out of uniform as developing managers, a few reverted to SO rank, and a handful left the establishment or took early retirement.

Table 2.2 The staff population, 1998 and 2009

	Total Uniformed Staff	Main grade officers	Senior Officers	Principal Officers
March 1998	479	393	67	19
June 2009	441	367	59	15

2.4 Location

It is significant that Whitemoor is located in a remote Fenland town, a long way from the London homes (or other major cities, like Birmingham) of most of its prisoners. Fenland is a rural district lying east of Peterborough and north of Cambridge, and is one of five districts in the County of Cambridgeshire, in the East of England. It contains four market towns: Wisbech, March, Whittlesey and Chatteris and is a primarily agricultural area. Fenland has the lowest average house price in Cambridgeshire. It has an ageing population.

The 2001 Census data showed that Fenland was less ethnically diverse than other parts of England, with a greater than average proportion of the population being white: 97 per cent of the population were white British and a further two per cent were white Irish and white Other. Fewer than 1,150 people were identified as being from other ethnic groups. Migrant workers — the majority Polish and Lithuanian — have traditionally formed an important sector of the seasonal labour force; more recently, migrant communities are becoming more established and less ‘seasonal’. The Cambridge Area Travellers Needs Assessment 2005 estimated that in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough there were 6,080 Gypsy/Travellers, making them one of the largest minority ethnic groups in the area (Cambridgeshire County Council 2010: Fenland Annual demographic and socio-economic information report).

According to a ‘Place survey’ which included ratings of ‘community cohesion’, only 62 per cent of respondents in Fenland agreed with the statement that their local area is a place where ‘people from different backgrounds get on well together’. The Fenland rate is significantly lower than the national (76 per cent), regional (78 per cent) and county (79 per cent) rates and is ‘amongst the worst in the country’ (Cambridgeshire County Council 2010: 49).

This information, including the tone of local feeling relating to immigration and diversity and voting trends, shown below, is significant as it was known and

commented upon by prisoners and had some impact on the recruitment and profile of staff. It was also noted by prisoners (for example, throughout the period of an election campaign) that UKIP and the BNP attracted a proportion of the vote in the Fens. There were placards and posters advertising UKIP on the journey into the prison.¹¹

2.5 Changes at the prison since 1998-9

There were many physical, organisational and cultural differences between Whitemoor in the original study ('Study 1') and the Whitemoor of 'Study 2' (see Table 2.3) as well as some differences in the organisation and purpose of the research. In general, we would describe the prison as more 'new penological' in Study 2 (see Liebling and Crewe 2012a, forthcoming): that is, there was a greater emphasis on risk assessment, audit and performance, sentence planning and aggregate processes (that is, undertaking accredited courses as part of a risk reduction framework). There were more restrictions on entry into the prison, movement around it, and the organisation of groups and interviews.

Some of the population changes left the staff newly uncertain about their work with prisoners:

I: So at Whitemoor what's been the biggest change that you've seen in the last ten years? R: From when I was sat on a chair doing this ten years ago to now probably the biggest thing for me is, from the staff perspective, the staff in general seem to be frightened of the job, to be frightened of what we're doing with prisoners, etcetera, and with what could happen, or they're very, very unsure of what they can do, they're very unsure of where their authority starts and where it stops. They're very unsure of the boundaries that they can or can't set, or what they have to work within, whereas before we didn't have that, you know what I mean? We did in the early days, then the escape, then we had the bit where we got back on focus, but they seem very unsure of what they can and can't do now (Officer).

¹¹ Whitemoor falls in to the North East Cambridgeshire constituency. The 2010 local election results were as follows: Conservative = 26,862 (51 per cent of the vote, increase of 4.5 per cent); Liberal Democrats = 10,437 (twenty per cent of the vote, increase of 2.9 per cent); Labour = 9,274 (18 per cent of the vote, fall of 12.9 per cent); UKIP = 2,991 (six per cent of the vote, increase of 0.4 per cent); BNP = 1,747 (three per cent of the vote, increase of 3.3 per cent); Independent = 566 (one per cent of the vote, increase of 1.1 per cent); English Democrats = 387 (0.7 per cent of the vote, increase of 0.7 per cent). [Majority was 16,425 (31.4 per cent); Turnout was 52,264 (71.4 per cent), an increase of 12.2 per cent on the previous election].

Table 2.3 Changes between ‘Study 1’ (1998-9) and ‘Study 2’ (2009-10)

Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Function (loss of two VPUs/1 of which had delivered SOTP; the SSU replaced by a CSC; new DSPD).• Population demographics (lower age, more diverse ethnicity, and religious identity).• More complex and longer, more indeterminate sentences (for new offences).• Higher levels of security; CCTV cameras.• Less outside exercise, loss of AstroTurf.• Restrictions on certain types of external involvement in the prison (since the ill-fated comedy club: Dialogue, education options: a new public acceptability test).• The prominence of risk, and the complexities of a new risk ‘bureaucracy’.• Incapacitation/‘settlement’ as an operating philosophy.• Younger, fewer, less experienced staff.• Fewer operational, younger senior managers (with some shift in the skill set towards administration, audit and accountancy rather than ‘operations’).
Quality of life/ culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less trust, more fear.• Less professional confidence among staff.• The prominence of concern about ‘the Muslim population’.• Lower perceived legitimacy (a different kind of ‘tightening up’).• The changing role of psychology (more risk/programme-oriented).
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Research funding/sponsorship (Home Office funded).• More practical constraints (checking location and activities, the need to work round activity performance targets, difficulties of collecting information).• Personal protection training required.

2.6 The broader context

Whitemoor prison in 2010 reflected, in a concentrated way, many of the characteristics of a transformed ‘late modern’ society: high levels of fear, preoccupation with risk and security, increased reliance on complex technology, low levels of interpersonal trust, widespread migration, multiculturalism and the contested values and religious expressions this brings, economic insecurity alongside widely advertised consumerism, otherwise fragmented identities, individualisation, feelings of meaninglessness, new forms of crime (and punishment), economic reasoning about its causes and control, and a temptation among the disaffected and excluded to cause ‘symbolic affront’ (see, e.g., Garland 1997; Boutellier 2001; Bottoms 2006: 264). Late modern institutions tend towards a form of ‘reflexive modernisation’ involving an emphasis on official performance and continual improvement in the direction of clearly stated ‘success goals’. The institution and the self must be continually and ‘reflexively made’ (Giddens 1991). Dynamism and future orientation replace tradition, habit and experience as sources of confidence, in ways that unsettle staff. In such an uncertain socio-cultural context ‘the notions of trust and risk have particular application’ (Giddens 1991: 3).

As Giddens and others have argued:

The modern world is a 'runaway world': not only is the *pace* of social change much faster than in any prior system, so also is its *scope*, and the *profoundness* with which it affects pre-existing social practices and modes of behaviour (Giddens 1991: 16).

Whitemoor prison had been reshaped by global as well as national events. A high security prison post-2001, following the 9/11 attacks on the twin towers in New York, the 7/7 bombings in London, and the fear of international terrorism these and other events generated, housing seven convicted terrorist offenders, and preoccupied by fears about the potential risks of radicalisation or extremism among its prisoners, faced different problems and challenges from a prison operating before that date.

Nationally, a 2003 Criminal Justice Act had introduced, amongst other things, an Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection (IPP):

Dangerous offenders convicted of a sexual or violent offence specified in the Act which carries a maximum penalty of 10 years or more, will be sentenced to an Indeterminate Sentence for Public Protection (IPP). The Court will set a specified part of sentence (the "tariff") for the purposes of punishment and retribution, after which the offender will only be released if the Parole Board is satisfied that it is safe to do so. On release offenders with an IPP sentence will be subject to supervision on licence but in contrast to life licensees they can apply to the Parole Board to have their licence cancelled after 10 years (and at yearly intervals thereafter). If, while on licence, any offenders sentenced to IPP are considered to present an unacceptable risk to the public they can be recalled to prison to continue serving the IPP sentence (PSO 6650 *Sentence Calculation*).

A high proportion of Whitemoor's population were serving this sentence. Ninety per cent were serving sentences of over ten years, including life. The prison contained a different, younger, more ethnically diverse and more challenging population at the time of the second study. The loss of its vulnerable prisoner population (to facilitate flexibility in the use of accommodation) added to the build up of large numbers of gang members present at the establishment.

Quite how or why Whitemoor ended up with a 35-39 per cent Muslim population at the time of the research is beyond the scope of this research. Staff and prisoners were unable to offer any explanation for the rise in BME and particularly Muslim prisoners since the time of the first study (although the removal of the VP Wing was clearly one significant factor and the number of in prison conversions, described later, was another).¹² The proportion of Category A prisoners had decreased. Real risks of contamination of vulnerable prisoners by a small number of those holding and expressing extremist ideologies meant that the prison's 'moral reckoning' – the perceived trade-offs between freedom, protection of the individual, and risk, had changed. A political and policy climate preoccupied by 'security' infused action, but much of this 'action' moved away from individual staff-prisoner relationships,

¹² VP wings are less likely to house BME and Muslim prisoners than mainstream dispersal wings.

towards intelligence gathering, risk assessment procedures, and formal Boards. The maintenance of order and safety was made harder by these conditions. It was hard to 'anchor trust' (Giddens 1990: 87).

2.7 Risk and 'approved interventions'

Just before the main fieldwork began in November 2008, Whitemoor was again the subject of negative and politically damaging media headlines. These headlines were related to the staging of a 'comedy workshop'. This followed three weeks after a damaging exposé of a 'Hallowe'en party' held for vulnerable women prisoners at Holloway, after which Governors had been instructed to avoid any further political embarrassment, particularly given the stage in the political cycle (approaching an election).¹³ The events to follow made a direct impact on prisoners in general, as well as on the then Governor, and set the tone (a risk averse or cautious approach towards external agencies and activities) for most of the period to follow. This was by no means the only reason for a relative absence of outside/external agency engagement with prisoners at Whitemoor during the period of our study, but it illustrates the relevant tensions being managed at the establishment, and was the subject of commentary among prisoners, so the main events are summarised below.

On 21 November 2008, a headline in the Sun Newspaper read, 'Are you having a laugh?'. The story began:

'An Al Qaeda terrorist involved in a plot to bomb London was taught how to be a stand-up COMIC at his top-security prison, The Sun can reveal. Evil [name] was enrolled on an eight-day 'comedy workshop' at Whitemoor jail, along with murderers and rapists. An inquiry was launched today by the director of high security prisons to consider whether further action was needed ... The 18 cons were given lessons in stand-up, comic drama, improvisation and scriptwriting. Once they 'graduated' they were due to get a certificate and display their new talents with a comedy show for fellow lags and guards ... Justice Secretary Jack Straw canned the 'totally unacceptable' course after The Sun alerted him. He also vetoed a plan by the Category A Cambridgeshire prison to set up its own comedy club. The course was laid on by the Comedy School of London at an estimated cost to the jail of £8,000. It started on Monday and ran for three days before Mr Straw stepped in. He said: "As soon as I heard about it, I instructed it must be immediately cancelled. Senior managers in the Prison Service, who were also unaware of it, take the same view. Prisons should be places of punishment and reform. Providing educational and constructive pursuits is essential but the types of courses and the manner in which they are delivered must be appropriate." The Justice Ministry launched a probe and said all jail governors will today be briefed "to take account of the public acceptability test." Whitemoor houses three 21/7 bombers and M25 road rage killer [name]' (The Sun, 21 November 2008).

¹³ The main motive for this appeal was to avoid a politically-led 'draconian pull-back on everything' in the wake of the Holloway 'scandal' which had been televised as well as covered in the tabloids. Assurances had been given to Ministers that a PSO was not needed in order to rein Governors in (personal communication, Sept 2010).

The story had been leaked to the press, apparently by a disaffected staff member (as in the Holloway example). The Governor was reprimanded (this was widely known). A PSO placing new restrictions on the type of activities allowed followed: 'Acceptable activities in prisons' [PSO 0500, issued 6 January 2009].¹⁴ It said:

Prisons are places which are, rightly, under intense public scrutiny. It is essential that we are able to justify all aspects of prison life to the public. It is crucial that the public has confidence in prison regimes ... Governors are responsible for ensuring that all interventions and activities that take place within their establishment meet the tests set out in this Instruction ... Governors must consider the possible reaction to any existing or planned activities and avoid those which would generate indefensible criticism and undermine public confidence in the Service.

Unlike the original study, which followed several years after the escapes and subsequent inquiry reports, so that some of the original controversy had died down or been moderated by other considerations, this study coincided with a period of political sensitivity and many felt, over-reaction. The overt moral problem was 'the treatment of terrorist offenders' in particular, and the public and political sensitivities about the status of victims their treatment apparently infers, but the moral (and political) question of the treatment of prisoners in general was part of what gave the story 'bite' (the website e-mail commentary to follow, much of which concerned the treatment of offenders in general, is testament to this). In addition, the conflation of 'terrorist' with 'Muslim' in the minds of many made any disapproval of the conditions in which politically violent offenders were held spill over into the experience of Muslim (and BME) prisoners in general. Words like 'comedy' and 'party' were not acceptable in prison. This meant that several individual prisoners had their creative trajectories halted, and others were denied access to courses or activities they had hoped to attend. The researchers encountered some of these prisoners during their research.

One prisoner described the interplay between this media event and his perception of his and others' treatment by staff:

I'd say probably X Wing is the worst that I've been on. That's where I had a lot of problems with write-ups and staff, stuff like that. I'll give you an example; somebody ended up coming in the newspaper for something that happened in prison. I think the public disagreed with a certain course that this individual was doing in prison. I walked by the staff room, for some reason the door was open and you could see on the wall there a big picture of this guy and the paper article that was with it. It was in the middle of the room, so all the staff going in there would have a joke at this person. I don't think it was there for educational reasons, as in a briefing. That was there for ridicule. So from that you can see what dictates the staff culture is the media. I think it comes back to this whole problem I was saying from the beginning, no one knows what prison's about, and in the absence of that the tabloids have filled that vacuum. So who dictates officer culture, who dictates prison policy is the tabloids. That's where the authority lies in prison (Prisoner).

¹⁴ These instructions were brought together by PSI 38/2010 and its accompanying guidance.

There was a contrast between prisoners' answers to the researchers' questions this time and the responses they had heard in the first study. Two major differences were that prisoners were more critical, and felt that staff were more punitive (although, as the report establishes later, the culture prisoners described was more complex), and the Muslim population was the subject of considerable commentary among others, as well as having a considerable amount to say for themselves. The research team asked:

I: What do you think officers want from you, as a prisoner here? R: I think, this is going to sound strange, but I do generally think that the majority of staff here would like to see you being punished.¹⁵ And, you know, they might. You do come across officers, few and far between, that want to see you succeed in your life, but I think generally, unless you're walking round with a miserable face ... I'll give you an example. Sometimes we eat outside. We put the tables out and everyone gets together, we eat together. So the officers will come and stand right opposite us and observe, and it's quite obvious they're doing that to intimidate. I think it's got to the point where people are actually self-censoring, where some of the people are reluctant to be on the ones, say look, we're going to get attention to ourselves, blah, blah and all we're doing is sharing a meal together. So, it's got to the point where if you're actually in a good mood or you're having a good laugh, you have to conceal that from the officers, in case you get moved around or you get into trouble (Prisoner).

2.8 Summary

In twelve years, Whitemoor had changed from a prison with good staff-prisoner relationships, professionally confident staff, and a mainly white and fairly 'compliant' population, at least on two of its four wings, to a prison with distant staff-prisoner relationships, a less respectful culture and frustrated prisoners. By 2010, the dynamics and prisoner composition had changed, bringing about new problems and giving rise to some distinctive themes.

These themes were: the nature and quality of staff-prisoner relationships, the purpose of imprisonment, the problem of meaning and trust, and the links between the latter and faith identities and representations. These themes are developed further in the chapters that follow.

¹⁵ In the first study, prisoners argued that staff wanted 'compliance and acceptance of their authority'; see Liebling and Price 1999: 20.

Chapter 3 The experience of long-term imprisonment: staff-prisoner relationships, identity, rehabilitation and meaning.

There are lots of sad stories in here, and lost souls. You have to be mentally strong. I feel upset for people in here. It's not a happy place. You have to look at things behind your crime. [With reference to an officer on the wing] He's good, he listens and doesn't jump to conclusions and he is fair, you can't ask for nothing else, to be treated like human beings and not be reminded constantly that you will be spending the rest of your life in here. It's a sad place (Prisoner).

This chapter outlines the key themes arising from the interviews and broader conversations with prisoners. These themes were: the nature and quality of staff-prisoner relationships; the experience of serving long sentences in conditions of high security; the struggle for identity and recognition; the need for and meanings of love, creativity and rehabilitation; and the sense of confusion of or lack of purpose felt in prison. The relationship between these themes and the attractions of various faith identities are explored in Chapter 4.

3.1 The nature and quality of staff-prisoner relationships

At their best, staff-prisoner relationships at Whitemoor were characterised by prisoners as respectful, fair, trusting, supportive, considerate, flexible-within-boundaries, humane and honest. But there were complaints and frustrations. Prisoners' accounts were critical. There was uncertainty and inconsistency in the way staff approached the use of authority. Staff were closer to some 'types' of prisoners than to others.

Prisoners made some very positive observations about staff-prisoner relationships:

It has its good times and bad times, but most of the staff here have been more family to me than anyone else ... I've got a shit family, and when I came here, staff changed my way of thinking about people. I can be a real pain in the backside and they tolerate it. There's more tolerance here ... I will be sad when leaving. This has been more like a home for me than a prison. I'll miss some of the officers. I'd rather wish that members of the staff would be my parents ... We all fall over sometimes, and that's when you need other people (Prisoner, fieldwork notes).

Here (in the seg) we've got good relationships with staff. They give us a chance, work, and a bit of freedom. Before, it used to be hostile. There was no interaction. Now there's a better understanding of mental health problems. They judge us as individuals. These changes are due to education on both sides (Two prisoners in the Segregation Unit, fieldwork notes).

He said he was 'extremely worried' when he arrived; when he got off the bus he was double-cuffed but when he got into Reception he was asked if he wanted tea or coffee and he couldn't believe it; it was the first time in two years anybody had offered him a drink like that. He said in ten seconds he was made to feel comfortable by an officer who put his mind

at rest and told him it wasn't like you hear here (Prisoner, fieldwork notes).

I get respect from a lot of them, you know? If they treat somebody with politeness, dignity and good attitude, I call that respect (Prisoner).

I'm sure that Whitemoor runs on relationships rather than systems. People feel safe, cared for and trusted when having relationships (Clinician).

The research team observed these kinds of practices themselves:

An SO came over and a prisoner thanked him for something he had sorted out for him. The prisoner was genuine and enthusiastic in his thanks and praised the SO for being a good officer. This was because even if he said 'no' he would provide explanations (Fieldwork notes).

The officers are very tolerant on here, on [this] Wing. They put the prisoners who are finding it hard on Green spur. Here they try to help first. They try to understand the prisoners (Prisoner).

Another officer came into the SO's office to discuss what to do with a prisoner who was displaying unusual behaviour, unlike his usual self. He had come from Belmarsh and had noticeably 'gone downhill' in terms of his personal hygiene; they were concerned about this and had contacted Belmarsh to establish whether this was normal behaviour for the prisoner: they confirmed that it was not. The SO advised the officer that the personal officer should speak to the prisoner and try to find out what was going on and should also contact the in-reach team to come and talk to him (Fieldwork notes).

In the first study, the researchers described staff and prisoners (and they described themselves) as generally 'close and bonded'.¹⁶ As in the first study, prisoners emphasised the importance of relationships in prison. But the mood was different, and the general assessment of relationships was less positive. Prisoners responded with interest and enthusiasm to the research: "That's the most important topic in here!" But the specific responses to questions took on a different tone from the first study:

I: What do you think constitutes a good relationship with officers, and how important is it to have a good relationship with them? R: Well, I think it's very important to have a good relationship. Your life could be in danger. So you have to have a relationship. The problem is, whether that's attainable or not. I don't think it is (Prisoner).

Prisoners said that effective communication, the use of prisoners' first names, and informal banter on personal matters or on 'neutral', safe subjects of mutual interest, such as cooking and football, made relationships work:

¹⁶ It is important to acknowledge the difference to relationships found in general between vulnerable and sex offenders, who constituted two of the wings in the original study and who tended to seek proximity to staff, and mainstream dispersal prisoners, who are more likely to seek autonomy and distance, as we described (see Liebling and Price 2001).

The basic level of communication, to me, that's a good officer. Someone who takes time out to talk to you or come to your cell and go; 'how are you, what's going on?' (Prisoner).

R: For months, me and my pal thought [an officer] was a right miserable git but he's a very helpful, decent bloke. I can remember having a chat with him one day about what he cooks for himself when he's at home and things like that and I'm standing there thinking, this is amazing. How he steams the veg and all that, and to me, for someone to be standing here talking to me like that, he's treating me more or less as an equal, isn't he? I: You didn't expect that? R: Do you know, he's talking to us like a human being. He's not talking to me like a screw, do you know what I mean? He's talking to me like a human being, so for the rest of my time in here I'll always give him respect (Prisoner).

There's one in particular on here who introduced himself, and he's not even my personal officer or anything, and he's a young one, and he's really, like, friendly and he talks about football and all stuff like that. He will talk to you properly as a human being. It makes the day better (Prisoner).

Some prisoners had developed relatively trusted relationships with staff who actively listened to them, responded honestly to their requests and offered support. Prisoners placed a great deal of weight on receiving a reliable response to a request:

Some of them are very good, if you've got problems you can go and see them, and they say, "right I'm busy at the moment but I'm back on in an hour, I'll deal with it" and you know they will (Prisoner).

[Name] is firm but fair, if you ask him to do something, he will try his best to sort it out for you, and if he can't sort it out for you he will come and tell you honestly: 'I can't', 'I haven't been able to do it' or 'it hasn't happened' or whatever; he'll never lie to you, and that's a relationship of respect. He respects us as people, we respect him as a person as well, and that's why he's never had any trouble from any prisoners as far as I know. Everyone will openly say [he is] the best prison officer in the jail (Prisoner).

I trust [a specific officer]. And if I ask her to do something, she does it for me, and that's what I think it is: if an officer doesn't lie to a prisoner, because some officers you can ask, "oh do that for me?" then they'll lie to you, say "I done that", they'll lie to you but, if an officer's honest, you know? Just mutual respect, innit? (Prisoner).

Prisoners appreciated officers who listened to their problems and offered advice or practical help:

If you've got a problem, she listens to you, she don't go just 'yeah, yeah, yeah', do you know what I mean? She gives you advice what to do, and

if she can help she'll help, and that's why I think she's quite good (Prisoner).

I: Do you have an officer that you get on quite well with? R: Yeah, I do. I was on one spur and I was actually talking about my offence quite informally to this officer. That's quite a big step for someone to do. And I done that because I thought this person was quite interested and could listen to me. 'Cause I'm moved around, as soon as I get to that place, you're moved on so I have to start from scratch, with another officer. So the officer that I did get on with, it was somebody I could talk to about my family problems, my index offence, problems on the spur, and so on. It was all very therapeutic and a stress relief, actually (Prisoner).

Individual officers still used their discretion to help prisoners out in times of difficulty with procedures:

I sent a VO out and I sent the VPO out, which is a weekly one. And my nan, who's ninety-odd, turned up on a Saturday. I've sent the wrong VO out. All my family have come: my mum, dad, kids, and my nan. I've not seen my nan in three years, three and a half years. They've come up and said you can't come in. She went 'oh ...' and they've let me through, they've let 'em through. They've made a 'phone call and they've said yeah, and they've let them through and said 'he's alright, he's a good lad. Let 'em through' (Prisoner).

This officer's sent the other officer away and said 'oh go on, go and get the burn off him' and he's actually come in the cell and he's took out his cigarettes and he's threw a couple of cigarettes on the bed because he knows that's it, he hasn't got any smokes because Canteen's the next day. And it's just like, he's considerate, he's just done this guy a big favour, because the guy over there, he hasn't got any burn either. And it's just those little things, you know? He's not breaking the rules but he's just ... if you live in an environment where there's long termers, and the staff are long termers as well, you've got to be able to build up a relationship, where every day we come into contact with each other and it's civilised (Prisoner).

Prisoners recognised and appreciated officers who went 'that extra mile', or who looked out for prisoners:

An officer had finished work at seven. I come back from the library at ten-past, she'd wait rather than going off the wing just to make sure and see if I've got an application form for a father-and-child visit, 'cause she knows how much I want it. And that — going out of her way — it means a lot. And in return, if one of the cleaners wasn't well and I'm studying, she'd open me door and says 'look, do you mind mopping the threes?' I'd do it in return. But it's silly little things like that. If I'm on a visit and they've dished dinner up — not only for me — but she'll put dinners on plates for lads 'cause when we come back, we haven't got to muck about and I've got meal choice three but it's gone. But, its there. You know, that seem silly, but to us, it's massive (Prisoner).

Some officers care about the prisoners. For example I've been asked many times to check one person's cell. We know him, he's lazy, he's never on time anyway, he's mostly in his bed, so the officers are worried that sometimes maybe something's happened. I personally been told to go and check his cell. There was a female officer, it's obvious she doesn't want to go inside his cell when he's in his bed so she said go and check him and ask (Prisoner).

Prisoners were almost always able to identify individual wing officers with whom they had good relationships. Personal officers,¹⁷ when they were 'the right one' and they were on the wing, were much appreciated:

I: Can you describe a relationship you have with an officer that is particularly good? R: Like I said, that officer, we talk about football. And he's all right with me. You know, say I've got something in the kitchen cooking and they, say, call us to vacate the kitchen, but if I ask him, he'll leave me in the kitchen for another two or three minutes to do my thing that I need to do, or he'll say as long as I get out ... so I can do what I've got to do. I: So it's a bit like, not being totally strict by-the-book, but to use a bit of ..? R: — discretion, yeah. He's being strict, but he knows I'll come out of there on time, so he just leaves me to do what I've got to do (Prisoner).

My Personal officer — I trust her to the fullest, innit? Because obviously your Personal officer is like, they know more about you and your needs and your targets and all that. They're your main person that, if you've got a problem, you're supposed to go to them. If they're not there then obviously you chat to another officer, but your Personal officer is the main person on the wing, do you know what I mean? (Prisoner).

I've got a lot of respect for that one who just walked past. He's my Personal officer, so me and him have had good chats. He always says to me 'anything you feel bad about, you tell me about it and if there's anything going down or anything's going to happen, or if someone was going to jump you, you'd tell me?' I said 'of course I would'. I've got a lot of respect for him, you know what I mean? I look out for him, he looks out for me. You don't get a lot of that in this prison system (Prisoner).

R: When you can ask a question and get a civil answer, like there's a woman over there [name], she's a sweetheart. You know what I mean? There's nothing in the world she wouldn't do for you, if it's within her power, you understand me? I: But does she stick to the rules as well? R: Oh yeah of course she does, don't worry about that. She's not an easy touch. I: So there's a balance? R: Yes. And she holds it fantastic, and uses common-sense (Prisoner).

Liebling and Price described in the first study how apparent 'common sense' is actually refined skill, and that officers at their best make complex judgments and

¹⁷ Officers with a small group of prisoners to whom they acted as 'first point of reference'. All prisoners officially had designated Personal officers.

decisions almost constantly in their work. The question of boundaries, what was acceptable and appropriate to do, and for whom, constituted the grey area of prison life and work, and in some ways this question had become more vexed. Officers who did 'too much' in the eyes of other staff were taking risks. Male officers worried about some young female officers being too close to prisoners. Officers who refused to smooth over the cracks in the flow of the prison day were regarded as aggravating by more engaged staff, and by prisoners.

Some prisoners described how they had learned how to communicate with staff over time, avoiding confrontations, and choosing the right member of staff to ask for help. One of the 'sad things about prison' was the way prisoners learned to manipulate their environment, including staff, in order to make their circumstances as bearable as possible. Without these skills, interactions could 'turn sour', for example, over aspects of identity:

You do actually learn how to ... approach staff in a certain way, I'd say, certain officers and avoid others. That is something you have to pick up in prison. If you have a bad officer on the spur, you either bite your lip and not get done what you need to, or you learn how to approach this officer. For example ... there's one geezer was going out for exercise and he had a beard and everything and he had slippers on, and so the officer said to him, careful, it's going to be raining outside, and the guy said no, it's alright, I'm British, I'm used to it, yeah. The officer took a look at him and he changed his view and he said, are you sure you're allowed to go out with those slippers on? And the guy goes, yeah, and he let him go. The officer went back and spent an hour going through the PSOs, whatever, finding out that actually you're not allowed to wear slippers. Now, that officer's view completely changed by one statement: 'I'm British'. He clearly disagreed with this. Out of spite, he's gone back to the office, looked at the PSOs and waited for him to come back inside and said 'actually, you can't wear them'. Next time I'll nick you. And initially he wasn't going to say anything, but ... so that shows how quickly an officer's approach can change towards somebody. So ... when you're dealing with that kind of an officer you have to be so careful in what you say. You don't approach this person with problems, 'cause it's just going to be turned round and cause even more problems. So, yeah. You have to read the officer to understand his mentality and then approach him accordingly. The problem is, not everyone's a genius. Not everyone can do that. I can't do that so ... yeah (Prisoner).

Officers were different – and were divided into the helpful and unhelpful. Sometimes the incentives seemed to work in the wrong direction:

Well this is the problem. If you're an officer, from their point of view you would actually be penalised for being approachable because you shouldn't be approached by everyone you meet ... you avoid that. So I think ... this is what I'm saying, the officer who has an understanding of prison, who recognises ... thinks it is ... about rehabilitation, he's going to be sought after to the point of being detrimental to his own career, right? The guy who's coming here with an attitude, no one's going to punish him for anything. He's going to be left alone, he's going to get paid the

same as the other guy. He has less hassle. So in some ways it is inherently easier for prison officers to be unhelpful (Prisoner).

Prisoners did not expect to be treated the same by all staff (and used analogies from outside – ‘sometimes in Tesco’s you can be treated rudely by a cashier’). But the prison environment seemed to turn good staff bad. Officers might start out with approachable attitudes, but they changed over time:

We are in a human place where it’s understandable, but I think because of the cultures of the staff ... the lack of clarity in what a prison is ... you will find that most, when they start off, are quite ... actually quite civil. As you see them progress a few months or a year later, it turns into arrogance, rudeness ... So I think ... if you were to interview somebody who’s, like, quite new and somebody’s who’s worked maybe one or two years, I reckon there’d be quite a big change (Prisoner).

There was some dispute about whether ‘newer’ versus ‘older’ officers were ‘better’ or ‘worse’ (there were always exceptions to any generalisation). Some prisoners preferred ‘old school’ staff, by which they meant ‘traditional-professional’ officers. Some felt that younger staff were less well disposed or tolerant towards prisoners. The analysis of the staff survey data suggested that younger staff scored significantly more negatively on the ‘punitiveness’ dimension (that is, expressed more punitive views) but had higher loyalty towards the Prison Service; see footnote 18 (p. 18) and Appendix 6. Staff culture is explored in more detail later.

Prisoners wanted help and individual recognition from officers, but felt the current culture was a long way from this:

It comes down to the recruitment of these officers. Ideally, you’d ... I think you’ve got the wrong people working in prison. I think you need ... in an ideal world, most probably, you need somebody more on the therapy side dealing with inmates. Instead you’ve got ex-military, which is the complete opposite. A good relationship would be an officer who would know you, understand your difficulties and understand your past as well as your hopes and your aspirations. And I think you’re not going to get that from the current culture of officers. I think most people would define a good officer as somebody who’ll fill in an application for you or run around for you. That to me should be a minimum. I think an officer should be someone who has got a value to his process ... make sure you come out in one piece and hopefully return to society, but I don’t think it’s going to happen (Prisoner).

Interaction between staff and prisoners was often limited:

I: *So when you do interact with officers, what’s normally the reason?* **R:** *It’s just when I need things done. I don’t feel comfortable approaching them and saying well, did you see the game yesterday? Nothing like that.* **I:** *Are there certain prison officers that you would avoid altogether?* **R:** *Of course (Prisoner).*

Being Category A, and moved from spur to spur, made the building of relationships difficult:

I'm moved around quite often. So as soon as I get a relationship, or I start opening up and talking about difficulties ... I was on one spur and I was actually talking about my index offence quite informally to this officer. That's quite a big step. And I done that because I thought this person was quite ... interested and could provide a ... listen to me, but ... 'cause I'm moved around, as soon as I get to that place, you're moved on so I have to start ... from scratch with another officer. So the officer that I did get on with, it was somebody who I could talk to about my family problems, problems on the spur and so on. It was all very therapeutic ... There's probably about one or two that I've done that with since I've come to prison. When it does work, it's very effective (Prisoner).

When asked questions about whether prisoners could describe experiences of respect, the typical answer was 'no', but prisoners often qualified their answer with examples like the one above, where a relationship had formed: 'the guy would take time out and talk to me'.

Prisoners saw any 'talking down' by staff to them as a sign of arbitrariness which could result in anger being reflected back to staff:

I'm a father myself, don't talk to me like I am a child (Prisoner).

At the end of the day, we're human beings, Miss. I'm someone's son, I'm someone's father, someone's ... husband so ... I expect to be treated like that, but they don't understand. In prison, they only understand one language, it's violence (Prisoner).

R: *They don't see you as a person. I: What does it do to you, if you're not seen as a person? R: It makes me ignore them. I blank them to their face. Simple as that ... I'm not violent by nature but it makes me just want to give them a swift kick in the crotch, you know? So ... here ... It kind of makes you want to live up to ... their impression. You think we're scum? Fine, we'll take it out on you. That sort of thing. And it stirs up the pot. It causes stress amongst other inmates and it's something we don't need 'cause ... there's no way for us to get rid of it (Prisoner).*

I have a problem with any member of staff that tries to bully me, yeah, and tries to talk to me like I'm something on the bottom of their shoe, and that's what I have a problem with, I don't have a problem with male or female, it's just people that think they can look at me like I'm not a human being (Prisoner).

Prisoners wanted to be acknowledged where they were – as more than their 'past action'; often on a complex trajectory of reflection and review – and they wanted support in this process. The best officers offered that. Prisoners were sometimes sensitive to the problems some officers faced in suspending moral judgment in their work in a high security prison:

I mean, to be honest with you, I spent ... when I first came into prison, I was really interested in what people ... what's this guy in for? And, you know, some of the people that you keep company with have done really horrendous stuff. I must say it's quite difficult to ... I find it difficult to approach some inmates. Now imagine an officer is put in charge of such a person. Now, this person's going to have a moral value ... he's going to have a model that he bases his life experience on and it's quite ... he's going to have his belief system. Now, when this inmate asks him, 'Gov, can I have a toilet roll please?' This guy ... right, how on earth could you commit that crime, whatever. Moral dilemma. If I'm being nice to this guy, does that mean I'm actually sacrificing my values? Am I selling out society or shall I just be really harsh with this person? So ... an officer's beliefs, ideology's going to affect his approach towards inmates (Prisoner).

The harshening public climate – a growing lack of tolerance towards offenders, fear and insecurity about threats to safety, increasing punitiveness being expressed in the media, and lengthening sentences – set the tone for a less 'liberal' attitude among newly recruited prison officers towards long-term prisoners.¹⁸ At one level, prisoners understood this. There were conflicting views around the prison about the purpose of imprisonment. The possibility of prisons as as well as *for* punishment was 'back on the agenda'.

Prisoners felt there was no need to pile extra 'weight' on their shoulders, when time was supposed to be their punishment:

You see ... being away from your family ... locked back in a cage is suffering enough. But to make your life difficult and make you suffer even more ... that will turn a man angry and make him come out and do bad things. This is why so many people end up back in prison, because prison turns them mad. Prison is supposed to be a place to show them, like, these lot are supposed to show them, look, there's a different way of life. You know, do this, don't do this ... this is right, this is wrong, make you recognise things like that, but they don't. It's a business (Prisoner).

When asked about times 'when life was at its best at Whitemoor', prisoners often recalled experiences that were connected to the recognition of individuality, and to care:

I know a lot of people might think maybe it's a little bit silly of me saying that it's nice to hear somebody say "Good morning" when you wake up, you know, first thing in the morning, you know, everybody's near enough half asleep ... [but] when you're prisoners there's a lot that you have to face, you might have a bad dream about your family, and you wake up in the morning and ... to hear somebody say "hello" to you, or for you to turn round and say "hello" to somebody, "good morning", you know, it feels nice, it feels good (Prisoner).

¹⁸ When analysing the staff data by age/experience, officers under the age of 35 expressed slightly more punitive attitudes towards prisoners. On the other hand, officers with less than eight years' experience were more likely to feel loyal to the Prison Service and to trust their senior managers. See further, Appendix 5 and 6.

I would say good days are when you're treated as a human being, I suppose. Days when you are recognised as a person ... as an individual ... and treated like that, which can range from just somebody saying good morning to you ... that sets up a good day, I suppose, and being spoken to equal footed. That, for me, is a good day (Prisoner).

When asked, 'What makes a good prison officer?' most prisoners described 'humanity', respect, and 'good talk':

Somebody who treats people like humans, who understands that what we have is so very limited so being petty is pointless (Prisoner).

He was brilliant. He would just stop by and say hey, how you doing? Simple as that, yeah. How's it going? I worked as a listener and when he was working nights he would ... come by, tap on my door and say hey, want a cup of coffee? And he'd take me downstairs and we'd sit there, when he was doing nights, and have some coffee, watch a little telly and just chat, you know. You're an adult. Let's have a conversation (Prisoner).

I: *What makes a good Prison Officer?* **R:** *When they've got a heart, isn't it? (Prisoner).*

I: *So a good relationship is about respecting each other?* **R:** *Yeah, it's about ... taking into account that we're both people at the end of the day (Prisoner).*

Prisoners needed assistance from staff with many aspects of their lives in prison, from handling their appeal or digesting a re-categorisation 'knock back', to finding clothes that fitted, or managing their urge to self-harm:

Here's an example. My T-shirts are getting too small 'cause my belly's getting bigger. And yesterday I wanted some next size up T-shirts and the officer went 'it'll take four/five days'. I told [name] this morning, and he's just brought them to me. Do you get what I mean? So you learn who you can go to (Prisoner).

I've got a problem with cutting myself. I'm ashamed of it, but when I get angry and I get down I cut myself up. It's always 13 to 14 cuts, all over my arms. One of the SO's on here, she's got a heart of gold. I couldn't put a bad word about her, she's got time for me. Any time I need to see her, I just put in to see her and she'll come and see me (Prisoner).

Prisoners also described good and constructive relationships with education, workshop, Chaplaincy and gym staff (see further below). But as on the wings, there were concerns expressed (and SIRs submitted) when conversations went on too long, or prisoners began to open up to particular staff.

Some of the problems prisoners faced in serving long sentences, finding meaningful activities, working their way through re-categorisation processes, or finding meaning

and purpose in general, meant that they were often in a state of frustration and confusion. Prisoners also imported distress and trauma into prison with them, as described further below.

3.2 The experience of serving long sentences in conditions of high security

Them first three years of being incarcerated, you know, I think I wasn't coping very well with my emotions (Prisoner).

For some prisoners, life at Whitemoor was 'reasonable', 'sustainable', 'bearable', or 'what you make of it'. If you were the library or gym orderly, were attending the 'right' offending behaviour programmes, and had a good relationship with your personal officer, then life seemed manageable. In some ways, it provided an opportunity to reflect. The prison was 'good in procedures, like apps and complaints', and 'the (Governing) Governor' was 'very good' because he was visible, and listened to prisoners. Prisoners often mentioned the fact that you could 'cook your own food' as 'a major plus'.

But many of the prisoners interviewed, and others listened to in informal conversations on the wings, seemed to be in a state of almost psychological 'paralysis' (Maruna *et al.*, 2006: 169) as they contemplated (or tried not to contemplate) the reality of a 15-25 year tariff. A high proportion of the interviewees (14) were appealing against their conviction or the length of their sentence. They were aware of the high numbers of indeterminate sentence prisoners who had been recalled to prison, which added to their feeling of being a very long way from release. Their position – often within a few years of receiving a very long sentence, and in the highest possible security category – was beyond words. Their lives 'on the street' had been violent and turbulent, the sentence unexpected, and the route out was difficult to navigate. They were more aware of issues of class, discrimination, exclusion and disadvantage, than prisoners the authors had spoken to 12 years earlier. They were younger, their sentences were longer and more complex, and their circumstances more difficult.

When prisoners talked about how they managed, they said, 'I just go to the gym'. Structure and routine were essential to psychological survival: the day was divided into sections, the week into multiples of sections, and the years into stages of longed-for progression. Prisoners 'held out' for the next progressive move – coming off Cat A, getting onto a required course, and getting a reduction in their 'risk score'. Everyone knew their score, and prisoners recounted 'humorous' stories in the Dialogue group: 'last time I put my name down for an offending behaviour course, my score went up!'

The research team asked prisoners to give them 'five words to describe what your life is like in here'. Life was 'stagnant', 'confused' 'boring', 'very stressful' and 'frustrating'. Some described it as 'hellish', 'pressurised', 'a nightmare', 'turbulent', 'unstable' and 'robotic'. The environment was both severely routinised and constrained, but also unpredictable. Prisoners felt 'trapped', and 'closed in'. Life was 'vague' and 'muddy'. You could feel 'lost in the system'. Without a steady goal or target, 'you would go crazy'. Some prisoners used the words 'alone', 'struggle', 'anxiety' or 'insignificant' to reflect their feelings of being hidden from the world at large, and fending for themselves, as well as somewhat fearful of those around them.

Many described their experience in Whitemoor as feeling like ‘containment’ and ‘punishment’. It was difficult to see the ‘rehabilitative’ aims of a prison sentence from inside a maximum security prison.

Life in other prisons was sometimes described as worse. Some prisoners said that ‘compared to Belmarsh’, for example, life at Whitemoor was ‘secure and comfortable’. Others saw no end to the fears that prison life entailed:

A lot of confusion, inconsistency, I suppose it's more of a depressing atmosphere now than it used to be (Prisoner).

For all prisoners, life at Whitemoor was ‘deep end’ imprisonment (Downes 1988).¹⁹ ‘High Risk’ Category A prisoners were subject to stringent security restrictions – for example, having to change cells every 28 days. All prisoners were subject to very high levels of security including rub down searches at all movement times, regular strip searches, cell searches (‘spins’), CCTV camera coverage and close restrictions on movement.²⁰

Prisoners valued the new presence of CCTV in some ways, because evidence could be viewed after incidents or contested events, and for safety, but they were also a source of new fears of ‘misperception’; being seen laughing too loud or ‘having fun’ ran the risk of being ‘written up’ for gang-related behaviour. ‘Self-censorship’ was common: ‘That fundamentally changes who you are as a person.’

You do actually change ... being a prisoner, you do change whole value judgements ... your way you interact with people, what you look for in relationships. And, I mean ... putting up with the rules and regulations is one thing, but when you make that a part of your identity to not show that identity... One thing I couldn't really understand when I was outside was, people use the term hardened criminal. Part of that is being able to read and manipulate officers. The other side of that is [being] self-censoring ... I think what happens, that after a while it becomes preserved and you are actually a living product of prison rules and you don't realise it (Prisoner).

¹⁹ Scholars have described the prison experience as having ‘depth’ (mainly related to security category) and ‘weight’ (the psychological burden of imprisonment and the quality of relationships with staff; King and McDermott 1990). These dimensions of the prison experience vary. More recently, Crewe has used the concept of ‘tightness’ or ‘grip’ to describe the constraints and requirements of engagement, compliance, progression and risk reduction (Crewe 2009).

²⁰ The team were searched, and their possessions x-rayed, before passing through around 16 locked gates to get to the wings, and a further two to reach the spurs where prisoners lived. Two of these gates were operated by a central control room, managed by call button cameras. It was common to be asked for ID at points along the way. Team members were given permission to bring in digital recorders and batteries, which was regularly renewed, and notices to this effect were kept at the gate. It took twenty minutes to get from the gate to a wing. The Close Supervision Centre – F Wing, took a further ten minutes to get into. The prison was ‘sealed off’. Prisoner representatives attending a ‘safer prisons’ meeting looked at a picture of the prison on the front page of a report and exclaimed that they had never ‘seen the prison’ before. Nor did many know where it was, geographically.

3.3 Establishing and maintaining an identity in a false environment

Imprisonment was far more than 'the physical deprivation of liberty'. It meant the deprivation of freedom of thought, action, and identity:

Freedom is just being able to have my own thoughts and ... often they'll be contaminated ... I'm not free with that thinking, am I? And I'm not free to make that piece of art, I'm not free to write that poem, I'm not free to write that story, I'm not free to send them things off to that competition, I'm not free to buy them magazines, I'm not free to talk about this (Prisoner).²¹

Some of the new constraints on relationships, then, were the prominence of risk assessment, feelings of fear, and the need to make progress through the system.

When asked, 'Can you be yourself in Whitemoor?' a majority of prisoners responded negatively:

You still feel you want to express yourself, but you can't in prison ... so you don't know where you are. I have no idea any more where I am (Prisoner).

I'm a totally different person from when I first came to prison ... I've lost my identity I think (Prisoner).

R: [You're] Just another brick in the wall, yeah. **I:** Do you feel part of society? **R:** No, no, no ... you don't even feel ... part of yourself, because I feel fake, so somewhere out there, there's my personality floating around waiting for me to recapture it²² (Prisoner).

I just want to get out of this jail and be myself again. This place is gonna take away my soul (Prisoner).

As I said, you're the living dead. I'm a zombie. I'm spam, I'm meat in a tin. I've no association with the real world any more (Prisoner).

Prisoners described a 'fake' environment in which all action was strategic and self-protective. Staff and prisoners were playing games with each other (as McDermott and King suggested in 1988). As one prisoner put it: "They're playing chess with me, but I'm playing checkers." Strategies and game plans were necessary in order to handle everyday life. The structured and separated physical layout of the prison contributed to the perception that all action was artificial: The CCTV-monitored wings and corridors resembled stage settings for 'performers' who were conscious of being 'on camera' most of the time. Demonstrations of happiness, for example, were risky. As one prisoner said, "Don't make me laugh so hard, we're on camera, I've got an image to lose". He readopted a solemn expression. Prisoners were aware that their public actions were analysed by someone-at-a-distance, an officer sitting in front of a monitor, someone writing an OASys report or taking part in a

²¹ In his interview, this prisoner reported that he would throw away drawings or poems after producing them whilst being locked up in his cell because he was afraid he could be negatively judged on their basis.

²² One of this prisoner's mottos was borrowed from a Pixies song: 'Where is my mind, way out in the water, see it swimming?'

Sentence Planning Board. This sense of being monitored contributed to an atmosphere of constant suspicion, paranoia, and self-conscious reflection. This had effects on individuals and their self-perception:

You can't be yourself in here. See [name] for example, I keep telling him, man, don't be so open and attached to people. They don't understand that in here. Everything is suspicious, but he can't be anybody but himself, that's how he is, he likes to connect with people. He'll be Cat A forever (Prisoner).

Being open and connecting with people meant providing personal truths. Real information acted as the groundwork for establishing a relationship. Trusting someone with personal facts normally came as a reciprocal gift, with expectations that they would be given back in a similar manner to signal willingness to engage in the mutual relationship-building process. Whilst this form of exchange was a precondition to forming a social community in the outside world, in a high security prison, the sharing of personal information was transformed from a constructive tool for building relationships into a potentially destructive and risky action, with unforeseeable consequences for both parties. Staff feared conditioning and manipulation; prisoners feared 'biro-power' (Crewe 2011). When prisoners did not abide by the implicit rule — 'do not share personal information' — because they could not 'play the role of a lone-wolf', there were repercussions. Prisoners wanted to play by the rules of the world outside to make their lives inside survivable, particularly as they were facing or spending very long periods in prison. But prison rules were different: socialising was seen as potentially suspicious. The social shift towards risk-aversion, and the 'atmosphere of suspicion', meant that staff were always on 'red alert'. Staff felt under pressure from intelligence units within the Prison Service and the Police to investigate, monitor and report on prisoners. Officers were required to observe and manage prisoners 'for intelligence' on a daily basis. Prisoners were very aware of the intelligence gathering and security measures taking place around them.²³

Inmates have to be individualistic, because nowadays if you seem to ... get too close to somebody, they look into it as something negative ... If I get something from you, you get something from me, it's either bullying or we're planning a gang or we're doing something negative. They're looking at us negative ... So nowadays, even if you want to help somebody, you have to be careful who you help out, where before it was no problem (Prisoner).

Another contribution to the shift of meaning regarding the sharing of personal information stemmed from prisoners. Some of them had learned to distrust, and not to disclose, before they came to prison. Encounters with criminal justice agents taught them that, 'everything you say can be used against you'. In their court cases, they said, personal information proved to be their undoing. Prisoners talked about how information about loose affiliations was sufficient to be convicted (so, for

²³ Arnold (2008) has suggested that since the prison officer entry level training course is focused to a large extent on security issues and on control and restraint techniques, new officers enter the prison environment with an exaggerated notion of the dangers of prison life: they are taught to become cynical and distrustful of prisoners.

example, the doctrine of 'Joint Enterprise' is used to convict people of murder on the basis of their association with the principal killer).²⁴

The amount of personal information revealed by prisoners to staff (who were seen as representatives of the executive authority) and to fellow prisoners had to be reduced to a strategic provision of sketchy and selective glimpses of the self. Anything could be a trap in these made-up surroundings:

People use these things against people. Sometimes the police come in here, looking to convict someone, haven't got enough information, they say to someone, 'Listen, haven't you got no information about this guy here?' We want to get him down on this ... listen just tell us.' They've done that already ... They come to prison, hit someone and say 'Yo listen, you're on a spur with this guy, you're on the wing with this guy just tell us that, you can get reduced sentence or you can get reduced on your conviction or you can get early release'. These are the things they do (Prisoner).

The threat of a 'conviction ad infinitum' was present at every level of daily life because prisoners did not know exactly what information could be used against them: anything could. Prisoners felt like they were 'walking on eggshells' and under constant scrutiny when interacting with staff and other prisoners on the wings. The collection of information in a high security prison never ended: CCTV surveillance, DST staff doing regular cell and strip-searches, and other departments (Security, Psychology, OMU, and Health Care) compiling reports about prisoners' state of body and mind, or awarding and revising risk scores. These risk-assessments were used to down- or upgrade a prisoner's security category. Decision-making power was out of their hands, but at least they could try to 'play safe'. A common response to the questions, 'How do you do your time?' and 'How would you describe yourself?' was, 'I keep myself to myself'. Prisoners displayed as little information as possible about their individual personalities, adopting a fake identity ('You're restricted in here, they're all like me ... everyone knows they're lying'), or they tried to melt into an indefinable mass:

***R:** It's almost like people are scared to be different. **I:** Why? **R:** Because it's being judged by prison officers, judged by prisoners ... so it's very difficult ... to break away. ... Like, I've ordered some DVDs, but the problem is that sometimes they have a bit of violence in them ... and I started getting a bit nervous because they could start thinking: does he need a new fix of violence? You start thinking like that and you get paranoid, you can't help it. [They would think] 'Who is this guy, he's totally different from everyone else', so ... you revert back, and it all comes back to that process where everyone is wearing the same clothes, the same short haircut, you know, and it is very much like that ... **I:** But you almost have to be a non-person then? **R:** Oh yeah, I feel like I am, I feel alone in that sense of the fact that I have interests ... it's very rare*

²⁴ In this case, and in the example below, these are prisoners' accounts and understandings of their experiences, but legal commentary supports their accounts of murder convictions (see Badza [2009] EWCA Crim 2695; and Gnango [2010] EWCA Crim 1691). Prosecutors are making more use of the new powers to give information to judges on assistance to the police as sentence mitigation (s. 73-75A Serious and Organised Crime and Police Act 2005). Prisoners perceptions are of a change in the balance of evidence in criminal trials since 2003.

that you'll find something that you love ... it's very rare you'll find anyone to engage with that, so you ask someone about it and ... you won't get a lot from it ... you're like, 'Oh right', and then you feel a bit alone, it's like 'God, there's no one in the world who I can talk to about this'. ... You'll see something, read something, hear something and you're like 'Wow!', that gets you really interested, but you just have to hide it or forget about it, and that's really, really difficult ... So it's better to ... almost stereotype yourself as like a typical person who is a criminal, you know, who dresses a certain way, has short hair, is from a certain background, just to try and fit as much as you can in that mould (Prisoner).

The individual became his own enemy: his individuality was neglected on many levels,²⁵ but was also used against him. The fear of being judged (sometimes inaccurately) limited self-expression:

When it comes to ... other prisoners or the officers or something, I'm well reserved, I hold myself back, because my main focus is getting out. If someone's trying to irritate me or someone feels like they want trouble with me or anything like that, I'll just blank them completely, as long as you don't put your hands on me I'm fine, I don't really care, I'm focused on one thing only (Prisoner).

This notion of being fake, and holding oneself back, were recurring themes in conversations about identity in prison. Prisoners talked about not acting on what they thought, but suppressing it or displaying a somewhat 'dimmed version' of themselves:

I: So you have a lower version of yourself then, that we see? R: Really low, yeah, that's nothing. If I was outside I'd be cracking off jokes all the time. I: So do you miss that a lot? R: Yeah, I do, yeah. It's banter ain't it? (Prisoner).

As a result of being as reserved as possible, prisoners lost touch with their identities, or with the 'higher aspects of themselves' they often wanted to develop. The feeling of not being able to share interests with anyone isolated them.²⁶ The feeling of not knowing themselves anymore was disturbing and constituted one of the deep pains of imprisonment. Sykes argued in his classic study of a US maximum security prison that, 'the individual's picture of himself as a person of value ... begins to waiver and grow dim' (Sykes 1958: 78-9). This was experienced as a destructive process thwarting any aspirations of rehabilitation:

I went from being a useful, productive member of society, more or less, that made two stupid decisions and one really bad choice ... and now I'm a vegetable (Prisoner).

²⁵ As the research team argue later, there were areas, departments, and people in Whitemoor who recognised, encouraged and rewarded individuality. But here the focus is on prisoners' more frequent accounts of aspects of suppression or misrecognition of individuality and the painfulness of this.

²⁶ The original meaning of the term 'interest' itself was to be amongst, to be engaged (derived from the Latin translation: inter- (amongst) est (esse = to be), to share a common focus.

What I don't understand is the negativeness because I think negativity is something that would damage someone, you know, and I think in all aspects whether a person is bad or whether a person is good I think, if we show that person a bit of positivity and help that person to rise up above whatever it is ... I think a person can only be better (Prisoner).

If someone else doesn't value you, you start not valuing yourself, and when you start not valuing yourself you're not going to value society or anybody else around you, it's easy to slip back into that ... that life of crime (Prisoner).

3.4 Identity change and self-improvement

I've been extreme where I was like 'okay, immediate gratification, I'm mad, this is what you've done to me', you know? And I've been through that and I've realised well maybe I might deal with the extreme of the spectrum, but I just feel like I've gained an understanding from that journey that I've been through, and I've done a lot of isolation along the way, a lot of Segregation time, and I've had a lot of time to reflect, and I think, yeah, that's really how I've kind of evolved into probably the other end of the spectrum (Prisoner).

Whilst many prisoners experienced their time in prison as painful and disturbing, a majority also talked about beginning to recognise and explore their own shortcomings. Their 'old self' had proved to be dysfunctional and they had 'come to the end of the road'. Having realised that this was a chance to change, they were ready to 'start from scratch'. But they were unclear about how to begin. As one prisoner said, "First of all you start looking within yourself, reassessing why you're in prison". This was often the start of a long and time consuming process. One potentially positive consequence of a sentence of imprisonment was the change of pace, surroundings and company which provided time and opportunity to reflect on life, the past and the future:

I would be different from how I am now, you know, I'm not saying I was a bad person before, but there was a lot of things that I never used to take time to look into, and I never used to take time to understand, you know ... people's feelings was one thing that maybe I never used to take into consideration ... which play a big part in my life now ... it's meaningful (Prisoner).

I think I've changed to a better person. I think ... when I first came to jail I was young, I didn't really understand life, I was still trying to find myself, kind of thing ... I was just running around in the fast life, I was doing this, I was doing that, and now I know what I want out of life, I now know I can control myself in certain situations, I believe yeah, I can definitely be a better person, I don't think I need a psychiatrist to tell me if I can do that or not (Prisoner).

Prisoners described how being thrown back on themselves had given them time and forced them to contemplate the meaning of their lives, the reasons for finding themselves in their current situation, and more existential topics like the finality and meaning of life:

Prison and hospitals are the best places to start believing. You've got the time. And you're depressed, you're thinking maybe I'm going to die in there, there is no time for it outside. Outside I was busy (Prisoner).

Once the insight had developed that change was necessary and appealing, and that “improving yourself is key” (Prisoner), the question remained, ‘which road leads in the right direction?’, towards a more constructive and hopeful future. Prisoners worked out that they had to ‘reinvent themselves’ and started looking around for guidance, alternatives, or inspiration. This was the point at which what was available in the environment became important. It was also the point at which being recognised for their willingness and ability to develop themselves was critical, but often this did not happen. In this phase of orientation it was crucial that prisoners could gain access to different, meaningful and constructive outlooks on their identities and futures. According to most, “there’s nothing within the prison or within ... society to help people to have meaning” (Prisoner). A risk-averse society, and a cost-saving public sector, offered limited, measurable outcomes: risk-reduction verified by risk-assessment tools. Official acknowledgment of change was based predominantly on psychological reports which could be abstract and disturbing:

I don't think I'm being given a chance by the system because if I was being given a chance I wouldn't have this negative hold over me because, you know, this negative hold is causing anxiety to show in me, and anxiety is something I don't [know] how to overcome (Prisoner).

Individual efforts and strengths, like working as a listener or helping fellow prisoners to read and write, were rarely recognised by official authorities: prisoners argued that such activities did not often find their way into OASys and other reports. Prisoners did not feel represented adequately by such reports and assessments, but saw them as potential sources of misunderstandings or misrepresentations of their person.

In a prison environment where prisoners could not resort to taking part, for example, in the societal production of goods of value to prove their abilities or uniqueness, how else could they achieve a sense of self-worth and recognition — basic human needs?

It's all about social imperatives. As in belonging, grasping ... getting what you need in some way ... We still have all our competitive nature. There's just nothing to compete for any more, except for recognition (Prisoner).

The concepts of recognition (Honneth 1995), misrecognition, and hope, emerged as core themes in the analysis. Honneth argues that recognition has an important meaning for the individual’s conception of himself (sic) as an agent. This could be recognition of needs, legal status or achievement. The foundations of relationships of recognition are based along three axes: love, respect, and esteem. Non-recognition or misrecognition of individuals along of any of these axes of self-formation is experienced as a harm or injustice which in turn can lead to a greater struggle for recognition (van den Brink and Owens 2007). Honneth’s theory of the forms and foundations of recognition can be summarised as follows (Figure 3.1):

Figure 3.1 The foundations of recognition

Mode of Recognition	Emotional support	Cognitive respect	Social esteem
Dimension of Personality	Needs and emotions	Moral responsibility	Traits and abilities
Forms of Recognition	Primary relationships (love, friendship)	Legal relations (rights)	Community of value (solidarity)
Developmental Potential		Generalisation, de-formalisation	Individualisation, equalisation
Practical relation-to-self	Basic self-confidence	Self-respect	Self-esteem
Forms of Disrespect	Abuse and rape	Denial of rights, exclusion	Denigration, insult
Threatened Component of Personality	Physical integrity	Social integrity	Honour, dignity

In Whitemoor, where forms of recognition (such as love, friendship or affirmation) normally embedded in primary relationships were difficult to attain, and where legal relations and rights were threatened by perceived unfairness,²⁷ opportunities to maintain a positive outlook on oneself were limited:

Good news ... people don't get a lot of that, and it gives you the encouragement to do better ... Like, my offender manager said "I'm glad to tell you that you've met all of your objectives and we're very pleased and we're going to write that", you know, these things give you a push to say "yeah that's really good", you know what I mean? (Prisoner).

I: Speaking of the enhanced spur, do you think the IEP scheme is used in a fair way? R: No, it's not fair. I'll give you an example. I know a guy was over here for, like, six years, and he made one mistake, one adjudication and they kick him off. And he's a hell of a person. The guy's nearly fifty something years of age, been in prison for over ten years, he's been over here, do so much positive things for all that six years, and he made one mistake and they just boot you off. You don't get credit for what you've done over here, they don't care. And that's just a cold, mechanical, bureaucratic system which shouldn't exist if they say they're talking about rehabilitation. It's just retribution. One mistake, woop you're gone (Prisoner).

[You] could do good, and really they don't give a damn, they still don't, they're not writing it in your History Sheet, they're not making it verbally known that you done something good, because you know why? You're dead, you're dead to the world, you're no-one, you could have done good but you're still the biggest criminal in England (Prisoner).

²⁷ A high proportion of prisoners were appealing and/or saw themselves as victims of an unfair criminal justice system.

Prisoners felt that their efforts to change for the better were not sufficiently recognised by staff, or the Prison Service in general, which left them pessimistic about the role and meaning these efforts could have. In interviews, the metaphors referring to life at Whitemoor often revolved around death. The prison was described as a 'concrete coffin', or prisoners said they would 'look around and what they saw were 'people who just don't know that they're dead'. Some experienced prison as like sinking sand: 'easy to get into, but impossible to get out'.

Being 'mis'-recognised as *only* risky (a 'risk' rather than a person), and not as individuals with some good intentions, emotions, aspirations, talents and motivation, was an existential threat. It meant denying agency and humanity, literally pronouncing prisoners dead in the sense of being away from society and beyond hope:

Everything you do, there is something criminal behind it. There's nothing seen as altruistic, just kindness. There's no such thing as being kind or being ... just, you know, a human being to someone else (Prisoner).

I do think a lot of the rules and procedures are overkill and you're actually killing the human spirit through that. A simple strip search is horrendous to somebody outside. You imagine doing it every day for ten, twenty years ... it would finish you off as an individual (Prisoner).

Much of what the research team heard sounded like an account of psychological and emotional survival. Essential human needs like love, meaning, and hope were hard to find in this environment:

R: *It's all a stressful environment, where you have no privacy because you have officers always sticking their nose in, even in the night ... they wake you ... if you're on the toilet they come by your block ... you have no privacy. I:* *How do you cope with that? R:* *You just lock away your pride and just say I'm not a man. I'm a subhuman at the moment (Prisoner).*

Emotional and psychological survival meant fighting against the feeling of being dehumanised, depersonalised, or looked down upon, against being misrecognised as a unique human being. For prisoners this often manifested itself in the treatment they experienced from – or the way prisoners felt seen by – some prison officers:

I: *And how do you think the officers see you, then? R:* *I think they see we as numbers, I think they see we as scum. I think they see we as people who is hard to rehabilitate, I think they see us as immature people who are up to no good, getting to them ... There is no positive ... (Prisoner).*

Just 'cause we're in prison you don't need to degrade us ... just 'cause I'm in prison, I'm not going to act as if I'm ... the lowest part of society or whatever. I'm not going to act like where you can come and just treat me like an animal ... like I'm a monkey and this is the zoo (Prisoner).

[Why] speak to him 'you're a piece of shit, you're no-one' when we're only human beings? (Prisoner).

It's to do with the culture they have of just trying to make life harder for the inmate, for the prisoner. They like to keep ... the language a certain way ... So they're distancing yourself from me, no familiarity ... no closeness, you know, i.e. they don't want ... to call us by our first name because it tries to personalise and make it look like we're human beings (Prisoner).

Prisoners saw and evaluated their relationships with staff in this newly complex context. Being treated civilly by staff was about making prison life more survivable, but there was also an underlying and transcendent need for redemption and hope. Many of the respondents expressed the desire to be given a chance to show other, more positive and constructive parts of their personality, rather than being reduced to the role of a social and moral outcast, of a hopeless criminal:

There's nothing within, once you're in sentenced you're just guilty (Prisoner).

I: So what are the reasons why you interact with officers? R: To try and make them feel like we're human ... Because they almost want to dehumanise man ... you always get that vibe that 'he's a convict and he's dangerous.' I get that vibe a lot with them (Prisoner).

We're human beings at the end of the day, we're people. OK, some of us have done some very bad things, some of us have done some not quite so bad things, but that doesn't make us ... we're still, you know, we still love and feel and have the same emotions as everybody else (Prisoner).

I think sometimes it's the little mundane things ... when you're not feeling like a second class citizen. You feel as though you're recognised for who you are. You're recognised for your mistakes and your future aspirations rather than your past, if that makes sense (Prisoner).

It was crucial for the individual to (re-)gain faith in himself in order to find the motivation to progress and change for the better. One of the gradual reactions to the crisis of a long sentence was the eventual realisation that there was an urgent need to change, if prisoners wanted to progress, be released, and lead a life without crime. But this was difficult on their own and without guidance. They needed someone to believe in and place trust in them, someone to provide them with hope and inspiration (or 'healing', like the role that Elders can play in Canadian Aboriginal prisons, see Waldram 1997):

I think what's helped me quite a lot is people come from outside and they come as mentors or as people who have been in the position that like I was in and other people have been in and made a success of their life by doing certain things that, you know, we could do ourselves sort of thing, you know, because you can get hope from those sort of people and in prison you definitely need hope, you need hope that there is going to be

a better day, you can change and everything's going to turn out, not fine but, you know, you're going to try and make it. Because if you lose hope in prison then that's just it, it's a downward spiral going all the way down (Prisoner).

Psychological survival in prison was partly about finding humanity and recognition in relationships with staff or peers, but it was also about finding an interest or passion for something: horse-racing, fly-fishing, reading, making music, food and cooking, theatre, films, or bacon sandwiches, history or modern art. It was about (re-)connecting with emotional and intellectual needs, finding something that could give life a meaning and a purpose, providing a goal they had never had:

I: So do you like helping people in that kind of way? R: I love it yeah, I love doing it. I: Do you? R: I love it because I never had the [opportunity] (Prisoner).

I think a lot of these like young lads now from these ethnic minority backgrounds have always had this kind of instinct to have this emotional void fulfilled, you know this is why there's a lot of gang culture outside of prison, you know, and looking for acceptance, and now this void is fulfilled whether it's through religion, whether it's through gangs, whether it's through drugs or whatever it is, you know, it's all, when these individuals come into prison they need something to like fulfil this void and being a part of something or finding acceptance is about identification with other people, it's the ideal thing. I think the emotional void comes from, you know, the estates that, in the city areas that a lot of us have been raised in, you know, of deprivation, whether that's like social deprivation or emotional deprivation, you know, and poverty that goes with that and does have a kind of unstable kind of upbringings, you know, I think it's always seeking for some kind of fulfilment (Prisoner).

Prisoners described an overarching atmosphere of suspicion and detachment in the prison. According to their accounts, there was a general lack of care at Whitemoor. As one prisoner put it:

'There's no love in the concrete. It's almost ... at times you feel like even the building despises people in here' (Prisoner).

Given what the research team have described so far – struggles with identity, urgent needs for hope, recognition and respect, restricted opportunities, and a bleak future – much of the energy of the prisoner population was devoted to finding ways round, or compensation for, these experiences. Prisoners found opportunities to experience un-prison-like activities or environments that could promote individual growth and development, or fill the void via education, work, music, the gym, or faith.

3.5 Sources of hope, recognition and humanity: Education, workshops, the chapel and the gym

Prisoners found places where mutual co-operation, as well as hope, care, inspiration and motivation were more present and acceptable than they seemed to be on the landings. These places were away from the wings (the main 'stage'), literally situated 'at ground level' (one floor below the main walkways) in the workshop area. Or they were in education, the chapel, or the gym. They were 'underground' in another sense. As one staff member put it:

Humanity is there, it's in very small doses and it comes out like a little light, and then somebody sees it and goes oops, we can't be showing that (Officer).

3.6 The role of education

Positive accounts of some kind of change process emerged in many interviews, often centred around finding an interest and inspiration in learning. This discovery had often helped to turn lives round. Education in prison was about much more than knowledge acquisition. It was about identity, cognitive transformation, and meaning:

I: How would you describe your old self and how would you describe your new self? R: Definitely wild ... I don't know if I was just still finding myself but ... you mature ... I was just wild, I wasn't really settled, like wasn't doing no education, what I was doing, I was just still involved with certain groups, phoning people outside, I was still smoking cannabis and ... just a bit wild, you have that persona where you're living up to what your friends know you to be ... I've been a risk, and I found education, because before ... I was in that state of mind like a lot of prisoners, they come in, do workshops, gym, and just basically something to kill time, but with education, and something that interests you, it changes. I now relate to those that want to learn something ... whereas before I'd be sitting and relating to other prisoners about crime, 'oh you've done that, you've driven a car 100 miles per hour, oh', so you're relating about crime, so you're going to end up moulding into that route. But I've found education, that's my interest, there's more to life. ... You find yourself, you were a bit wild, you've had the thrills, now move on. ... It would be so easy for me to go back to that life, to be grr grr ... it would be so easy, but it's not the concept, that's not where I'm going, that's not the concept that I see ... there's no rewards for it (Prisoner).

R: I used to be sort of materialistic, you know, new car, good computers, clothes, best this, best that. Doesn't matter. I: What matters now instead of this? R: Experiences. I: Learning? R: Learning is experience ... I mean, I don't know how to say it... (Prisoner).

Through the experience of losing almost all material possessions and sometimes their identities, a thinking process began within some, as they reflected on the core of human existence and the formation of the self. When there was little 'material' left, then all the individual had was his mind.²⁸ Prisoners had to find constructive

²⁸ A monk-like existence. During the course of this project, Professor Ford (Faculty of Divinity, Cambridge University, Chair of the Cambridge Inter-Faith Programme Steering Group Meeting) was invited to teach for a week in Louisiana

ways to work with this 'raw material' or neglect it and let it die. This was the point where an exploration of the self started:

I did Psychology as well to A Level. I think the reason why I did that was because I wanted to understand people a bit more, myself as well a bit more. At the time I didn't understand myself, sort of thing, so I thought maybe this could be a way of me exploring the reasons behind, you know, why I committed crime, and family structures and things like that, and I think it did help me (Prisoner).

It takes away the ignorance, because I was very ignorant before. It's like, this is how it should be and this is how I want it and that's it, nothing else mattered. It was just the ignorance, and like the selfishness and I think that education kind of took away that ignorance ... I needed to learn ... the alternative routes, you know? (Prisoner).

R: *I've started my OU now and my mindset is in a different place now. Learning has kind of opened up my eyes to a lot of things. It's allowed me to put labels to things that I could see but could not define. I: And this makes the work more tangible, a bit more understandable? R: Yeah ... there's more cohesion in my world then, put it that way, so everything now kind of ... it's unified, it's one whole now. I can say all right, that's that, that's what that is, that's what that is, I can see them for what they are ... because your horizon has broadened so to speak (Prisoner).*

Education: reading, reflecting, and writing, could open eyes, add a new dimension to understanding the world, and provide insight: the previously incomprehensible made sense. Their 'tunnel vision' was recast, and with the broadening of horizons came the inkling that there were alternative routes to take. The idea dawned on individual prisoners (at different rates, or stages) that they were able to take these new routes, especially where backed up by a supportive guide — teachers or other mentors:

R: *We give them the opportunity to accept, "Yes, I need to do something for myself, I need to change, and it's okay to change", whereas in other areas it's not okay. I: Which other areas is it not okay to change? R: For example with peers on the wing ... prisoners often have to portray an image that they might not agree with, whereas down here they're all learners so it is acceptable to not be perfect down here, not to be strong, and yeah just do something for yourself. ... the behaviour is different in the classroom than it is on the wing, it takes a lot for a grown man to say I can't read or spell, or I can't add up, and it is okay to say that down here, where on the wing I am the biggest, I am the strongest, I have more power, that just doesn't come into it. Here everybody is at the same level and I think the basic issue is, you want to make a difference to yourself, and it is okay to do that here, whereas I think on the wing or in the other areas, or even on the street, it's a different image you have to keep up (Staff member).*

prison, where the chaplain was teaching monasticism to prisoners. Prisoners are learning to re-make incarceration into a 'quasi-voluntary' experience and learning the techniques of contemplative prayer and psalm recitation to teach patience in the face of long sentences and daily aggravation (see Frankl 1954).

Education gave prisoners the much talked about and much needed 'fresh start' and an alternative outlook on themselves. As learners, or students, they were now part of a community interested in their views about life, offering them a voice and something to strive for, regardless of the kind of persona they had outside or on the wings:

I: Have you ever experienced ... prisoners being different people in education than they are on the wing? R: Definitely, they're more disciplined, they're more understanding, they've got those goals ... they want to learn, it's interesting, they want to put their opinions into it. There's a lot of debates ... that depends on the level of education ... we all help each other, advise each other ... If I'm in the class I just try advising them and say look, where do you want to be ... are you doing this to just tick a box or ... slowly, you see it, they get into it, they get interested (Prisoner).

This process was facilitated by staff who were trustworthy in the eyes of many prisoners: "they're here to help us. So I believe ... what they say ... I more trust what they say than what an officer would say" (Prisoner). Teachers had a straight forward explanation for this:

We try not to judge, [so] I think yeah trust is definitely involved. Sometimes I think just as another grown-up because we have a different life, give a different perspective ... not because of being a specialist, just simply because we come with a different attitude maybe (Staff member).

Resorting to or discovering education as a survival strategy in prison could sometimes save lives and sanity:

[Name] never had his category reduced, he didn't get anything, he had to fight for absolutely everything, and he actually did say in the end if he hadn't been on education he would have committed suicide. That's how he defended himself — he survived, because he could stay away. He just studied and studied and studied (Staff member).

Prisoners repeatedly argued that 'the best interaction in this jail ... is with the teachers ... in education', and they appreciated their professionalism and work attitude highly:

I: How are the teachers in education? R: Quality, quality, brilliant. I could get the help I need from my teachers, they're impartial, like I said, they come in with this open view, they don't judge people. Because we've got prisoners around ... where you would think naturally the teacher should be a bit ... but they're very open minded, which I like. So all credit to them (Prisoner).

Because teachers were not commissioned to gather security information on prisoners, they had the chance to see each prisoner as 'a clean sheet', only evaluating his performance as a learner. Education staff had more avenues to get the balance of security (rather, control) and humanity right:

I think the education team do a sterling job here, you know. I think they've pitched it at just the right sort of ... levels and interest, and I think the control they have with people down there is ... amazing. [One teacher has] got a very strong personality which he really enforces on people, and I think ... I think it's almost like a fear, people are quite fearful ... but he's like also quite a pastoral father figure as well, so people want to please him in the lesson as well, so he ... gives a lot of stick, but he gives a lot of carrot as well, you know? (Prisoner).²⁹

Statistics on the distribution of assaults also conveyed a clear message about the distinctive atmosphere in the more constructive parts of the prison:

We might have had two or three incidents, two to my knowledge, serious incidents where prisoners actually got hurt in the Education Department in eighteen years, now you compare that to what's happening on the wing, and we do have, we got questioned years ago why do we have ... a very high proportion of the high risk ones ... and incidents just, I wouldn't say don't happen because the minute you say that ... but if you look at the statistics they should actually see that there is something we're doing right (Staff member).

Staff in education saw their work as something productive and constructive, conveying meaning, recognition and hope: 'It's what makes you feel good when you get positive feedback, don't you?' They were able to provide prisoners with the chance and encouragement to build up a better self-image, and to achieve something for themselves:

I came here with nothing. And I've got to that level now (Prisoner).

I: If you were about to think about when life is at its best here, what is it like? R: Education ... I can achieve something, you know? (Prisoner).

I think a lot of it has to do with gaining confidence and a better self-image, 'I'm not just bad, I'm not just wrong, there are areas where I'm actually just as good as anybody else' and I think there are lots of little building blocks that help to come to a final [mmm] yeah I did make a difference to myself' (Staff member).

You can't under-estimate the value of educating people, you know, and giving them more self esteem, and more self worth, and it broadens horizons and it makes people realise what they're capable of and, you know, especially at the start of such a long sentence. And I think the more educated a man is, I know there are some very, very violent and highly educated men, but once you start, especially if you start reading quality literature and you start feeling your own self worth you see the worth of others and are less inclined to be violent towards somebody who you see some worth in (Officer).

²⁹ This balance between the use of authority and respectful relationships is precisely what the best prison officers achieve (see Lieblich, Price and Shefer 2010; and Lieblich 2011).

Prisoners described this 'growth' experience vividly: finding meaning in something and getting back in touch with emotions and the world around them. Understanding and making sense of the world provided them with a new life:

Definitely education has given me so much. It gives a little bit more meaning. You can be so passive with life, you can be just watching TV, not engaging, and education engages you more with life and makes it feel a little bit less crap because you can read something and find that there is like a little purpose and meaning, there is a reason. It can almost reinvigorate life (Prisoner).

Learning more about life and the world (within one's self as well as outside prison walls) provided cohesion to the world. This provided orientation for struggling, erring individuals looking for alternative routes and a chance to find their own place in the world:

R: It's important, having your own space. Knowing that you can start something and see it through and finish it. And just having a belief in myself, which I had when I came out of the last sentence, I had that belief. I: Is that something that you built up during your ...? R: I built up during the sentence, yeah. I: How did you do that, if you can recall it? R: Well I educated myself. I left school at 15, no qualifications or nothing. Doing my last sentence, I did five A levels, business studies courses, accounts and book keeping courses, I committed myself to using the time that I had. I did over eight years on my last sentence, and I gained qualifications. I used those in order to come out and start my own business. That was my plan because I knew I was virtually unemployable. I'd just done 12 years for armed robbery, and who the hell was going to give me a job, I wouldn't give me a job! Ha ha ... See what I mean? (Prisoner).

There was a 'law-abiding' life out there somewhere that seemed remote and alien, and out of reach.³⁰ Education made that out-of-reach life seem graspable.

So education was often referred to by prisoners and staff as one of the most important keys to rehabilitation, as it could help to set up future work careers, provide alternative visions of life and practical instruments to free oneself of old stereotypes:

[W]ith education I've managed to enhance my vocabulary and my understanding of speech, literature, writing, reading, so it does help if you've got a better vocabulary than 'innit, mate' (Prisoner).

When I get out, people see my tattoos and see you've got a criminal record, they're going to judge me and what would be brilliant is to turn round and say, I'm here to do this. Oh, yeah, what qualifications have

³⁰ Dialogue group members asked questions about how one voted (how anyone knew what a polling booth was and where to find it), how we participated in our communities ('a polling booth is a village hall..?'), and how we fitted into a class structure that to them seemed rigid and excluding. They assumed our lives and upbringing were more straightforward, privileged, middle-class and stable than was realistic, and were surprised to have these assumptions challenged. The 'othering' process works both ways.

you got? I suppose an NVQ or something? I go well, actually, no, I've got a degree ... that's my goal, you know ... I've really surprised myself (Prisoner).

If you have somebody in prison and then he's been shown education and he's got incentives to say, well you actually can be successful, but not in this way, and just because you've got a criminal record, it ain't going to stop you from getting a good job, etc., then he's more likely to learn. Most people in the ghetto drop out of school through violence and gang conflicts, some people though are very smart and they will finish their exams ... then you actually open the door for them or you actually seal the door for them to commit crime (Prisoner).

Another place where prisoners were able to express themselves with passion were the workshops dedicated to creative production, especially Workshop 10 which was equipped with computers and other facilities to produce music and do graphic-design.

3.7 Workshop 10

'Music is the people's life' (Prisoner).

When prisoners were asked what mattered to them most about being in Workshop 10, they said, 'We just do our thing' or 'this is our music'. They were proud of their work: self-produced and mixed-music tracks that provided them with a sense of ownership and independent achievement.³¹ Their songs illustrated the 'best hidden' parts of their identity. Much of the music compiled by the prisoners in Workshop 10 included lyrics about love and loss (one track we listened to was entitled 'Fake Love') as well as (sexual) desires which were very much taboo everywhere else. Prisoners gave creative expression to their circumstances and regrets in these contexts, to painful or disturbing experiences inside and on the street, but also to their identities as loving people. 'People are opening up' we were told by one prisoner. It seemed easier for many of them to translate feelings like fear, uncertainty, longing, love, anger and pain into lyrics and melodies than talking to staff or each other about them directly (see the use of poetry and literature in general in the management and expression of suicidal feelings, for example, in Alexander 1990). This form of expression was something they could identify with, and had incorporated as a tool for cultural and social expression on the outside. Some had been working in or had been otherwise involved in the music-production business³² before they came to prison and had gathered specialist knowledge that could provide them with future opportunities:

³¹ Several Good Vibrations courses have also been delivered at Whitemoor (see Digard and Liebling 2008 for an evaluation of its impact in one prison). The Firebird Trust's Good Vibrations one week gamelan courses were awarded "approved intervention" status by NOMS' Directorate of High Security Prisons in 2009. This means that Good Vibrations is now officially recognised as an effective tool for high security prisons in their efforts to reduce reoffending. Their annual report read as follows: '2009/2010 was a challenging year for many organisations delivering arts projects in prisons, including Good Vibrations, owing to the Prison Service Order (PSO) on "acceptable interventions" issued by the then Secretary of State for Justice in response to negative tabloid coverage. This PSO had the effect of discouraging some prisons from hosting arts projects and also dramatically increased the amount of bureaucracy faced by both host prisons and arts organisations when trying to establish and run projects. Good Vibrations submitted evidence to NOMS on the impact of the PSO on our work and on other arts organisations. A revised PSO, issued this summer, is much more positive'.

³² Most (but not all) of the prisoners in Workshop 10 were from a BME, metropolitan background, and most were interested in producing music-styles like Hip-Hop, Rap, RnB, Dub(Step) and Soul.

You would be amazed. If you like music and, depending on what type of music, can appreciate and understand music, you would say to yourself “wow, you really made that?” but that’s with listening, because seeing somebody stand in front of a microphone shouting a load of what looks like abuse to me, can probably seem to some people negative, but to hear it when it’s all fixed on the beat and it’s all been tailored and fixed, yeah? (Prisoner).

It’s something that I can [pause] ... something that is teaching me, preparing me for outside, because it’s something that I would like to do when I get outside (Prisoner).

The story-line about Workshop 10 and its rehabilitative and constructive potential was similar to the narrative about education, as were the prisoners’ opinions about the staff (instructors) working there:

The staff down there, you can talk to them easy. And we have conversations and he tells me about his day and what he does and his spare time, and I don’t know, down there I can have a good talk with him (Prisoner).

Prisoners invited members of the research team to put on the headphones, to hear selected tracks, to appreciate the emotions expressed in song: of loneliness, longing, heartbreak, and love. These moments were moving, and indicated a level of engagement, self-expression and meaning-making longed for elsewhere in the prison.

3.8 The Chaplaincy

Prisoners also spoke with feeling and affection for the courses and activities on offer in the chapel, where these were available.

The stated, official role of the prison Chaplaincy is to ‘enrich the spiritual life of prisoners’ and provide for their spiritual needs. This involves giving prisoners ‘opportunities to practice and grow in their faith’, assisting prisoners with family issues, and being available to all prisoners whatever their faith or background to offer pastoral support, care and challenge, whenever that is required. This involves linking prisoners with the Chaplain of their faith tradition. As one prison Chaplain put it, “I had a responsibility to be aware of the humanity of everyone and to demonstrate God’s love wherever and whenever I could”. Most of the time Chaplains find themselves ‘being with people, whether they are staff or prisoners, as a person who listens and who cares, and who prays’. Chaplains may engage in or encourage specific ‘humanising’ projects like restorative justice, Dialogue, and so on, as well as providing advice and support on spiritual matters.

Each prison has a Chaplaincy team composed of Chaplains from the main world faiths. They are often complemented by volunteers who make a valuable contribution to their work. At Whitemoor, the Chapel area was located at the centre of the prison, next to education, the library, and several group rooms, making it a key location for meetings and activities. In the first study, this area was busy, active and thriving, and became a central stopping-off point throughout the research.

Conversations and activities were constantly going on, visitors came and went, and members of the research team found themselves part of this flow. The Chaplaincy team, as well as others in the area, played a critical and creative role in the prison, encouraging personal reflection and questioning, relationships and harmony, and supplying much tea. It was clear that the potential role played by the prison Chaplaincy, both directly and as a gateway to other things, was wide ranging and highly significant.

In the second study, whilst individuals were generous with their time (and tea), and spoke with passion about their areas of work, the team were somewhat depleted at the time of the research, with one long-term sick absentee and a second post unfilled. The atmosphere was less confident or harmonious ('barren', as one observer noted) and their collective role, power and presence in the prison (as well as on the senior management team) was less clear.³³ The language spoken about prisoners, or 'our theology of the person', was refreshingly free of institutionalised risk-thinking. The concepts of trust, peace and relationship were in use. A very well liked 'living with loss course' had been devised (and accredited), with a support group to follow, and several faith and secular justice awareness courses were on offer. But there was some confusion in the prison as to the role specific faith representatives played, and whether every post had a 'welfare function' as well as a 'scriptural' function. Some tensions existed, which were reflected by conversations held higher up in the organisation, reflecting the fact that 'the provision of religious and pastoral care in prisons has become a site of controversy' (see for an early analysis of this, Beckford and Gilliat, 1998). Questions of religious diversity, public and private practices, provision, equality of provision, as well as conversion, were newly troubling to prisoners, staff and senior managers, and it was not clear to prisoners with powerful positions 'whose side' individual ministers were on.³⁴ These new and largely *structural* constraints sometimes made it difficult for individuals to carry out their work.

As the fieldwork ended, new life was being breathed into the Chaplaincy team, and several new appointments had been made. By the time of the final revisit (undertaken at the report's revision stage, in February 2011) Whitemoor had two full-time Imams, two Anglican Chaplains and two part-time Roman Catholic ministers. It was clear that the 'quiet' phase was over. A lively programme of training, Dialogue and ministry was in place, and relationships with the small number of extremist prisoners in the prison (and also with their families) had been established. Whilst prisoners played 'games with us', sometimes claiming they were under pressure from Christian and Muslim groups in order to try to secure a transfer out to a Category B prison, the Chaplaincy team were deeply engaged in individual prisoner narratives and were able to offer guidance and support in ways that prisoners appreciated. The critical role of the Chaplaincy in the life of a high security prison, in generating trust and building staff-prisoner relationships, in clarifying the messages and parameters of each faith tradition, and in the future

³³ A security breach had led to the demise of the 'original' Dialogue Group, and the period to follow was inevitably demoralising for those ministers in post who wished to engage external volunteers in their work.

³⁴ For example, there were, according to some prisoners, 'Home Office Imams': "It's like with the new Muslim service, we've got lots of Muslims ... only 29 went last week because the main guy won't let them go because it's too moderate, so he will do his own teachings when he comes back ... he will go ... he sends one guy down, the same guy every week, we know who it is, to find out what's going on and come back and so he can tell them what's gone on in the prayer meetings, but as a protest against the Imam he won't let them go" (Officer).

development and progress of prisoners, were all very clear, (and could each constitute future research topics in their own right).³⁵

It was noticeable that prisoners regarded psychology and the Chaplaincy as opposite poles on 'trust' – whilst psychology were 'telling them things they don't want to hear', the Chaplaincy were 'trying to give people hope and meaning'.³⁶ The faith ministry permitted 'sitting by him while he needs us', or pastoral care, whereas psychology required an analysis of faith practices 'within the context of a risk assessment'.³⁷

3.9 The Gym

When asked how they 'did' prison life, many of the interviewees referred to 'going to the gym' as a main means to 'release a bit of pressure' or to deal with stress and anger. Even though several of the most serious prisoner-on-prisoner assaults had taken place in the gym (see chapter 5, section 5.6, 'prisoner-on-prisoner assaults'), prisoners and staff agreed that the reason for this was not to be found in its atmosphere, its purpose, or how the place was run, but in its layout: there was (at the start of the fieldwork) no CCTV-monitoring of the gym. Thus it was one of the few places in Whitemoor that was unsupervised in this regard,³⁸ providing an opportunistic setting for fights and violent revenge to be carried out with no video evidence left behind.

Apart from these incidents, prisoners were unanimous in their praise for the gym and gym-staff:

The gym screws down there are different as well, they're more easy going and they talk to you about football and they joke around with you, they run jokes with you, and we run jokes back with them and it's just that kind of relationship that makes it more easy going, so I don't know what the staff on the wings can do, but I feel like they need to follow in their footsteps and see the way the gym screws do it and the staff in the workshop do it as well, I feel that they need to do that (Prisoner).

Staff provided the opportunity for prisoners to acquire certificates and vocational qualifications (for example, in personal training) for the outside labour market. Games and tournaments were organised (including a table tennis tournament featuring one of the research team), with the support of staff, during which prisoners mixed freely, talked with each other and with the research team, and seemed to forget their wing identities and divisions.

³⁵ A qualitative investigation of the contribution of prison chaplaincy to the Prison Service is being conducted by The Cardiff Centre for Chaplaincy Studies (due to report March 2011).

³⁶ A study of religious conversion and self-identity in prison by Goodwin found that prisoners regarded the effects of psychological intervention as stigmatising compared to the effects of contact with the chaplaincy which they regarded as forgiving and redemptive (Goodwin 2001).

³⁷ Efforts were being made by the psychology team to be more transparent, to disclose the content of their assessments with prisoners, and to engage prisoners (and staff) in Dialogue about how they might reduce their risk of violence, for example, but as 'the main barrier to progression' in the eyes of prisoners, this was tricky. A professional shift towards 'more emphasis on protective factors' meant that 'some constructive engagement with very difficult prisoners', and 'confidence building', was taking place. A rotation of unformed staff with considerable expertise off D Wing into posts on other wings also contributed to a confidence building process on all sides.

³⁸ Shortly after the fieldwork was completed, the gym was fitted with CCTV cameras. Prisoners waited patiently for the fitting process to take place over several weeks, and supported its introduction.

Apart from the benefits already noted (the provision of alternative self-concepts, inspiration and opportunities for the future), places like the Education Department, small workshops, the gym or the 'Older Prisoners' Club' also provided 'mental-escape':

When I go to the gym for an hour and fifteen minutes it's like, it takes my head out of jail for the time I'm down there, do you know what I mean? It's the only thing we've got (Prisoner).

When I'm in Workshop 10 it doesn't feel like I'm actually in prison, you know, because there's music playing in the headphones and it's like a studio [claps hands] (Prisoner).

What I'm trying to say sounds slightly weird, but your life transcends the prison, you could be anywhere. Within that, you're just in a gym, do you know what I mean? The only way I felt like that was in Full Sutton when I was in the motorbike shop, and that was, like, a garage, do you know what I mean? I enjoyed that (Prisoner).

It's only for a couple of hours but it's like you've been released. I can't believe how much it [the Older Prisoners' Club] means to me (Prisoner).

In the same way that Appreciative Inquiry could put people in touch with what gives them life and energy, an afternoon in Workshop 10 (the music workshop) or on a gym instructor's course could put prisoners in touch with those parts of themselves that were spontaneous and 'harmonious', and glad to be alive. Creative activities were engaging and life affirming, 'transcendent' in the same way that religion could be. Some observed that the same 'high' they had gained from hedonistic (but dangerous or destructive) activities outside could be gained from more creative pursuits. Such activities were validating and therapeutic, and helped to bring about a kind of self-integration that seemed out of reach in other contexts. The 'offender' and 'the creative artist' were not so far apart – and yet their expression led in completely different directions.³⁹ Without self-integration (a form of healing), prisoners sought integration-immersion into a community elsewhere, as described in the chapters that follow (on healing, see Waldram 1997: 72).

Most prisoners and staff were aware of the intrinsic reforming and therapeutic value of these activities. It was a tragedy of modern politics and culture that the benefits were not recognised (or were misunderstood) by the public and the media:

Yeah, they do music and that. They need to do things to keep people busy and give them a purpose. Something, you should have a purpose, not just rotting away smoking burn, drinking coffee. That stresses me out, 'cause I don't want to waste my time in jail. The thought of it stresses me out, and when you get stressed, you get anger in prison (Prisoner).

I: Is it [your music] published anywhere or ...? R: No, we're not allowed to send it out of the prison because obviously they're saying that they

³⁹ Kavalier-Adler describes creative activity as 'reparative self-striving toward integration, differentiation and authenticity ... the internal representational world [can] find resolution in creative work' (2003: 58).

don't want it to be like oh, these criminals are being creative, doing music, and you understand, the tax payers are paying for us to sit down and do music (Prisoner).

What happened, the newspaper had got hold of it, inmates are being given creative classes, blah, blah, blah. Backlash. Home Secretary rang, close the class down. That was the end of it. We were chucked back into our cells and nothing more was ever said about it. Now, to me, you know, you can see a little glimmer, people's lives actually being touched, yeah, thrown back (Prisoner).

New regulations made clear what prison was not supposed to be and what was unacceptable to the public. But they left a void as to what prison was supposed to be or do, as to how prisoners should relate to staff or what role prison played in wider society. This left behind a somewhat perplexed prisoner population, and an almost equally perplexed, overcautious and risk-averse staff population at Whitemoor, as described in Chapter 6.

3.10 The purpose of prison: punishment, rehabilitation or 'the expression of public rage'?

Prisoners argued that the deterioration in relationships evident at Whitemoor was related to a lack of clarity about the purpose of imprisonment. Staff and prisoners lacked a common goal. This point arose as a significant theme in several respects. As one prisoner put it:

I've been in prison for six years. I don't know what the point of prison is. I can figure it out for myself, but I haven't actually been told listen, you've been sent to prison. The terms of prison is this. I have never been told that. And I think that's lacking from the Prime Minister to the Justice Secretary, Governors, officers, society and inmates. If you were in a business outside you'd have a mission statement, but we don't have that. So what's happened is that I think prison is about this, and I think it's about rehabilitation. Your officer will think no, it's about punishment. You have to have a miserable face. And then another officer will think, but actually it's about giving somebody a second chance and they'll be a lot more helpful. So I think in the middle you've got a lack of purpose what the proper prison is. And then that permeates everything. It affects every single relationship (Prisoner).

Prisoners thought staff were unclear on this question, and tended to bring their 'outside' or lay views into prison with them:

The staff don't know what prison's about, inmates don't know what prison's about, so everyone brings their own thoughts to prison. I mean, there's one officer who's coming from a very moralistic [sic] angle and I appreciate that and I really respect him, so his approach has been HM Prisons are about reform. And your officers are going to be coming in and thinking right, you've done this, you've done that, you're the scum of the earth, you deserve to be punished. I think that explains why you get on with some officers and you don't with others. They've got different

beliefs about what prison does and I think that also explains why some inmates treat officers in a certain way (Prisoner).

There were assumptions among the prisoner population that disciplinary staff saw the purpose of Whitemoor as primarily punitive, whereas prisoners wanted to see it as a place of rehabilitation. In contrast to prisoners' assumptions, staff often expressed views and hopes that were similar to theirs:

I: What do you think the purpose of Whitemoor should be? R: I think it should be more rehabilitation than punishment (Prisoner).

I: What do you think the purpose of this prison is? R: Security, isn't it? I: And what do you think it should be? R: Rehabilitation (Prisoner).

There should be a common purpose of prison. Once that's identified, then you can go in as if they'll agree that it's about rehabilitation, 'cause they might not. I don't think staff would agree with that. I think they'd come out with something like if you commit the crime do the time. I think that would be the, sort of, answers that would come out (Prisoner).

R: [Sighs], imprisonment, for me, is (a) protecting the public, as in you're keeping them away from the public, and that is doing what the Courts want you to do, and I would love to think that we do rehabilitation and get them to live a better life, but that just doesn't happen in a Dispersal Prison, I'm not saying it doesn't in other prisons. I: Is it because of the sentences they're doing? R: Yeah, because they're just normally in the first couple of years of their sentence. A lot of them have committed some sort of offences within the prison to end up here anyway, or they've done heinous crimes outside to have got them in here, so yeah, we're at the sort of the wrong end of the stick for rehabilitation, but it can start here, there's no doubt about it, it does start here (Officer).

I: What do you think the purpose of imprisonment should be? R: I do think we've got it wrong. Yes, we're protecting society and, let's be honest, the reality is, if the majority of these guys were out there'd be a lot more victims, so we're preventing victims, and that ultimately is the main aim. But I do think ... if we could get the balance right and work with these guys, because a lot of them have no understanding of what their role in society is, you know, so while we're chucking them down the CD shop or giving them GCSE's, yeah that's good, but it's not actually rehabilitating them. I think the Government's got it completely wrong. Much rather we had lots of small groups of similar people, intellectual people, so you could work with them and actually teach them about life, you know, and what's expected of them (Officer).

Many prison officers would have liked more opportunities to actively engage in working towards rehabilitative goals with prisoners (though this argument was often linked to a political position on resources):

If they want us to lock them up, because that's the staffing levels we're going to, we're losing the extra staff to have the good relationships, to

have everything you need for rehabilitation to take place, but they're just chipping and chipping and chipping with taking away the funding (Officer).

They regretted that this task had apparently been 'taken away from them' and agreed with prisoners when they regretted that psychology (or offender management) staff were officially assigned (exclusive) authority to judge risk, and progress, as measured by the successful completion of accredited courses:

I mean, the psychologists and everything else, they see them probably, I don't know, once, twice a month. They see us every day. A lot of these prisoners have had terrible up-bringsings and I know it's never an excuse, being abused in some way, but all they know is what happened to them or around them, which is not a normal upbringing, or what I'd class as a normal upbringing in their everyday life. So how come we expect people who have lived that life to behave in a normal behaviour as such? It takes a long, long time and the problem is, it's time — it's trying to juggle it in with your normal jobs that have to be done and when you do it, there's only so much you can do at one time. If they don't know different — unless someone's prepared to put the time in to try to show them different, how are they ever going to know different? And that's why I said to you earlier if you only ever get one that never, ever comes back in prison, that one's enough for me (Officer).

3.11 Towards recognition and rehabilitation

To hold offenders accountable to the norms of a society always implies accepting their rights to recognition and respectful treatment, and 'a chance to regain our trust and to re-enter society once they have undergone punishment' (Laws and Ward 2010: 15). Helping offenders acquire social, psychological, and cultural resources to meaningfully participate in the life of the community (or communities) would, according to desistance scholars, 'result in reduced reoffending rates' (Laws and Ward 2010: 293).

Prisoners talked at length about the accredited programmes they were required to take, and how these programmes did not feel relevant to their individual trajectories:

If I do five courses in the next three years I've still got twenty-eight years left (Prisoner).

There were courses on offer (e.g. CALM, ETS, Focus, Alpha, a Cognitive Self-Change Programme, Justice Awareness, Living with Loss, Victim Awareness and TSP), and sometimes some of these courses were highly praised by individuals, but prisoners were generally somewhat sceptical and frustrated about their effectiveness in helping them *make progress* (e.g., achieve a reduction in their risk score) as well as the long waiting lists involved, and the 'aggregate' processes through which recommendations were made.⁴⁰ The process of identity change was long and complex, but prisoners wanted to pursue it, and find support. Formal

⁴⁰ Prisoners at early stages of long sentences in high security prisons are more critical of accredited offending behaviour courses than shorter term prisoners tend to be (see Liebling 2004: 316-18), and this is exacerbated by the high proportion of prisoners appealing against their sentences. But the critique of 'narrow' models of rehabilitation is widely accepted (see, e.g. Maruna/Rehabilitation Services Division 2010).

processes of 'risk reduction' came nowhere near this agenda. In their recent book on the treatment of offenders, Laws and Ward (2010) argued that 'R&R type correctional programs' are 'rigid and based on a one size fits all treatment philosophy' (see also Farrall, 2002; McNeill *et al.*, 2005; Porporino, 2008; Robinson and Raynor, 2006). There is a lack of attention to the contextual nature of human action or appreciation of the multifaceted nature of crime. The 'overly mechanical and bureaucratic' approach of the R&R to offender treatment and risk is based on an implicit individualism. A consequence of this reliance is a 'tendency to overpathologize individual offenders and neglect the important role of external and systemic influences in the creation of crime facilitative circumstances'. From a desistance perspective 'it is imperative to take offenders' unique set of circumstances into account when seeking to understand factors that reduce crime and enhance pro-social functioning' (Laws and Ward 2010).

There was a huge gulf between the 'identity crisis' and 'identity change' processes that prisoners found themselves immersed in, and the model of rehabilitation in operation in the prison (and in the Service more broadly), as it did not take into account the individual's own pace of development. Courses lost their credibility and effectiveness when imposed upon a prisoner who had not come to the right point in time, where he was ready and willing to change. They did not make sense, as 'self-change necessarily involves the motivation to change and requires that the client "buy in" to the change process.'⁴¹

I: Do you get the impression that the Prison Service or the system believes that people can change, that offenders can change their attitude? R: I think they do. But really I don't think it takes a psychiatrist to turn around and say yeah, that person, he can change. It's down to that person in himself to change, he knows he can change. If he wants to change for the better he's going to do it. If he don't want to change for the better he's not going to do it, yeah, because he's not stupid, you know what I'm saying, either he's saying, you know what, I'm going to try and make a go for it when I get out and turn around and do something good with my life, or he's going to say to himself, you know what, I'm going to talk to them and let them hear what they want to hear and get out and do what I want to do. So either way he's going to do what he's going to do. He's got sense in his head (Prisoner).

There's not much rehabilitation, and the only thing that's in the tool kit of the prison seems to be allegedly voluntary courses - ha ha! They say these voluntary courses can rehabilitate, I don't know how true that can be. It's down to the individual basically. If someone wants to change they will (Prisoner).

I don't think courses work. I think courses are a total waste of time. The reason why I say I think courses are a total waste of time is because a person will only change as much as they want to change. We can sit and talk to them until the cows come home, but unless that person wants to take it on board and do it themselves... Now when they're in prison, if they never want to come back to prison again and want to lead a normal

⁴¹ See Ward and Maruna (2007) p. 119.

life, that is down to them. It's not because someone in a classroom has said to them A, B or C, because that is just a paper exercise to put before a Parole Board, to put before the Home Office to say Mr X has done blah, blah, blah. Oh, he must be OK now then (Officer).

What facilitated change was trusted people, good advice, new avenues, and gentle encouragement (as well as tough straight-talking, when the occasion called for it). These processes took time and required patience. As one prisoner (who had been in and out of YOIs and prisons from a young age) put it:

I think psychology is completely wrong man. I look at it from a sociological point of view, like where people get caught up in a way of lifestyle, they've become socialised into a way of life, and to break out of that lifestyle is very difficult. It means totally restructuring everything they hold normal: values, beliefs about life in general, and for a lot of people that's very hard no matter what their best intentions are. A lot of people just would get out and try and lead a different life and just find it so alien to them. The sad fact is they'd rather risk themselves coming back to prison than trying to change, because it's easier for them and they feel more comfortable, sad to say, within a prison environment. Because they're around the people that they've always known, that they've always related to. That's why these people don't understand, they think there's something broken within you, that they need to help you fix it. Do you know what I mean? And that's where they go wrong, because for the majority of the people there's nothing broken. They say that criminals can't differentiate between right and wrong and they've got bad thinking patterns and they can't hold true to the norms and values of what ever society. But if you look at some groups of criminals, they actually hold true and display the correct rights and wrongs within their own sub-culture because that's what they've become socialised in. So it's nothing to do with their thinking being wrong, it's just to do with them not knowing. Within their own group and within their own society they were quite capable of showing all these characteristics that apparently criminals are deficient in. The problems are a lot more sociological, environmental, than they are to do with psychological and things like that (Prisoner).

The concept of the 'Good Lives Model' (GLM; Ward and Maruna 2007: 118) supports the prisoner quoted above, proposing that 'offending emerges from a network of relationships between individuals and their local environments, and is not simply the consequence of individual psychopathology ... the idea of context-free intervention, then, is clearly a mistake'.

Some courses did not seem to make sense, and added to a prisoner's confusion rather than offering a constructive way out:

All the time you just feel like they're trying to change my mind, especially as the fact that there's no improvement. What they really want you to do is just never get emotional again and stuff like that, it's very difficult. That's what prison ... them courses ... I just got sidetracked off anger ... but that's what them courses are, they're just like ... they really are in so

much like a cliché way they just tick the box. So we're behind here, and they go look, we have done something about him, even though half the people that do them come back to prison. They go well, that's because they can't be saved (Prisoner).

The GLM regards intervention 'as an activity that should add to an individual's repertoire of personal functioning, rather than as an activity that simply removes a problem, or is devoted to managing problems, as if a lifetime of grossly restricting one's activity is the only way to avoid offending' (Ward and Maruna 2007: 128).

Even though staff and prisoners did not perceive rehabilitation to be officially or explicitly part of Whitemoor's statement of purpose, they felt that it would have to be, if the Prison Service was to concern itself with the future of prisoners and the greater public good.⁴² The right timing was crucial in this regard:

Consider this is a long term prison, there is a surprising lack of, you know, really good long term objectives for people. The mentality seems to be that basically before you actually go out the door, a few years before you leave, that's when they become interested in you (Prisoner).

They don't give you nothing to motivate you. They are just: prison, prison, prison, retribution. There is no rehabilitation. All they deal with is retribution, that's it. But it will be the tax payer who will be suffering from this, because people will come out of prison bitter and having lost their faith in the system (Prisoner).

One day we're going to be members of society, so what kind of person would you like to see in society? These guys are walking shells and I think 'what are they going to contribute to?' 'What are they going to for life outside?' So I think it's an opportunity for, you know, to doing something worthwhile (Prisoner).

***R:** We really need a really, really good programme, not ETS or calm or focus or those crap ones, I mean I've done it and you know, I remember in the training thinking I'm being brainwashed. What we need is really good role models, you know, having people speak to them who can teach them about what is expected in life. **I:** And if you miss that window, though, then ...? **R:** they become institutionalised (Officer).*

Prisoners were aware that providing good-quality tools for rehabilitation like (higher) education courses, and diverse working and training facilities could fuel public envy, 'if the tabloids got a-hold of it'. They were anxious about highlighting the added value of rehabilitation for society:

I think because society is uneducated of what prison is supposed to do for the individual, it makes it dangerous for individuals in prison. Society don't understand that prisoners are supposed to be better when they

⁴² Whitemoor's homepage states: 'Whitemoor is a maximum security prison for men in category A and B. It is one of eight High Security prisons. The prison focuses on settlement (helping those convicted of serious offences to make positive use of long sentences) and resettlement (reducing the risk of reoffending through assessment, work, education and offending behaviour programmes)'.

come out, they're not supposed to feel bitter. If they get deprived of all what they have a chance to learn about, they're going to come out bitter and then live out there in society. They don't want prisoners to come out bitter, you know, they want prisoners to come out with a good temperament and good attitude with a purpose, to be better (Prisoner).

They say, 'oh they get free education'. We don't get it for free ... it's NOT free. They've taken my life away. I'd pay for it willingly (Prisoner).

All this stuff, all this luxury, you probably come from the outside with a negative view of what's going on here, they spoil these criminals, like why are they going to education, free education, free this. But it's for the whole benefit of the community; this is what the people need to rehabilitate them. Why are these people being provided with things like this, why are they being provided with so many avenues? But sometimes you've got to understand that's what's needed to provide ... if it's going to make them see themselves or make them be able to socialise and understand what they were doing is wrong, then it's good (Prisoner).

I suppose I can see that they think well, you know, the victims haven't got that opportunity to be in a band, and that's true, they haven't, but how do you rehabilitate people and show peoples' potential and give them hope if you don't encourage their better side? Some people don't even know that they're really good artists or they're good singers or they can play, you know, they've never been nurtured as children and growing up. Yes, they get to an age where they know the difference between right and wrong, but often it's too late then to stand up and be strong and so if we don't encourage them we're never going to rehabilitate them (Officer).

Prisoners and staff at Whitemoor called for more and alternative rehabilitation efforts. They argued that current tools for rehabilitation were applied 'more or less half-heartedly' because there was no clear consensus within the Prison Service (or among the public) that rehabilitation had to (or could) start in high security prisons. Prisoners, most of whom had a hope to be released at some point, explained their need for constructive rehabilitation interventions, and for a feeling of personal progress and development.⁴³ In order for specific interventions to work, people had to have faith in them; the whole environment had to support them; they had to be embraced whole-heartedly:

I: *What do you think about rehabilitation? Is it something realistic? R:* *The thing is you have to be honest with them, you have to make them believe that you actually have a genuine interest in it, no-one that I've met has ever said to me that they genuinely believe the Prison System has any genuine interest in helping them in any way, shape or form, which obviously isn't very constructive (Prisoner).*

⁴³ The precise relationship between a 'feeling of personal development' in prison and positive outcomes on release requires further empirical exploration. At least four components of personal development (including 'engagement', 'constructive regime activities', and 'help with offending behaviour') have been identified in previous research (Liebling 2004: 311-24).

A considerable proportion of prisoners and staff were motivated to work towards rehabilitative goals together, and came up with ideas about how to achieve this. Some prisoners had a clear vision of their future:

I would like to be successful through education and through bettering myself. I've got the family support, I've got the right pathway that I can go because my uncle's in architecture already, so I've got the goals that I need already. I would like to travel. But when I was out there I needed to have the right academical skills. But it's only now that I'm catching up on my academical skills and if later on I'm able to enhance it, then that could definitely be an easier road to go down. I could easily join in and jump in and show that I know what I'm doing (Prisoner).

I: And what would be your ideal future? R: I intend to be very successful in what ever I choose to do. I intend to have the dreams of most people, to be very successful. I: Success that comes with money or success that comes with making a difference, or anything else? R: Success in my passion, success financially. I: What are your passions? R: Passions, to help the community. Help the community, help people that haven't got a mouth to speak. A rep for the community, something where you can work with the Government, trying to address situations and issues (Prisoner).

Other prisoners had few positive life-experiences to build upon:

I: How do you see your life in five years? How do you want it to be? R: Different. Normal. Never had normal ... normal would be nice (Prisoner).

There were plenty of constructive ideas around about how to achieve this:

I think a bit of pro-social modelling on a small unit coming from a few people that are giving out a bit of pro-social modelling. A lot of these guys are just displaying learned bad behaviour that they've observed throughout their lives so why not retrain them for a few years in a prison? So they can see when things gone wrong, they spoke about it, sorted it out, moved on, not violence, guns or whatever it is. I think there is a big place in prisons for the bulk of the work to be about sort of positive role modelling (Officer).

There seemed to be some gaps between theoretical 'training' for a good life within the 'unrealistic' environment of prison and the harsh reality of the world outside:

You're in prison, you start to have your own life. There is a completely different life from what is going on outside, and in time you start to think that the way you're living your life in prison is the right way. Then you cannot find yourself outside. You feel vulnerable outside (Prisoner).

I think maybe once they get out of prison there's a lack of support for them. I know that's what probation officers are for but I know they're sort of stressed out to the eyeballs and busy as well, and they don't have the

time to sort of spend on individuals, but I think the follow-up care or the through care bit is the bit that is needed, yeah. (Officer).

My problem, I think, is when I get out, you know, I would have done everything that's been required of me, you know? I would have served my time for the crimes that I committed at the time and I'm going to be hoping for a fresh start. But if I had a company, I don't think I would employ somebody like me, and I think that hundreds of other people would do the same. I think that's what the problem is, when you actually come out of prison — what are you going to do? How are you going to get employment? And then after, say, after a few months of trying to get work all the time you're going to probably start to slip back into the old mentality (Prisoner).

3.12 Summary

The experience of long-term imprisonment in a high security prison was painful and difficult, and involved threats to identity, meaning and purpose. Prisoners underwent existential crises and sought ways out of this difficult psychological condition. Education, music, meaningful work and the gym provided avenues for this, as did some offending behaviour courses, and faith.

The question of prisoners' personal development, and the effectiveness of activities and interventions in the long term, was linked to the question of purpose and whether opportunities for meaningful change constituted a main and realistic aim of a long-term prison sentence in conditions of high security (a question about which there was a clear and positive consensus when long-term prisons were first conceived; see Chapter 1). There seemed to be some confusion about whether high security prisons had a future-orientation, or whether they were reserved for 'settlement' and safe containment. Prisoners could not 'live solely in the present', and so they were preoccupied with 'progression' -- routes out -- and their future prospects. For now, however, and for a considerable time to come, prisoners faced the problem of managing life inside prison.

Chapter 4 The experience of life at Whitemoor: Faith, conversion, being, and being seen as a Muslim

Individuals are generally considered to be more receptive to religious ideologies during periods when their self-identity is questioned, placed under strain, or threatened with annihilation (Maruna *et al* 2006: 170).

It was relatively common for prisoners to turn (or occasionally, return) to a faith during their sentence. Clear *et al* (2000) argue that both the deprivation and importation models⁴⁴ inform the appeal of religion in prison. Faith 'provides inmates with supports of which they have been deprived' (Clear *et al* 2000: 57).

The reasons for prisoners to join a faith group, and the ways found to display it, were varied:

You know in prison there's always the good things, bad things, there's drugs, you know. So there's the religious people and they've turned wholly religious, they come to jail and they don't do nothing bad. Ironic, they're criminals but they want to better themselves, so you find a lot of people that turn to religion. You find a lot of people that are angry, they don't turn to religion, they're just doing their sentence. You find people that are just mellow, you know? (Prisoner).

The main motivations for turning to faith were:

- sense-making, searching for meaning, identity, and structure
- dealing with the pains of long-term imprisonment
- seeking 'brotherhood'⁴⁵/family; or 'anchored relations'
- seeking care and protection
- gang membership
- rebellion: Islam was 'the new underdog religion'; and
- coercion.

These categories were neither mutually exclusive, nor did all individual cases fit perfectly into them, but they characterised the main narratives given by those who converted, and by those who witnessed the relatively high numbers of conversions to Islam in particular. Twelve of the 52 prisoners in the interview sample described themselves as 'in-prison' converts to Islam.⁴⁶ This chapter looks at these cases in particular, and at their own as well as others' accounts about the conversion phenomenon.

⁴⁴ The deprivation model (Sykes 1958; Goffman 1961) suggests that the prisoner culture is shaped by the 'pains of imprisonment': the loss of liberty, security and autonomy. Sykes argued that the inability to define one's masculinity through the absence of heterosexual relationships and the lack of goods and services unifies prisoners' experiences and shapes their collective identity (Sykes 1958: 63-78). The importation model (Irwin and Cressey 1962; Jacobs 1979) on the other hand, suggests that prisoners bring the main features of prison culture with them from the outside, and that prisoners' outside identities (based for example on race or ethnicity) shape their prison identity.

⁴⁵ The term 'brotherhood' here meant belonging to the group. It had no broader meaning and was not linked in any interview to any specific organisation.

⁴⁶ The in-prison conversion phenomenon explains why the profile of Muslim prisoners is distinctive, consisting of fewer Asian or Pakistani men (who describe themselves as 'cultural' or 'family' Muslims) and a higher proportion of black ethnic minority prisoners of Jamaican, African, or African-American origin.

4.1 Faith-identities, representations and perceptions

There were diverse perceptions and representations of Whitemoor's Muslim faith community. They were the most prominent group within a diverse prisoner population. Disentangling 'what was going on' at Whitemoor proved to be a very complex undertaking. The dynamics were non-transparent and there were several deliberate 'presentations', stories told, and 'shades of grey' or conflicts in the narratives we heard to be accounted for. How did Muslim prisoners view their community (and were they 'a community' at all)? How did non-Muslim prisoners and staff see the Muslim population? Why had they become the centre of attention? One reason for their prominence was increased numbers, particularly on some wings, but another reason was the prevalence of in-prison conversions to Islam.

Christianity has been prevalent in UK prisons for a long period, but "religious identification by prisoners as adherents of faiths other than Christianity has steadily increased. Prisoners identifying themselves as Muslim rose 141 per cent between 1997 and 2007" (REAG 2008: 7). During this period the total prison population grew by approximately 28 per cent.⁴⁷ The current estimation of Muslims in the prisoner population is 11 per cent, compared to the three per cent they represent in the total population of England and Wales. Questions about why three times as many people were (new) followers of Islam in prison were often connected to anxious speculation about how the group itself was structured:

The system would say "OK, this person's come in a Christian, he's become a Muslim. Why are these people becoming Muslim, what's so catching on about this, what's this wild fire?" But you have to understand they have to open their eyes and see, "hang on, there's something you have to pay caution to. Is there radicalism? Is there conditioning? Is there these things going on within the religion?", and generally there's some quite beautiful people. Muslims, if you get to know them or chat to them, the ones that are sound, that know theirselves, might have experienced this from outside, they've been doing it from their way of life, it's not something they've come in and jumped into. Don't get me wrong, there's people that have come to prison and become Muslim, they're a much better person than they was before, but there's those that are in there for the wrong reasons. They're in there just to feel within that community, you wouldn't see them praying or reading the Qur'an any time, you wouldn't even see them going to Friday prayers sometime. But they say "I am Muslim" (Prisoner).

There are a lot of people that are underneath the bracket of a Muslim, but not practicing, you know? Doing whatever they still do, playing music loud and this and that. And then you'll have other individuals that are really devout, will not try to push that devoutness onto another prisoner. You have another prisoner that's tended to be devout, pushing his beliefs on people, but behind his door he's doing whatever he's doing. So it's all different, it's fragmented, it's manipulated and used for different purposes (Prisoner).

⁴⁷ Due to the manner in which religious affiliation is recorded on the Local Inmate Database System (LIDS) and P-NOMIS, it is not possible to estimate how many self-reported Muslims converted whilst in prison. The Prison Service is in the process of adapting the system to record reported change of faith.

The common perception illustrated above is of a certain insincerity behind conversion to Islam: the individual's purpose in joining the Muslim community was 'detached' from faith. The underlying motif was of gaining a benefit from the membership of the group: protection, a sense of common purpose, and power ('running the prison'). There was clearly some individual and collective misuse of religious affiliation at Whitemoor ('those that are in there for the wrong reasons'): prisoners could see that 'being Muslim' acted as a 'cover' for freedom, power, and influence – it was a ready made script, applicable to situations in which violence had been used ('well, they just wait for someone to make a wrong move'). But there were many who saw Islam as a more personal way of helping them deal with the prison experience.

4.2 Constructive and positive faith manifestations: faith as sense-making

One of the recurring narratives about why prisoners chose to adopt a faith was the notion of getting answers to questions about life they were not able to comprehend otherwise: its meaning; what kind of lesson their imprisonment was teaching them; or the purpose of their imprisonment. In an apparently meaningless environment, in which individual identity was in crisis, prisoners started looking for an 'absolute truth' which could provide stability in uncertain circumstances:

Maybe, Miss, people turn to religions because everyone turns to God. When I was at trial, I was praying to God, I was praying my arse off. I said 'oh, God, please, please, please help me'. You understand what I'm saying, Miss? So, it's a form of escapism. It gives you faith. Makes you believe things that you want to believe (Prisoner).

You've got to have faith, innit? You've got to have faith. Most important for me is that my life is part of God's plan so whichever direction my life takes, it's all written and the experiences I learn on the way are needed for future life, here or wherever. This is not the end. If I believe the signs then I know everything is going to be alright. And for some reason this is a necessary part of my life. I don't know why. I can't tell you why, you get me?, but it is for some reason. Religion's played a big part in my life since being convicted. I find answers in religion (Prisoner).

I think it's a part of acceptance and like a common kind of faith because with religion whether it's Christianity or Muslim it gives a kind of a sense of, well there's more to this than what's happened, you know, this dreadful situation that I find myself in (Prisoner).

It came as a comforting thought to believe that a higher being, a God, would take care of the future. It provided prisoners with hope that although they felt powerless, they would be alright:

A lot of them, haven't really got no hope. This appealing stuff and all this, it's a lot to do with academic kind of stuff. If you're not good at that and you've got no hope, you can just stay in jail and you can put it in someone else's hands to save you. I would say that religion is notorious in prisons, anyway, for that reason. Any religion. Because if you're in prison and you're at your lowest, you've got no hope, giving yourself to

somebody who you think's a higher being who can sort everything out for you and make it better. It's like a drug that takes you (Prisoner).

While many prisoners found faith as its own reward and submitted to religion out of devotion and a wish to change for the better, others drew on it as a tool to attain different, more specific goals. Extrinsic reasons for religious conversion in prison, according to Clear *et al* (2005), relate to 'safety', 'material comforts'⁴⁸, 'access to outsiders' and 'inmate relations'. Intrinsic reasons for conversion were psychological, developmental and emotional, and were often related to surviving a long sentence.

4.3 Being a 'devout Muslim' - Islam as a way of (re-)structuring life

The thing that brought me to Islam in the first place is that it's a whole framework for your whole life. It was Islam that actually spoke to me (Prisoner).

Religion could be adopted as a 'total system'; a method of using rules and regulations to start a 'new life' and bestow certainty. As Köse argues: 'the conversion experience itself is a conscious adoption of a new set of beliefs and principles to reshape one's life' (Köse 1996: 189):

I read a bit about Buddhism years ago, I think it was '98, but no, for me it was just the knowledge. Islam teaches you good deeds and manners. You're never a complete Muslim until you have respect for elders and love for children. Cleanliness and purification is half of your faith. A lot is only pure, clean and good, therefore they will only accept what is pure, clean and good, you understand what I'm saying? So these are things that Islam teach me, Islam teach me how to wash, yeah, how to carry myself, yeah, cut my finger nails, shave my hair, the hair on my body, at least every 40 days, yeah?⁴⁹ No one else teaches basic hygiene. It's practical, common sense (Prisoner).

Obviously the way that my religion has helped me to cope with prison is in the sense that it keeps me out of drugs. A lot of other wrong behaviours it keeps me away from, which then supplements my, sort of, motivation to do well and better myself and to get out. So in that sense, it helps me cope because it enhances what I'm already trying to do with myself, to better myself. It maybe does give you a bit of comfort just to pray, or just to ask for guidance or whatever, so it just gives you maybe a little feeling of security (Prisoner).

The basic principles of Islam 'off-set' aspects of the life stories of prisoners: unstable upbringings, a lack of familial bonds and parental love, a violent and fast life 'on road'. The religion offered a guideline for the future.

⁴⁸ Which, prisoners said, could be something as 'simple' as being provided with hot chocolate, if you were a member of the Mormon faith community in Whitemoor.

⁴⁹ This prisoner is referring to the 'Sunan al-fitra' (literally translated as 'customs of nature'), a collection of hygienic or cosmetic practices enjoined by Muhammad: 'A'isha reported: Muhammad said: Ten are the acts according to fitra: clipping the moustache, letting the beard grow, using the tooth-stick, snuffing water in the nose, cutting the nails, washing the finger joints, plucking the hair under the armpits, shaving the pubic hair and cleaning one's private parts with water' (Sahih Muslim, II.502) (See: Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fitra>).

The 'Basic Principles of Islam' (Albirr Foundation UK) outlined below, taken from a booklet handed out by Whitemoor's Chaplaincy team, highlight some of the possibilities for the symbolic use (and potential misuse) of religious tenets by specific groups:

“Islam is an Arabic word which means ‘surrender’. This means to accept the power of Allah, and follow His commands. Happiness in this life and success in the life after death can only be obtained by obeying Allah... A person who accepts Islam is called a Muslim. It means ‘one who surrenders’. A Muslim is required to do all that Allah and His Messenger have asked to do; good deeds like being kind to [his] parents, to help others who are less fortunate and to be kind to animals... Islam is not only a religion, but a complete way of life. This means that it shows us how to live all aspects of our lives in the best possible way.”

There are Five Pillars on which Islam stands:

1. Shahada: To firmly believe in the heart and declare: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.” This is meant by Iman (Belief). It is the very basis of Islam. Once a person declares it [in Arabic], he becomes a Muslim.
2. To pray five times a day (perform Salat). It is the distinguishing feature of Islam. A person abandons prayer at the risk of going out of Islam. Prayer is the most essential obligatory duty which a Muslim must perform. It is best to perform all the five obligatory prayers in congregation.
3. To pay Zakat. It is a way of doing duty to other Muslims [and] becomes due on savings which have been kept for one full year. 2.5 per cent of the total money is given to those who are in need. It is not a tax imposed by Islam, but a due fixed by Allah so that the wealth of a person may be purified.
4. To fast during the month of Ramadan. Fasting is both a physical and spiritual exercise. The person who is fasting is required to keep himself away from any act which displeases Allah. He should not engage in any evil behaviour. He should not say bad things nor quarrel with anyone. Fasting throughout Ramadan trains one to control the desires. It also teaches one to discipline the behaviour. Fasting provides Muslims with the opportunity to experience the hunger and thirst suffered by many starving people in this world. A Muslim will then be able to show sympathy, and be prepared to help and support them. This is why the fasting month of Ramadan is called ‘the Month of Endurance and Sympathy’.
5. To go on Hajj (pilgrimage) to Makkah, once in a lifetime if one can afford it. Hajj is a true demonstration of the fact that Islam is a universal religion and all Muslims are brothers and equal to one another. Pilgrims wear the same clothing and gather on the plain of Arafat. This is a reminder that all mankind will one day gather on the Day of Judgement when they will be presented to Allah. They will stand equal before Allah except in the degree of piety and righteousness.

Muslim Manners [Excerpt]:

- A Muslim should respect all those who are his elders whether they belong to the family or not. A person should treat those who are younger than him with kindness and affection. One should also try to help others, and must never behave badly towards them by doing them wrong.
- Allah loves those who are clean, so a Muslim should always try to be clean and tidy. He should also keep his heart free from grudge and hate, or any ill-feeling towards another person.
- A Muslim should always think good of another Muslim. He should not be jealous and should not hate others. Muslims should be like brothers and sisters with other Muslims.

The notion of ‘helping and supporting your fellow Muslim’ was an appealing principle, especially for new prisoners coming to Whitemoor. A family-like community made up of Muslim brothers was the most trustworthy group around if prisoners were looking for a way of reducing the emotional and psychological stress that accompanied their arrival in a new and frightening environment. This motive is considered further later in the chapter.

4.4 Dealing with the pains of long-term imprisonment

One motive for adopting religion in the prison context was as a tool for ‘dealing with loss’. In this sense, religion acted as a form of psychological protection and permitted a ‘personal sense of peace’, by filling the gaps exposed by the experience of imprisonment (Clear *et al* 2000: 61; Dammer 2002: 40). Prisoners described feelings of loneliness, depression and a sense of ‘being lost in a hostile environment’:

It’s an intimidating place for a young fellow to come. You get the young lads who come on, some of them are like brash and full of it, over confident, because deep down they’re worried sick, and then you get the other lads who just come on and they just stay behind their door, frightened stiff (Prisoner).

There were major psychological challenges for prisoners faced with (only) risk-based knowledge about them, in a climate in which staff sometimes showed cynical or indifferent attitudes towards them. Self-control and self-reliance were essential:

R: The [spiritual] practice that I have been continuously applying is the practice of mindfulness, observing your own thoughts and consciousness and seeing how things arise and I suppose fall within the mind, and as I spend most of my time in a cell trapped with myself so naturally the mind turns in on itself, that’s been quite a useful exercise. I: Because you have to get along with yourself? R: Precisely so, very well put (Prisoner).

Chapter 3 showed how prisoners described a kind of ‘existential crisis’ brought on by an unexpectedly long sentence, with few clear avenues for making progress. Religious conversion of any kind could act as a solution to this crisis. Faith offered both hope and dignity in an environment in which both were in short supply (Simon 2011).

4.5 Faith as care and protection

Young or inexperienced prisoners, new to the surroundings, were especially in need of useful and 'instant' solutions to the problem of surviving their time in a high-security prison physically, as well as psychologically. Finding and joining a group that conveyed the feeling of being 'in good hands' offered one such solution.

Dammer found that protection was the most commonly cited reason for religious involvement in prison (Dammer 2002: 43). For vulnerable prisoners, the physical and psychological safety afforded through connection to religious groups was often literal:

I've met two young white guys that have been bullied, you know, that were in different parts and somebody said "oh he's being bullied" and then the next minute, you know, he converts because he's not going to get bullied, and he's going to get looked after, so you can understand it, you can see it. Or a loner, you know, he converts and all of a sudden he's got friends, people you know wishing him good luck and, God be with you and brother and all the rest of it, it might be the first time in his life that he's been part of something. Just accepted because before he was excluded and shunned and bullied. Yeah, it's massive. Being part of the community is part of [being] human (Prisoner).

Whitemoor no longer operated with Vulnerable Prisoner (VP) Units, so sex offenders were dispersed around the main wings. Being admitted to the Muslim community as the most influential religious group in the prison granted them the certainty of being backed up in precarious situations by a large number of 'brothers'. This aspect of conversion is considered in more detail later in this chapter (p. 51).

So far the analysis has focused on the use and meaning of religion on a personal and individual level. As Clear argues, "prison religion exists on two levels: the individual level, and a collective level and that seen from the perspective of a group phenomenon, religion in prison will have whatever meaning the inmates who comprise those groups give it" (Clear *et al* 2000: 56).

The distinction between the experience and meaning of religion on an individual level and its meaning at a collective level was particularly relevant at Whitemoor, as staff and prisoners often talked about Muslim prisoners as a structured, organised body. Individual motivation could become "confused with a perceived collective agenda" (see Kant 2009: 38).

4.6 The Muslim 'brotherhood'

I'd like to be in a family, and being a Muslim you're in a family. Yeah, you stick together (Prisoner).

It's a support thing. Community ties more or less, as opposed to assets, so you have a sense of belonging. With Islam they see people praying all the time and they see people helping one another all the time and they're, like, oh, I want that. 'Cause they don't have anything to replace their family with, so they use that, for the most part, the guys who convert to Islam, they generally are missing something. They're not interested in religion as much, they're interested in belonging (Prisoner).

For some prisoners, being part of the Muslim community represented their first encounter with kindness, trust and care, because they had grown up with violent and abusive parents or relatives. For others joining the Muslim faith meant being able to establish a new social support network within prison, replacing social ties they had on the outside. New commitments could replace hostilities from outside:

The thing that obviously about my faith what I like the most, is Muslims are united. Like he's a brother who's amongst us. I've known of situations where people were enemies on the road, and people were like proper proper enemies, if they was to see each other they would go out to kill each other, and being a Muslim has quashed this whole thing (Prisoner).

It was an exchange process: becoming Muslim was granting benefits related to extrinsic factors like 'inmate relations' or 'material comforts'.

Through identifying with the 'Muslim brotherhood' prisoners had the opportunity to realise extrinsic as well as intrinsic goals and to receive recognition in the form of emotional support and social esteem. All of these were in short supply at Whitemoor:

You've got to think, people are in here and they've got no one. Some people, they've got no visits, no one. No one sends them no money. They've got no sense of belonging to anything or anybody. No sense of belonging, and the officers, 'cause it's an 'us-and-them' thing, there's no sense of belonging there. So they've got no one to turn to, and then if they've got this group of people who are willing to accept them and wipe away anything ... (Prisoner).

I mean, literally, you can walk on a wing with nothing. You can walk on with no clothing, prison kit, no money, nothing, and within a day you can have your cell filled with stuff. It might be someone else's stuff but your cell'll be filled with stuff and you'll be on a ... you'd be eating the best food and, you know, you can have nothing (Prisoner).

This analysis, coming from non-Muslim prisoners, was tinged with envy. In a prison context, where prisoners understood their 'inferior and alienated' status, a community stressing the notion of 'treating people equally, treating people fairly' (Prisoner) was attractive. There was a split between Muslims and other religious groups at Whitemoor, based in part on a perceived unfairness in the distribution of benefits and attention:

At the end of Ramadan they had a festival in the visits hall. You know, for Easter, we didn't get a lot. I don't want a bloody Easter egg but we didn't get nothing. We got a hot cross bun in the chapel. Then we got Christmas dinner which was woeful. Alright, we're in prison, but you can't have one for one, one for the other. Think of how inmates are looking at that. It's 'join us and this is what you get' (Prisoner).

People think in prison that the Muslims have too many rights. They are treated in a different way, the staff worry about them and there are people talking about it non stop. Somehow it annoys me. I do not like the way the Muslims behave, I do not like it. I was talking to them about it, because your faith is your private thing. If you believe and that's it. That's it. The belief is inside you, don't try to show everybody that you are the Muslim. They fight about their rights, they fight about everything because they are Muslims. They have to have different food, different clothes, different ... oh, everything is different. But if you believe, keep it for yourself and try to make friendships or something like this, not war, but the way that they behave, they created the problems (Prisoner).

Non-Muslim prisoners tended to believe that many Muslim converts were not using their faith on an individual level to psychologically survive their time in prison, but were misusing it. This rested upon an assumption that religious faith was something private, not to be publicly displayed or acted out in order to achieve a specific (material) goal. When used strategically, collectively, or bringing about benefits, religious engagement was seen as an insincere performance ('it's a mockery of the faith', Officer), staged for the wing-audience (prisoners and staff), another fake-identity in a false environment:

The ones what are all latching on, you get them by their own, they'll speak to you because they don't need to play that role in this little situation here [refers to interview room]. But when they're back in the thing, then they have to stick to this. It's not real. I see people doing it and I know 'you are not Muslim. You're just a wanker' (Prisoner).

Those prisoners who had recently joined Islam, who were acting as 'the perfect Muslim', actively campaigning and fighting for the rights of their fellow Muslims, were 'not credible'. Their 'audience' (staff and other prisoners) assumed they were acting on behalf of the collective, perhaps feeling coerced to do so:

The better Muslim you are, the better protection you got. So they're even lying to theirself that they're this good. I tell you how you know, yeah? If you go down to the Muslim service and you look at the front row. The ones that are at the front, or got as close to the front as possible, most of them are the weak ones. They have to be seen as the most involved like it's a show, because, "look I'm really - I'm really converting. I really am doing this". So they'll be right at the front, right up there, and then the ones what are probably doing it because they do feel, they do do it, they'll be at the back. Because they've got nothing to prove to no one. They don't need to run to the front and be right up in the limelight. They don't need to be, because they're quite happy with what they're doing. It's nuts (Prisoner).

Half of these people are not Muslims at all. They've got swastikas and racist things down. Tattoos about all the different organisations they've been in. They just join which scam is powerful at the time. Because they're just going with the gangs that can cause the most havoc, and are the most evil, and the most dangerous. I think some of them do it because they enjoy the bandwagon, and they like the violence, they like

the glory. And the others are joining because they have to. They just want more support. They want more backing. They want more muscle. They want more danger (Officer).

Staff and prisoners argued that within Whitemoor's (fragmented) Muslim community, there was an interest group operating in its own favour under the umbrella of the Muslim faith. There was a fine threshold between the Muslim faith community as a support network ('the brotherhood') and another group also comprising Muslim prisoners, but operating more like a gang. The latter group were seen as embodying the operating principles of outside gangs and now shaping parts of the Muslim community inside: this group provided deep networks and protective features. The group was easy to enter but difficult to exit; the 'players' exerted pressure on non-members to join the group to increase its numbers and therefore its power.

4.7 Negative faith manifestations: strategic manipulation and the misuse of religion: The Muslim community as a 'gang' and power base

Religion's just a side show. It's an organised gang really (Prisoner).

They want more muscle (Prisoner).

The ambiguous use of the term gang at Whitemoor presented a problem when trying to explore differences between the (supportive) Muslim brotherhood and the (suppressive) 'Muslim gang'. Opinions about how to define a gang were diverse:

I: What's the difference between a gang and a faith community? How does it show? R: There's not much. It's a sense of purpose, isn't it? They've got something there in common. They have their leaders and their soldiers (Officer).

When they [staff] see three people together in a cell, that's a gang already (Prisoner).

These statements reflected the most basic, technical definition of the term gang as "a group of three or more people who, through the organisation, formation, and establishment of an assemblage, share a common identity."⁵⁰ Staff (and some prisoners) referred to the term gang mainly in the negative sense, i.e. as a criminal organisation or affiliation, in line with the definition offered in the 'street-life-context' by Hallsworth and Young (2006: 12 f.): "A relatively durable, predominantly street-based group of young people who see themselves (and are seen by others) as a discernable group for whom crime and violence is integral to the group's identity."⁵¹

Prisoners often came into prison with gang affiliations on the outside, and they were monitored on this basis. Most came from a Black ethnic minority metropolitan background and constituted a considerable proportion of the Muslim community. Some assumed that staff would stereotype them as members of a 'Muslim gang' by conflating a criminal past with present religious denomination. They felt that this was short-sighted and an unfair account of their motivations:

⁵⁰ See Pyrooz, Decker and Fleisher 2011.

⁵¹ Simon Hallsworth and Tara Young (2006) 'Getting real about gangs', p. 12-13.

R: What about a group of people that go to the church, right, it's not a Christian gang. Would you call that a Christian gang? **I:** No, I'm not saying I would, but people are using those words here so how do you see it? **R:** Right, it's staff, isn't it? The staff here don't know nothing. I don't see it as a gang. You might have certain individuals that are part of a gang that are Muslims, but they're not, you understand? **I:** And so is it a genuine kind of adherence to a religion? Is that fundamentally what it is? Because otherwise I'm wondering why people are using the term gang when actually you don't need to. **R:** You know what it is? You see, Islam, yeah? It's like the reason they see it as a gang, is because everyone's brothers and sisters. A fellow Muslim is your brother. It's your duty to help him. And Islam teaches you that. The Qur'an says that. Like, if he's going hungry, give him some food (Prisoner).

According to this prisoner's account, helping and supporting someone who is in need, acting according to Islamic principles was misinterpreted and exaggerated due to a misguided perception of what a gang was. Every close-knit peer group was potentially 'a gang'. Thomas and Zaitzow (2002: 254) argue that the group dynamic developed through collective religious identity can act like the dynamics operating in gangs: both offer access to many of the extrinsic motivations for joining such groups.⁵² The assumption operating in prison was that prisoners who felt attracted to gangs on the outside would feel similarly inclined to join an equivalent group inside, for the same reasons: a sense of purpose and identity, material comforts, (inmate) relations and safety in a dangerous environment:

R: It's easier to be in a gang than not to be in a gang in the prison, so that's what they use it for. They only embrace people in gangs. If people say no then they're by their self. **I:** So there's not really an alternative? **R:** No, not while you're in prison really (Prisoner).

For someone who's probably not got much self-esteem or whatever, they come in to this and they look around, the first thing they're going to do is get involved. That's why only the people who have got strength in their own terms will survive. Because you are being evaluated on their terms. And if you're going to let their evaluations bother you, then you're going to end up joining them (Prisoner).

You've got the vulnerable people who see this Muslim thing, strategically, if you come into prison and you feel a bit vulnerable, a bit weak, that's the best thing for you to do. Because obviously, there's a big number of them, they are sticking together or most of them are trying to stick together, so if you feel vulnerable or anything like that in a prison, the best thing for you to do is to join up with that, and that's what a lot of people are doing (Prisoner).

For someone who was not strong enough to be a 'loner' the most sensible thing to do was to join the community who seemed to be the 'safest bet' when it came to psychological (and physical) survival in prison:

⁵² Pyrooz, Decker and Fleisher (2011) argue that prison gangs are "more controlled, organised versions of street gangs. Prison gangs exhibit higher levels of racial and ethnic homogeneity, instrumental violence, entrepreneurial offending, covert behaviours and actions, collective drug dealing and unqualified loyalty to the gang".

Protection, it's all about being in the biggest gang. That's how it's treated in prison (Officer).

It's like a protection racket. That's the way the Muslims operate, over a period of a few weeks they'll get these young lads into their confidence, comfortable and it's basically like a protection racket, that's how it runs, 'we can offer you security, if ever anybody threatens you, we'll sort it', but you've got to become a Muslim (Prisoner).

This was especially desirable when prisoners were in precarious situations:

Well, why people think it's a gang is because you have certain prisoners who are in for rape who have given information about other people on cases. Basically prisoners who would normally, traditionally, be on the Vulnerable Prisoners Unit and all these prisoners, they turn Muslim and then they're joined to a brotherhood where people will protect them, so they're walking around normal (Prisoner).

If you're in for say a violent rape or killing a woman, you may be approached and told "If you join you'll be given protection, if you don't you will be seen as an enemy" (Prisoner).

There was suspicion and scepticism about the 'true' reasons for protecting and embracing people who, under mainstream prison norms, would be despised. For many, it was hard to believe that this kind of protection would arise from altruistic, religious motives. It had to be 'a disguise' for other underlying motives holding more weight than the usual prisoner code, or of more importance than the accepted 'beef' between rival gangs. This was 'hide-and-seek': it was difficult to identify 'genuine Muslims', and difficult to get close to those who were undermining them by capitalising on their principles and values:

They are told that if he's a Muslim and if he's doing everything right, whatever is going on, you have to embrace that person. These guys what are doing this [latching onto faith] they know this, so they will pray five times a day, they will do this, they will do that, they will do all the right things, they won't look at porno magazines, they'll do all the right things to be embraced by these real ones, but at the same time, in the little back of behind it, they're also using it to do other things (Prisoner).

I believe some people turn Muslim for protection as well. I feel a lot of people do that, and that's the wrong reason to do it, I don't agree with that at all. One thing it says in the Qur'an is basically if you see another brother getting attacked you should always intervene and try to stop the fight and that's what it is, so I think that's why a lot of people is converting into Muslims because they feel like in case they're getting attacked by somebody, or they've got a problem with some person, or it's a gang thing, yeah, so they feel like if they become a Muslim now, that person over there can't attack me because the brothers will stop it from happening. A bit of a shield, to protect themselves, that's what it is really (Prisoner).

In this regard, this was a dynamic similar to that operating in gangs: if you wanted to be protected and lead a quiet life, you had to join in with the most powerful and influential group. Indeed some prisoners felt coerced to join (see further below); others felt obliged to stay, because they had been given so much support by fellow Muslims they would look like traitors if they decided to leave the community — they ‘owed them’.

There was another strand to the storyline: displaying an Islamic faith background assertively emphasised a new in-prison ‘gang(ster)-image’ characterised by power through intimidation. It was one of many ‘ready-made’ identities to choose from in prison. Prisoners argued that ‘this is the new trend’, ‘it’s almost become like a fashion within the prison system to become a Muslim.’ This interpretation or image of Islam was contaminated by, and formed on the basis of, images created by the media:

There’s a white Muslim on the wing who’s converted. He doesn’t like the gang culture because, how can I put it, in my opinion, right, and excuse the language, they’re the shit of the Muslim world, right, who are into all this, like, yeah, yeah, and they love all the terrorism they see on the telly. There’s something wrong with them people (Prisoner).

This was a certain new type of gang culture that glorified terrorist behaviour and motives, and exploited the fear related to it:

You do have people come in here from other prisons, from lower category prisons thinking oh, the Muslim boys are there and thinking ‘I have to join in with them’. The only way to break it down is for people to realise that they have to be themselves and not join up to it. But no one’s going to do that if they’ve got this big fear factor of the Muslim boys⁵³ (Prisoner).

Prisoners and staff were aware that these expressed attitudes constituted an artificial ideology, an insincere performance rather than anything approaching radical extremism. This became apparent when inconsistencies showed up between theory and practice:

We’ve got [name] at the moment. I mean, I heard him out the windows slating Western women, Western lives and all the rest of it, and I think one of the biggest sort of symbols of Western culture is sports, and he comes out of his cell in a pair of Puma trainers and I’m just thinking ‘well if you hate Western [life], they are one of the biggest embodiments of it’. So I don’t know if there is any real ideals behind what he does or whether he’s a violent man who has found a way to enjoy himself honestly (Officer).

⁵³ The Muslim Boys are a gang located in the South of London who, according to media sources, have ‘sworn to bring a criminal jihad to Britain’ and who ‘don’t just do law-breaking, they do it, apparently, with a militant Islamic vengeance.’ (See: Special Investigation: Are ‘Muslim Boys’ using profits of crime to fund terrorist attacks? - Crime, UK - The Independent - <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/special-investigation-are-muslim-boys-using-profits-of-crime-to-fund-terrorist-attacks-502831.html>). In this study, the Muslim Boys were rarely mentioned, and did not seem relevant to the Muslim population at Whitemoor.

These inconsistencies undermined the credibility of any 'genuine radical' involvement in Islam. Instead, the main aim of joining the Muslim community was to create fear in others (and thereby increase one's power in an environment where it was in short supply) by exploiting the associations connected to terrorism and extremism. The media made this easy.

Moore *et al's* (2008) empirical study into media images of Islam in the United Kingdom between 2000 and 2008 has shown that dominant representations of British Muslims include associations with terrorism, religious and cultural difference and extremism. Four of the five most common discourses used about Muslims in the British newspaper press couple Islam/Muslims to threats or problems (Kant 2009).

If prisoners wanted to exercise power by intimidating others, this was an effective strategy for doing so. The 'problem of power' — who had it, and who wanted it — was a major feature of long-term prisoner society, where the struggle for scarce goods and recognition was highly visible. The formation of interest groups striving to gain power was inherent in prison life. If you did not want to be a minority, you had to become the majority. This was illustrated by a number of highly vocal, White, older non-Muslim prisoners who were actively summoning up support for attendance at Catholic services at the time of the research. They wanted to form a counter weight; to campaign for better provision and fend off the pressure they experienced in the kitchens over the apparent prohibition felt on the cooking of bacon (more later). The Muslim faith community had become more influential over time, with rising numbers and increasing recognition. According to the audience of staff and other prisoners, the formation of a group that was high in numbers was a strategic and symbolic act. It was about establishing a counterbalance to staff whom prisoners felt alienated from:

This is our little power what we're allowed to have now, because obviously like we said, the power thing as well, officers have got their power. In a sense, that's a little power for them, so we want to do it [pray] here, then you've got the guys that are down there [in education] going round to every class saying 'come on, it's time to pray' (Prisoner).

For some prisoners, being a Muslim was an act or mode of resistance to the prison system and to staff. The formation of a collective (counter-)identity was a reaction to the feeling of being misrecognised or misrepresented by members of a legal authority, or a form of opposition to power regimes perceived as unfair. This failure of recognition entailed "the transformation of a primarily religious identity into a political identity of struggle and opposition" (Honneth 1995: 222).

4.8 Political religious involvement: Islam as the new 'underdog' religion

The analysis so far has addressed intrinsic and personal reasons for conversion to Islam, but joining this religious group could also be seen as a way of transmitting a political message:

I think a lot of people use Islam as a way of expressing their anger towards society, expressing maybe their own anger towards incarceration. There's obviously people that turn to Islam in prison not because they believe in God, not because they believe in Islam and they

want to follow the true faith, but because they're angry at society and they want to somehow ... [it] makes them feel good, because in their own way they're part of something that is attacking the very society that's incarcerated them, and I think psychologically that might give people a bit of a kick, or maybe it's more about politics than religion (Prisoner).

Islam was stigmatised by the media and portrayed as potentially risky for Western societies, culturally different and suspicious. Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Islamophobia has become prevalent: Islam is perceived as a threat to the Western way of life. The fear of terrorism inspired by radical Islamist ideologies is widespread. For young people alienated and disappointed by British society and politics, collaboration with the (perceived) enemy seemed a suitable way of making a statement:

***R:** It's a statement to go against the authorities, isn't it? A statement of saying we don't agree with your prison system. **I:** So it's political? **R:** Yeah, course it is. Out and out political. Them being Muslims, they're out and out giving it one in the face to the British government and the British authorities and all that (Prisoner).*

Prisoners saw this as an explanation of why a similar process of conversion was taking place in society. They saw prison dynamics as a reflection of processes going on outside:

You've got to view these conversions in the context of society. I think from what I understand of it from London, a lot of the minorities in this prison are from London, and from what I speak to my friends and my family, it seems that there's minorities. And if you go to the black community outside, Islam seems to be spreading to most communities outside quite a lot. Especially in some parts, like South London (Prisoner).

I think as time's gone on, the awareness of what Islam's about is in more people's awareness, and my personal opinion is, it could be seen in mainstream society as the rebellious religion, you know? And I think it's the underdog, innit? And a lot of people identify with being the underdog, and this could be an attraction because the media and mainstream society have kind of put down people. Instantly [people] want to be a part of that because they can identify with the fact that you're marginalised (Prisoner).

Attraction to the faith was about positioning oneself against an unfair state which accepted social inequalities and suffering in favour of economic goals. Often the accounts given by individual prisoners contemplating their faith identity included a mixture of motives; for example, curiosity:

***R:** Yeah I think, yeah because you've got people around you saying "well just come and check this out" or I think especially with Islam, the reason like I took notice of that at that particular time, was that I had a friend that was Muslim outside prison, was in the same prison and he does have a good demeanour, a manner about him and then he said, "why not just*

come down on Fridays and see what's going on?", I went down there a few times, you know sat at the back, and I listened to what was being said, and I thought 'it's interesting' and then you start to have questions and, you know then I started to get educated and I'm thinking 'well this doesn't stack up, I've got too many questions here' you know, and like, I kind of I tuned it back, this don't make sense to me ... I turned Muslim in Frankland, probably 2002 or 2001. I was just reading up a lot about it and my next door neighbour was talking about some good sayings, so I read a lot of philosophy and a lot of it comes from Buddhism. And then I was interested in reading up about some of that stuff but the spiritual side, it didn't resonate with me. **I:** So would you describe yourself as of no religious affiliation at the moment? **R:** Yeah, I would, yeah. It's the rebellious religion, you know, we're showing them, innit? (Prisoner).

Legitimacy deficits — or perceptions of unfairness — in the prison were sometimes significant in adding to a sense of grievance:

There's some people became Muslim because of the attitude that the staff was giving them like [background shouting] staff saying, "don't surround yourself with Muslims", "don't mix yourself with Muslims they're quite bad" you see what I mean? One of my mates come up to me and said "the officer there is slagging Muslims" and I said "let him slag them as long as he wants man, and at the end of the day of Judgement he's the one that's going to get punished not us, so whatever", so the guy goes "so is that how you see life?" I said "well I'm a Muslim, I've got no choice and I'm not going to go fighting, what's the point, he's a member of staff innit? He's entitled to his own opinions he could say whatever he wants, if he wants to spread propaganda around for no reason let him", and then a couple of months later, that same prisoner, he's a Muslim now, so he was disgusted by the behaviour of his own Christian, Catholic or whatever (Prisoner).

4.9 Pushed to conversion: coercion and intimidation

Some prisoners (and staff) talked about how the decision to convert to the Muslim faith was influenced, or forced, by other prisoners. These prisoners did not join the faith voluntarily. They did not see its attractions, but reported being 'pushed in the right direction'. They reported being approached by Muslim prisoners who 'advertised' their faith in such an intense manner that they felt under pressure to comply. The most common narrative described persuading actions, a kind of 'heavy advertising':

I've had little things left on me bed like, only sort of, a leaflet, like that, introducing you to Allah right? And "remember your age, you know, you're getting near your Judgement Day". I said "look, I'm me own judge, I know right from wrong, and I think I've done enough right in my life to out do the wrongs" (Prisoner).

Well I have had people try and give me books and that, "read this", and I have had people ask me [noise of rosary beads] how come I'm wearing this. "Why are you wearing this?", a Muslim person asked me why I'm wearing my chain. "Well that's my religion isn't it? I don't ask you why

you are wearing that hat or whatever it's called and this-that, this-that - that's your religion, so respect my religion and I'll respect yours, innit?" (Prisoner).

Someone tried to give me some books and said "read these". I said "mate, I ain't interested". I said "I have trouble believing in Jesus, never mind anyone else". Then after that he's never spoken to me, and given me funny looks and stuff (Prisoner).

R: *Well I was approached when I first came on to this spur, but I made myself clear that I wasn't interested. I:* *And that worked right away? R:* *Oh yeah, yeah, they got the message that, you know, I wasn't interested. Obviously I've never actually witnessed it happening first hand because it's not done openly, it's done quietly, you know. I was in my cell and a guy came in and started chatting to me and sort of preaching about Islam and advertising. That's how it started, but I could see that there was more to it than that — this guy had never spoken to me before. I was new on the wing and I didn't know many people on the wing so I was sort of isolated at that time, and, I don't know, perhaps he spotted a weakness in me or thought he did. Anyway, I made it clear that I wasn't really interested in my own religion let alone anybody else's and that sort of deterred him (Prisoner).*

I: *Have you experienced the pressure? R:* *Oh, yeah. Not for the last year, but when I first come in. I was polite about it, just said "no mate", you know? But no, they were alright (Prisoner).*

These accounts were given by prisoners who did not convert and who had high levels of personal confidence, or commitment to doing their time their own way. Some reported being approached when they first came to Whitemoor, or onto a wing or spur. Their accounts suggest a kind of 'test' regarding their disposition towards converting to the Muslim faith. Some staff and prisoners told us that these approaches might be related to an ideal of Islam that would reward a Muslim as a good Muslim, if he convinced 'non-believers' to join the faith. This was a simplified account. Conversion of others to Islam was favoured by Muslims for many reasons. Every child was born a Muslim and like other religions, faith followers believed it had something good to offer, and wished to convey this meaning to the world (Ahmed 2008: 232).

Other prisoners described conversion attempts with more stress on the disadvantages of not joining the faith:

They do try and convert. I've never seen it done in an aggressive way. It's always been quite placid. Which has really shocked me, but then when you get to know these people, they are wolves in sheep's clothing, you know? But it's always been quite a placid way. But you can take it almost as a blackmailing way, you know? "if you join us you won't get hurt in the gym". So, are you telling me I'm going to get hurt in the gym? So there's ways of looking at things (Prisoner).

Whitemoor was an easy prison in which to convert, because there was little questioning of the underlying reasons:

It's easier to change your religion in this prison here, whereas in the other prisons, they won't have it. A month's worth of questions and still won't have it. But in this prison, if they want to change religion, they're like; "oh, yeah, yeah, you can do it", like confetti, you know what I mean? Which is bad, because some of the people that change religion, that don't want to change religion, then have conflict with their families on the outside, because their mums and dads, and their partners and that, don't wish for them to change religion (Prisoner).

Some prisoners complied to avoid conflicts and eliminate stress. Others tried to resist. This led to violence, in some cases: prisoners and staff recounted examples of conversion processes they had witnessed that looked like bullying in its purest form. Several prisoners had converted under immense physical and psychological pressure:

A few months ago there was one guy. He was a Muslim because he was forced to be. Some day his colleague came - his colleague is a Catholic - and he started to talk to him. He said "what are you doing? You believe in Jesus?", and in time he said "yes, you're right, I have to go back". He said he was Muslim because he was scared. And then next day, it was on the out, a few Muslims came and beat him up because he changed his religion. That's horrible (Prisoner).

He as much as said, "Yeah, fair enough, I'm doing it because if I don't do it I'm going to get done", and, you know, he wouldn't divulge any names or anything but that's effectively what it was. He was being converted and he was being pressured to convert and if he hadn't done, he'd have been burned out or assaulted, or something would have happened to him, and there's stacks of them in that same boat. They're doing it for a peaceful life (Officer).

The phenomenon of violence between prisoners, and its relationship with faith identities, is explored in the next chapter. The indications of coercion were linked in many of the narratives to fears of 'radicalisation'. This presumed link is explored below, and little evidence was found to support it.

Many Muslim prisoners were outraged and offended at the 'paradox' that Muslims who tried to exert pressure on people to convince them to convert to Islam could not be devout Muslims themselves, referring to 'early Islamic scripture and law that forbids forced conversion'.⁵⁴

R: These people, you see them for what they are, they're oppressors, and we do not oppress, because there is a barrier between the prayer of the oppressor and Allah. Whether you're Muslim or not, this is how serious oppression is, so we don't uphold oppression in the least, so any time we see them things, I've almost had fights with Muslims because they're trying to bully non-believers, and I'm saying "touch him if you think

⁵⁴ Forced conversion was strictly forbidden: 'No compulsion is there in religion' (Cook 2000: 35).

you're bad". **I:** Why do you think this happens? **R:** Because of silly people, no matter where you are, or how you are. This person I'm talking about; he doesn't even pray. And I know he doesn't, he listens to music and that type of funny stuff, smokes weed and all them things, but because we're not supposed to spy, and he's trying to hide it, I don't say nothing, but I know what he's doing (Prisoner).

This defence of the 'proper and God-fearing way to behave as a Muslim' revealed the factions within the Muslim prisoner community and the tensions caused by some prisoners misusing a faith that to others was sacred:

There was strict Islamic religion. Even in the time of the Taliban in Afghanistan, non-Muslims living in my city, nobody hated them, even the leader of the Taliban told them "listen, respect". Even if they're non-Muslim, we're not allowed to harm anybody. You're not allowed to hate anybody. In the same city as Sikhs living, and Hindus living. They're going to their temples. Nobody harms them, nobody hates them. But now, for example, the British government, whatever it did to them, they put him in prison, now they hate, they're using their hatred then they have a little bit of understand of religion and mix it. And some young boy comes in, he tells them this and that, like, "I offer you protection in prison, you need to have money outside? We offer you money". Then you're serving your two years, you go outside, they give you a contact number ... I was shocked. I saw one guy come here in prison, become a Muslim, and after somebody told him I'm from Afghanistan he came to my cell and says "hello, how are you?" Then asked me "can you give me some contact numbers? I'm going to be released next year. I'm going to Afghanistan to fight British soldiers". I say "what's wrong with you? Have you lost your mind or something? You have enough people there fighting already, they don't need you there. Just sit down". We have a lot of people dying every day in my country. I say "you don't need to go, you just go outside, start a new life, show your family you are a changed person". First you learn how to help somebody, how to feed somebody, before even, how to kill (Prisoner).

Staff and prisoners were often sceptical about the underlying motivations for religious conversion in prison. Hamm argues in his research on conversions to Islam in US prisons that there are two opposing viewpoints on the matter: an alarmist stance, suggesting that prisons have become incubators for Islamic terrorism; and a position asserting that Islam plays a vital role in prisoner rehabilitation (Hamm 2009: 667). Staff and prisoners at Whitemoor represented both of these viewpoints:

Predominantly, the Muslim faith is very good, and there's some there who are turning it to fundamentalism, the other side of the faith, where they're actually doing, actively seeking to cause problems. Plotting, undermining and being subversive, and so you'll always have the good side of the faith, and there is a lot of good Muslims here. And I respect the fact they're Muslims, you know, I've got no problem with the Muslim faith at all. Unfortunately, at the moment, due to world events, other people are jumping on the bandwagon. They see it as an injustice

against their fellow Muslims, so who are they going to fight against? They're going to fight against people in charge, establishment, authority (Officer).

R: I think, because of the actual numbers that attend the chapel, and the current climate of what Islam is, and is expected to be, and the uncertainty. It's being perceived by white working class people, who are, kind of, maybe looking at it through, kind of, scared vision and that, and always thinking the worst like 'what are they up to? Three of them going in the cell to pray, that's a gang that is', you know? I: So the majority of people that follow a religion in the prison, whatever it is, it's peaceful, it doesn't really impact negatively on other people? R: Yeah I believe so. I don't think it's like a big organised machine, you know? (Prisoner).

Working out and managing 'what went on' was made harder by external anxieties: especially by fears of 'prison-grown' radicalisation and extremism.

The next section explores the accounts provided in interviews by those prisoners who had converted to Islam whilst in prison.

4.10 In-prison conversions to the Muslim faith

The concept of a 'conversion' is primarily a Jewish, Christian, and Muslim notion indicating a radical change in personal religious beliefs as well as in associated behaviours and social affiliations (Maruna *et al* 2006: 162).

Twelve prisoners in the sample of 52 interviewees (which included 23 Muslim prisoners) described themselves as in-prison converts. These are 'quasi-statistics' (Becker 1970) in the sense that prisoners' accounts were simply counted as given in interviews. At least four of these prisoners had converted in Whitemoor. Most were at early stages in long sentences when they converted. Three of the 12 were White, and their profiles were on the 'vulnerable' side. The BME cases were a mixture of 'heavy players' (most), 'young naïve' (a follower, but not quite a gang member), and 'quiet searchers'. Conversions to other faith groups (of which there were relatively few at the time of this study) tended to fit into the 'quiet search for meaning' and companionship categories. The (modified) profiles of the 12 in-prison converts were as follows:⁵⁵

1) A 40-year-old, BME, Cat B prisoner serving a life sentence with a 16 year tariff. He had served 14 years of his sentence in dispersal prisons, and came to Whitemoor in 1997 for the first time. He came back in 2000 and had been there since. He originally was Rastafarian, then became a Muslim, and was Rastafarian again at the time of the interview. He was born in Jamaica, but had lived in London most of his life. He changed his religious denomination back from Muslim to Rastafarian because the Muslim community in Whitemoor was 'too fractured' and too many people were 'abusing the faith to follow their own agenda'. Because he wanted to be transferred to a Therapeutic Community as quickly as possible, he tried to avoid any involvement in relationships that could have a negative influence on his progress ("I don't want to botch up in that group"). He became a Muslim by accident more or less because "when you come to prison before, they just usually

⁵⁵ Some details have been changed to protect identities.

automatically put you down as Muslim ... But really and truly I'm not a Muslim. I'm a Rastafarian. I'm from Jamaica ... and I'm not influenced". He saw prisoners as stakeholders of no real power and wanted to leave the UK as soon as possible after his release in order to work in tourism in his home country. He spoke openly about his concern that staff at Whitemoor had a 'stand-off' attitude towards Muslim prisoners, and that this could hold the risk for powerful leaders to radicalise vulnerable prisoners.

Main Motivations: Practical survival of long-term imprisonment (adaptation).

2) A BME, Cat B prisoner in his thirties, serving a fixed-term sentence (18 years). He had served 11 years. He was from Jamaica originally, and had always been Christian, but turned Muslim in 2000, after he got sentenced and came to a dispersal prison. He had been to Whitemoor five times, this time since March 2008. He was appealing his sentence, and had been to most other dispersal prisons. When he started questioning his own (Christian) faith and did not get any satisfactory answers from authorities, he started looking around for alternative religious inspiration. When he discovered Islam in prison (1998), he started to go to the Muslim service, and would argue about the faith's contradictions. He was particularly impressed by the reaction and acceptance of the Imams: "they never ever told me not to come. One day he kind of got fed up with me and he said listen, you ... can come, but if you're going to come all the time to try and convert us ... I was banned from the chapel for laughing in the chapel, man ... laughing, they banned us for two weeks. No matter how I go down there and argue for the bible, they never ever ban us". He especially liked the Muslim faith for providing him with a framework for his life ("Islam teaches you ... good deeds and manners"). He was a diversity rep on his spur, and actively campaigned for more tolerance towards and between different faith and cultural groups. He seemed to be well respected by prisoners, but staff described him as challenging and aggressive.

Main Motivations: Sense making; searching for structure and brotherhood; possibly gang membership.

3) A 33-year-old BME, Cat B prisoner from London, serving a fixed-term sentence (21 years). He started off in a B Cat prison, but 'worked his way up' within the prison system instead of down. He had been to many B and C Cat prisons in England. He converted to Islam in 1996 for extrinsic reasons, when he first came to jail: "To be honest with you, I converted solely at the time for Ramadan, which means they bring in food from the outside which is better than prison food". He felt stuck in the system and thought it was harder to get things done at Whitemoor than elsewhere, to progress, because it was very bureaucratic and staff were not very helpful. According to him, there was some pressure on non-Muslims to convert, and he described the process as 'heavy advertising' verging on coercion. His coping and survival strategy was keeping himself to himself, and not trying to engage, which made him feel isolated and lonely at times (especially as he had no family ties on the outside, was abandoned by his mother at the age of ten, and had lived a violent and lonely life since). At the time of the interview, he was solely focused on his future outside, and did not want to be involved too much in the Muslim community which made him 'a kind of outcast'.

Main Motivations: Extrinsic reasons, surviving long-term imprisonment.

4) A White, 24-year-old, Cat B, Muslim prisoner from the South of England serving an IPP sentence (with a tariff of four years) who had been in Whitemoor for six

months (he came from Full Sutton). He had been in prison since 2007, starting in a Cat C, and had been in a number of different prisons on this sentence. He had a history of violence in prison, assaulting officers and prisoners, which he attributed to his paranoia for which he was on medication and had received psychiatric treatment. He described prisoner relationships as 'very fractured', and talked a lot about suspicion and distrust within relationships at Whitemoor in general. He was baptised a Catholic but was now a Muslim who saw Islam as providing a framework for his life, as a religion about peacefulness and equality, which enabled him to better himself. He also had an interest in world religions. He was open and articulate but omitted to mention that he was currently fearful and pressurised by Muslim prisoners, as he had confided in an SO.

Main Motivations: Sense making, searching for meaning, structure, protection (and coercion).

5) A mixed race, 28-year-old, Cat A prisoner from the North West serving a two strike life sentence with a tariff of six years; he had served ten years. He had been at Whitemoor for three years. When he arrived from another CSC, he was in the Segregation Unit for four to five months and then F-Wing (Whitemoor's CSC). He came into prison as a YO and became Cat A later in his sentence. He described Whitemoor as constraining. The culture of boredom and the false environment of prison made relationships between prisoners difficult, and he described the prisoner population as fragmented. He felt there was quite a lot of paranoia, distrust, and boundaries within relationships. He had explored Islam and Buddhism and became a Muslim (in Frankland in 2001). He became a Mormon subsequently whilst in prison (according to him, for extrinsic reasons, i.e. the provision of hot chocolate). The main reasons for exploring different religious denominations was his general curiosity and openness towards new and different fields of knowledge. He was always striving to learn and to broaden his horizons.

Main Motivations: Sense-making, searching for meaning, identity and curiosity.

6) A 26-year-old Cat-A, BME prisoner serving a life-sentence (with a 28 year tariff). He had lived all his life in the East Midlands. He came to Whitemoor two years before the interview. He had been appealing against his sentence for three years; it was his second try. He had converted to the Muslim faith when he first came to prison in 2005. What he liked about the faith was the togetherness and peacefulness of a united and strong community. He also found the Qur'an's teachings about manners and how to behave towards others useful for his own approach towards life and people around him. He described his own process of conversion as being wooed by other Muslims in prison ("I've come in ... someone was talking to me about it, and gave me a book, and it showed me certain things"). His faith gave him hope because it promised a fresh start and a second chance for everyone who believed in it. He did not describe prisoner relations as fractured, and claimed that Muslims and non-Muslims mixed and got along well at Whitemoor. He did not trust prisoners though, "only one other guy" because he was "similar to him". He felt that prison officers were giving the Muslim community a bad name, i.e. claiming it was a fertile ground for prisoners to be radicalised by powerful leaders. Although he did not think that anyone was coerced to join the Muslim faith, he still felt that some people were becoming Muslim for protection and "the wrong reasons".

Main Motivations: Seeking brotherhood or anchored relations.

7) A 32-year-old, BME prisoner serving an IPP Joint Enterprise sentence with a seven year tariff. He had three years left to serve and was still Cat A. He was also an appellant, and therefore had chosen not to engage in any courses or take part in sentence planning boards. He had been in Whitemoor for 3.5 years. He was born in the UK, and lived in London, but described himself as a traveller. He was brought up in Jamaica and had been all over the world. He used to work as a sound engineer in the music business. He turned Muslim when he came to prison. He claimed to make no difference between Muslims and non-Muslims when it came to interaction with fellow prisoners. He appreciated the unity of the Muslim community most (“We’re united ... he’s a brother who’s amongst us”.) which in his opinion had overridden personal and especially gang enmities.

Main Motivations: Seeking brotherhood and protection.

8) A 26-year-old, BME Category B prisoner serving a life-sentence with a 12 year tariff. He came to Whitemoor two years before the interview. He was born in the West Indies, but had lived in London for 20 years. Before he came to prison, he used to work as a music producer and song writer (Hip Hop and R’n’B). He had been Muslim for three years. What he liked most about the Muslim faith was the notion of equality, learning how to be patient, and treating your family and others with respect. He appreciated being in a community that cooked and ate together as a group of brothers. He also felt he was part of a counter-culture and a counterbalance to the group of disciplinary staff to feel less powerless or inferior (“The officers are all like ‘look at us’, like it’s a show thing ... but at the same time to let them see ... you’ve got numbers, you shouldn’t think you’re better than us because ... we can do the same”). He thought that the perception of the Muslim community in general and at Whitemoor was spoiled by the negative and stereotypical image created by the media, centred round extremism. He thought that prisoners were grouped by common interests, and that most people who were affiliated with gangs outside would leave that identity behind due to the pointlessness of following a dogma that had got them into prison for the next 30 years. He emphasised how well everyone (especially he) got along with other prisoners. But he was taken to the segregation unit the next day for taking part in a fight between two Muslim prisoners (taking the side of an extremist TACT prisoner). Staff later let us know that they thought he was ‘the right hand’ or runner of this TACT prisoner. This was difficult to reconcile with some aspects of his interview.

Main Motivations: Seeking brotherhood and structure; rebellion against the staff group.

9) A 34-year-old white Irish man who converted in prison to being a Muslim. He was a Cat-B lifer with a tariff of 12 years. He had been a Buddhist before. He had been at Whitemoor for two years. He had spent half his life in prison on several sentences, altogether about 15 years. He was on medication for chronic depression and had difficulties coping without treatment. He was a father of two. His kids ‘kept him going’ on the one hand because he still had the hope of being able to see them when he got out. On the other hand, the fact that he was not able to see them whilst in prison (his daughter had been adopted, and his son was in long-term foster care) was one of the reasons for his depression. He had a very violent past, and had grown up around violence, drugs and drink. He had been abused and beaten when he was 13. That was when he changed (“My head just flipped, I wouldn’t let no one take liberties after that”). Whenever he felt distressed, he started cutting himself. He had started an industrial cleaning business with a

friend, before he came to prison, and specialised in cleaning up blood and chemical spillages. He had converted to the Muslim faith one year earlier in Whitemoor. One of his fellow prisoners hypothesised that he was under pressure to join the Muslim faith because of his status as a mentally vulnerable person. He told the research team that he had converted because his brother-in-law was Muslim. He was attracted by the family-notion of the faith because he had never had one. But he also was aware of potential sanctions from the Muslim community for ‘Kufars’ (traitors), i.e. if he was seen eating a bacon sandwich he would expect to get beaten up. He talked with feeling in the interview about how “the first thing I am going to do when I get out is head for a greasy café, and eat a bacon sandwich”. Some other prisoners made similar comments.

Main Motivations: Seeking family, protection and care, and coercion.

10) A 26-year-old BME-prisoner serving a life sentence (with a ten year tariff) for joint enterprise. He had done seven years of his sentence, and had been to all dispersal prisons. He was originally from London. He had spent a year at Whitemoor. He was appealing against his sentence, and saw himself as the ‘victim’ of a dilemma: if he admitted his guilt (though he claimed to be wrongly convicted), he would be able to progress, whereas if he kept fighting for his innocence he would be stuck because of not being able to attend any courses and a failure to demonstrate risk reduction. He had put a lot of thought into the causes of crime (especially in his community). His main survival strategy was reading to keep himself informed and entertained. He favoured a reformed prison system focusing on rehabilitation and the long-term effects imprisonment could have on prisoners. When asked about his religious beliefs, he said he could “relate to Islam most” because it was suited to his views (“You don’t use violence, you try and strengthen your weaknesses if you have them, you try and be good to people in general”). He believed Islam to be particularly attractive to young people who felt treated unfairly by the Government (e.g. when giving out harsh sentences, or offering no second chance, “whereas in Islam, if you do something wrong ... it’s all forgiven, so it’s like a fresh start really”). He acknowledged the fact that religion could be abused by some people using it to follow their own agenda, to get others on board (“[They] try and get you obligated, offer you stuff, gifts, try and embrace you, make you feel comfortable to be their friend ... the way it’s done is very indirect, so you have to be very clued up to it”). He felt that certain prisoners used the Muslim faith as a cover for building up a gang, a powerbase.

Main Motivations: Sense-making, seeking forgiveness, identity, protection, rebellion.

11) A 23-year-old, BME, IPP sentence, Cat B prisoner with a four year tariff from London. He presented himself as very held back and quiet, and was very suspicious towards everyone. He opened up a bit in the one-on-one interview situation, although he still chose not to talk about his life inside prison, but rather used the opportunity to describe the life-style he had on the outside (driving expensive cars, going out clubbing, etc.). He was officially down as a Muslim (converted in prison), also taking part in the Friday prayers, but he would not provide any details about what he especially liked about the faith, other than its peacefulness. His survival strategy was keeping himself to himself, which he thought would help him being transferred to a lower security category prison. He did not understand why he was still held at Whitemoor, since he was Cat B and only serving a short tariff IPP-sentence. Staff suspected he had converted under peer

pressure, but it might also have been out of his wish to lead a quiet and unobtrusive life in prison in order to progress as soon as possible.

Main Motivations: Seeking protection, getting through the sentence.

12) A White, British, 36-year-old prisoner who had come from Woodhill to Whitemoor's CSC for accumulated visits. He was Category A, serving a life-sentence with a thirteen-year tariff. He was two years into his sentence and did not understand why he was still Cat A, or about the details of the risk-assessment procedures ("I don't know how the system works, it's so confusing"). This affected his mental health. He had been to Whitemoor before, in 1999, (E-Wing and the Segregation Unit) and experienced it as brutal. He discovered Islam in prison 15 years earlier, and read the Qur'an, which gave him peace of mind. He compared it to "being in the company of your grandparents, you sort of feel comfortable around them and respect them ... it chills me out ... it's neutral, it's clean, it's not there to be judged and criticised". He would not explicitly define himself as a Muslim, but felt more attracted to the Islamic faith than to Christianity. To him the Christian faith was corrupted by priests misusing their power ("Every time you pick up the paper Christianity paedophiles, child molestation, Catholics, they're covering up, raping kids and, vicars and all them top officials are paying off families not to sue, it's bizarre"). His crucial experience with Islam took place in one prison's segregation unit, where he had experienced violence (from staff). The only people who showed interest, care, and empathy towards him were the Imams. He felt left alone by the vicars, and it was from this 'show of trust' (a form of 'speaking truth to power') that he started exploring the Qur'an. It had given him peace of mind to know that there were 'genuine people to turn to'.

Main Motivations: Sense-making, searching for meaning, peace of mind, dealing with the pains of long-term imprisonment, seeking care and support.

Another interviewee did not formally describe himself as Muslim, but he was attracted to and considering the faith:

13) A 33-year-old, BME-prisoner who was serving an 18 year determinate sentence and had served six years. He lived with his family in Northamptonshire, before he came to prison. He had been at Whitemoor for just over two years, from Long Lartin, and was High-Risk Cat A; he was appealing his sentence, and described the extra security measures for HR prisoners as 'designed to be stressful'. He felt he had to be stronger than an average Cat A/B prisoner to survive psychologically (his survival strategy: "I got faith and I've got children so I can't afford to be affected mentally"). He had been working in the music business on the outside, and therefore appreciated the opportunity to make his own music at Whitemoor in Workshop 10, until he had been taken out of it 'for security reasons' which had a very negative impact on his outlook and self-perception. He described staff-prisoner relationships as 'fake'. Both parties were not able to relate to each other really because of cultural and social differences. He saw staff as a 'tight knit gang', there was a strong 'us and them' feeling. He described Whitemoor as a 'Burger Bar prison', i.e. dominated by the Burger Bar Boys as the biggest gang. He claimed that this knowledge — which prison is dominated by which gang — was widely known and accessible throughout all establishments and on the outside ("Everyone knows where everyone is"). He also described prisoner relationships as fake, based only on how useful someone could be to someone else, in order to survive in prison ("Just to try and live. The strong are going to use the weak"). There was not much

trust and loyalty around because prison was by its very nature 'a selfish place'. At best there was 'enforced loyalty'. He got interested in Islam in prison at an early stage of his sentence, not in Whitemoor, but had not really joined the faith yet because he felt it was 'too big a decision for him to make now'. He believed this faith in particular to be credible and to be able to provide answers to complex questions about the meaning of a sentence, and about life. He also liked the moral standards it set in a world he perceived as 'Corybantic' (wild; "I'm English, but everything I ever witnessed was like foul language, women that will often parade themselves like half-naked, and it's glamorised in this country and TV, newspapers and all this media. So when I questioned it with Islam, a man said to me one time 'would you like to see your daughter like this?' 'Your mother like this?'. On a whole, it would be a better place that we live in"). This especially held true comparing Islam to scandals within the Christian faith ("I've heard about priests ... interfer[ing] with children"). He thought that speaking about the Muslim community at Whitemoor as a *gang* was 'putting a wrong and bad label on them'. He did not see them as a gang because they were not primarily united by illegal actions which a gang would be defined by.

Main Motivations: Sense-making - searching for new ideals, structure.

In addition, one prisoner in the sample described finding it difficult not to convert, because of the temptations, even though he knew this would be 'inauthentic', at least to begin with:

R: I don't think a lot of people trust anyone, really. The best way to be able to feel that you can trust anyone in here is to be a Muslim. I: Really? R: Then you'll have ... then you'll be able to ... at least feel like you can trust people. Because it's so ... like I said, it so unites and is tight and the way that ... like, the teachings ... I don't know if that's the right word ... The teachings ... of this Qur'an are it promotes that kind of stuff, trusting each other and ... So if you ... and that's what I'm saying... this is why they're all ... it's always going to be here now, because it's ... like I said, it's a proper temptation. It is. Because when you look at it ... from the outside, it's like the best thing in here, really ... apart from the fact that it probably won't let you go home ... I: Yeah, [both chuckle]. R: If you're here now and you've got a life sentence and you've given up ... That is the best thing. I: But that makes it ... that is really powerful ... it's a kind of basic human need to feel trust somewhere. R: Yeah. And it is. It's the only place in the prison where there's lots of things. It's... to me, I'd say it's the only place in the prison where there's love, where there's trust, where there's real friendships, where there's any of them type of things. Loyalty, anything like that. I: But that means the Governor's problem is making sure those things exist elsewhere. R: And that's what I was saying to you. There's no reward for us. There's no ... we ... you're just left out on your own ... So you will always ... see that as a kind of temptation (Prisoner).

As Maruna *et al* suggest (2006) prison conversions to Christianity (about which more is known) 'works' as a shame management and coping strategy, creating a 'new social identity' and 'imbuing the experience of imprisonment with meaning and purpose' (p. 161). Prisoners are 'provided with a language and framework for forgiveness' and gain 'a sense of control over an unknown future' (p. 161). The

motivations for conversion to Islam seem more complex and varied, and some aspects of motivation are more intertwined with prison culture and social life (seeking 'brotherhood', protection, and coercion; see also next chapter). There are prison-related 'conversions' (or changes in prison identity) which may have little to do with faith, where the accounts provided cannot be taken 'at face value' and may be more collective than individual.⁵⁶ But there are also strong indications that seeking meaning and identity transformation (as well as structure and boundaries) constitutes a significant part of the narrative for many prisoners. Prisoners were reflecting on their lives, futures and self-understandings in ways that made Islam, the most available faith, meaningful and appealing. Strong religious convictions 'insulate the true believer against the assaults of the ... institution' (p. 163) as well as providing hope, meaning and 'family'.

Many other prisoners described practising their faith more 'properly' since coming in to prison, and the positive effects of this on their behaviour.

The number of in-prison conversions to Islam, the evidence of some coercion or heavy advertising, and the growing felt presence of Muslim prisoners in the establishment added to anxieties about some organised process of 'radicalisation' going on in the prison (as well as elsewhere).⁵⁷ The research team saw no direct evidence of this, but did not set out to investigate it directly. It was, however, a major concern, as well as topic of conversation in the prison throughout the period of our research.

4.11 The risk and reality of radicalisation in Whitemoor and the cultivation of fear⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Maruna and colleagues argue that most self-narratives cannot be entirely taken at face value but should constitute 'an object of analysis' in their own right, as they form an important part of an individual's present construction of personal identity (Maruna *et al* 2006: 162). Detailed information on the (often troubled) 'prison careers' (in some case, involving movement – or 'regression' – up to dispersal conditions) of the interviewees was not available. The next chapter attempts to unravel some of the non-faith related dimensions of inter-prisoner relationships, but as described, some of the negative aspects of prison culture had become infused with faith 'presentations'.

⁵⁷ Hamm points out that 'Muktar Ibrahim, leader of the 21 July cell that attempted to bomb the London Underground in a follow-on to the 7/7 attacks, found religious calling in Islam at a British young offender's institution. Richard Reid, the Qaeda 'shoe bomber' who attempted to blow up an American Airlines flight between Paris and Miami in 2001, converted to Islam at the same institution (BBC News 2001). Perhaps no case demonstrates the dangers of prisoner radicalization like the case of Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (1966 – 2006), the founder of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Zarqawi did not convert to Islam in prison (he had been raised in a Sunni family in Jordan), but, according to the terrorist's biographer, 'it was in prison that his magnetism and strength appeared in a new light' (Brisard 2005: 43). Prior to his incarceration at Jordan's high-security Suwaqah prison on terrorism-related charges in 1996, Zarqawi's reputation was that of a hoodlum with vague religious learning' (Brisard 2005: 40). Zarqawi thrived under the harsh conditions of the desert prison where he memorized large portions of the Qur'an, developed the body of a fighter and the proselytizing techniques of a zealot. These organizational skills allowed Zarqawi to recruit a gang of ordinary criminals and drug addicts that would later prove vital to his terrorist campaign in Iraq' (Hamm 2009: 668).

⁵⁸ In the section that follows, the authors adhere to the current definition of terrorism according to Section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2000: (1) In this Act "terrorism" means the use or threat of action where the action falls within subsection (2), the use or threat is designed to influence the Government [or an international Government organisation] or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause" (The UK Statute Law Database). The term 'extremism' refers to social and political activity born out of fundamentalist ideology. 'Radicalisation' refers to the process by which beliefs and actions become more extreme (see Kant 2009: 6-7). The use of the term 'fundamentalist' creates ambiguity. Initially, it meant a belief system directly supporting the fundamentals of religion (i.e., the belief that scripture, whether from the Bible, Torah or Qur'an tells the literal truth). It is possible to adhere to this belief without acting violently: modern fundamentalist Muslims are

Around 150 prisoners in English and Welsh prisons are held for terror related offences, with a further number under supervision (Spalek, El-Awa and Lambert 2008: 45; Ministry of Justice 2011). There are fears that the presence of convicted terrorist offenders will lead to the radicalisation of ‘vulnerable’ prisoners who are exposed to their influence. These concerns about ‘radical extremists infiltrating the prisons of England and Wales to recruit members’ are well documented in the media, who exploit popular anxiety to increase their circulation (see, for example, Tibbetts 2008; Dalrymple 2005; and Doward 2007).⁵⁹ They have also led to active intelligence-gathering and a number of tailored interventions with influential individuals in prisons. The high security estate holds the majority of prisoners and detainees convicted or suspected of terror-related offences. Staff and senior managers are aware that they are dealing with serious potential risks to safety, so does the modern prison represent a ‘potential recruiting ground for terrorists’?⁶⁰ Extensive media-coverage about Al Qaeda-inspired terrorism in Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan (read and sometimes discussed by staff and prisoners on wings) increases this fear and contributes to an ‘othering’ process of Muslims and Muslim prisoners by the public (Prison Media Monitoring Unit 2006b: 20), by staff, by senior managers, and by policy makers. These issues have affected the treatment of all prisoners, because the risks posed are real (rare but ‘posing vivid danger’; see Padfield 2002):

Obviously the majority of these prison officers live in the outside society, they watch the news, they see all this stuff about terrorism and all this propaganda that’s on within the media, and then they come into work and they’re faced with the very terrorists that the media are talking about and things like that. Obviously they have the preconceived notions and biases that the majority of society have, and then they come into prisons and come face to face with these people and obviously a lot of it is them exercising their own feelings out on Muslims as a whole and exercising their own biases out on Muslims as a whole (Prisoner).

The presence of an omnipresent but ‘diffuse threat’ leads to generalised suspicion and mistrust, and to feelings of powerlessness, paralysis, and anger among the general public. Stereotypical images were fuelled in this climate and media ‘propaganda’ made the situation worse.⁶¹ Some prisoners weaved these ‘public anxieties’ into their actions at Whitemoor. There was clearly some strategic misuse of religion for political goals:

When I came through 2006 in this prison, because I’m from Afghanistan and especially in this prison, we are Muslim, about hundred and twenty

capable of negotiating and integrating the demands of both their religious and professional lives, hence accusations of fundamentalism may rightly cause confusion because its definition has various meanings and implications (see Kant 2009: 40). ‘Fanaticism’ is a belief or behaviour involving uncritical zeal, particularly for an extreme religious or political cause: ‘the fanatic displays very strict standards and little tolerance for contrary ideas or opinions’ (see Kant 2009: 7).

⁵⁹ For example, ‘Extremist Muslim prison gang radicalising inmates, say warders’ (The Telegraph, 10/10/08); ‘Our prisons are fertile ground for cultivating suicide bombers’, (The Times, 30/07/08); and ‘Muslim convert ‘recruits’ inmates’ (BBC News, 20/06/08).

⁶⁰ Although the current majority of terror-related prisoners are Al Qaeda inspired extremists, the number of right-wing radical offenders has also risen, see Kant 2009: 16.

⁶¹ In contrast to impartially providing information, propaganda presents information primarily to influence an audience. Propaganda often presents facts selectively to encourage a particular synthesis, or uses loaded messages to produce an emotional rather than rational response to the information presented. The desired result is a change of the attitude toward the subject in the target audience to further a political agenda.

Muslims living in this prison. And everyone came in asking me about these politics. I told everyone I have nothing to do with 'back home politics' in my country, like Taliban, Mujahadin or Al-Qaida; these organisation. They ask me "why don't you? ... you have to tell us about them". Some Muslims here, they think they are in prison in the cause of religion. But regarding to the British Government, they're saying they are terrorist, you know? But they asked me questions, and they have never been to Afghanistan. They have never been to Al-Qaida, they have never been to these people. I tell these people "just forget about it, OK? Now you are in prison, now try to change. You understand? Close the book". I tell these brothers; "if you want to be Al-Qaida, if you want to be Taliban, can you tell me about them? Do you know anything about them?". They say no. Just that they saw on the TV, or saw on the internet, I just left my country. Why did I leave my country? Because we were suffering under the Taliban regime. People have no food, children, womans [sic], no education. This is a very, very hard life. And these people are claiming "we are the best: Islam". But Islam has to allow you to look after the poor as well. Look after your nation as well. Look after everybody as well. First provide me education, first provide me some food, first provide me healthcare, then tell me to leave my beard, or do my prayers five times, or do this, or do that. A leader should be, in every respect of life, a leader. Not just pray five times and no food, pray five times and no clothes, pray five times and no education, no electricity — this is madness. I tried to tell these people that's what it's all about. These few individuals here, they try to use religion and teach this to people who become a Muslim. Like, what they believe. But these guys give the wrong image of Islam. Islam is not about killing and about hatred. Of course, in any religion, there is fighting, there is killing, but which time, in which circumstances? (Prisoner).

This prisoner was describing a process of political mobilisation taking place at Whitemoor. Some prisoners were ready to engage politically, i.e. to support a war which they saw as motivated by religious animosities (by Western oppression to the Islamic Taliban regime). Some prisoners were adopting 'distorted views' preached to them by extremist prisoners that ignored underlying political and social complexities, painting a picture of oppression and religious discrimination of a Muslim faith community. This account legitimated a 'fight against the oppressors' by means of terrorist attacks. This position misused important tenets of the faith, portraying Islam as a religion that approved violence in the name of God. This version of Islam could be 'highly explosive'. As Jürgensmeyer argued (2004: 10) "religion is not innocent. But it does not ordinarily lead to violence. That happens only with the coalescence of a peculiar set of circumstances - political, social, and ideological - when religion becomes fused with violent expressions of social aspirations, personal pride, and movements for political change".⁶²

⁶² According to Michael A. Sheehan, "a number of terrorist groups have portrayed their causes in religious and cultural terms. This is often a transparent tactic designed to conceal political goals, generate popular support and silence opposition". (Excerpt from a speech given at the Falk Auditorium, The Brookings Institution, Washington, DC: "A Foreign Policy Event Terrorism: The Current Threat", Thursday, February 10, 2000).

4.12 Fear and anxiety relating to extremism

The threat of assaults motivated by religious fanaticism or extremist ideology added weight to the atmosphere at Whitemoor. Staff and prisoners were 'on the alert' and were in fear of violent attacks thought likely to be carried out by a small number of Muslim prisoners. This fear was abstract (but a number of incidents, at Whitemoor and elsewhere, gave it edge). As one prisoner put it: "They try to put fear on people, like presumed fear". As one officer said; "But then that's terrorism for you, isn't it? It affects very few people directly but it affects a lot of people [indirectly]. Mind games, isn't it?" (Officer).

This meant constant staff vigilance as to any information that could be useful in preventing expected attacks, resulting in stress and tension, and obvious relief when 'key players' were moved elsewhere:

I've seen the morale of staff go up. It went up for a while when [three prisoners' names] were taken off, because they was a drain on the staff's resource, you know? The staff were constantly having to watch them, watch these, watch this. That was when the morale went up (Officer).

With constant fear of an abstract, intangible threat came the feeling of powerlessness. Staff and prisoners felt at the mercy of a numerous Muslim prisoner group containing potentially radicalised individuals ready to carry out assaults. The power balance had shifted in this regard:

I think now there's sort of more of a fear. If I was a prisoner and wanted to be bullying and intimidating, then I would love other people to think that my gang was so widespread that every single prisoner was, you know, loyal to me and about to do my bidding, so if they can create that culture of fear then that's excellent for them (Officer).

This new power base could be used in different ways by different members to follow their individual agendas. The motives driving action were varied and not often 'religious':

I think sometimes it's about trying to look at how we break that down, and how we label it, so perhaps we need to get away from the Muslim label. Then trying to get that adopted back by the sort of genuine Muslim community as it were and create a different label. Because we use the word 'extremist', but 'extremist' still has a lot of religious overtones in it because, how do you separate out 'extremist' as in 'extremely devout' from 'extremist' as in, you know, 'running round bombing people'? So I think what we need is a different label or a different term for it, that also then the genuine Muslims can distinguish themselves from the sort of sabotage group, as it were, and then if one knows who are the sabotage group, who we are dealing with, then we can treat them as the sort of gang, and split them up as we would, rather than just let them create this impression that all of the normal Muslims are in their little group (Officer).

Staff and prisoners needed to find a way towards mutual communication, understanding, and a clear definition of faith related terminology:

I think staff are starting to understand more and I think when we started having terrorists, Al Qaeda terrorists, the old threat of somebody being taken hostage and their head being cut off, that was a big issue and it scared a lot of people, but I suppose it could happen but it's just hype, you know? And once we break down these barriers, we start talking to the prisoners, start understanding their culture, start understanding that about Muslim prayers, about, the clothes they wear, what you can and can't do, respect for that religion (Officer).

4.13 Extremist activity at Whitemoor: leaders and followers

R: The ones like [name] are the extremists, the activists. The mood on the wing changes when they're here because everybody wants to be near them, everybody wants to do things for them. I: Why is that? R: because they don't want to go against what he stands for or who he is, but once he's gone everybody breathes a huge sigh of relief and they can get back to normal with the day-to-day goings on, and you can see that from the attitude of the prisoners on the wing (Officer).

It was difficult to determine how much power individual prisoners had, and whether they accumulated this power in an organised manner. According to staff, organisational hierarchies from the outside could be transferred by TACT prisoners inside:

You've got your proper Al Qaeda members. They're the top dogs, they are the recruiters. There will be a hierarchy of people and they're right at the top. They don't do the dirty work, they don't do the assaults. They will get people below them and they're adored because they're so high up, they're so dangerous, they're so evil, and then you'll get people down the bottom that, kind of, wonder what it's like and then you'll get the people that have to do it and there'll be a whole pyramid of people that are prepared to do the job. They're right at the top. Genuine Muslims I think there's probably a very, very low per cent (Officer).

Staff and prisoners offered theories about the 'top dogs' that mainly consisted of assumptions about how terrorists operated in general. When probed on the specific character traits, behaviour and ways of interaction between, for example, TACT prisoners and staff, there was a consensus that interaction was deliberately civil and polite:

I: And have you had experience of dealing with some of the more radicalised extremist prisoners? R: No, he doesn't really mix with staff, and not with females especially. I have dealt with him once on a query and he was polite to me, but it's only been the once. You can see them physically but they don't come to your attention (Officer).

I've had conversations, philosophical conversations about religion and all things like that but I know who to talk to and who not to. I wouldn't talk to somebody who was really extreme. Having said that, there is a guy who is quite well-educated, well there's two guys that are quite well-educated, apparently they were at University before they got arrested, and they're both meant to be quite high up in the Muslim hierarchy, as far as this

place is concerned, and, you know, they're intelligent, you can talk to them (Prisoner).

There were 'strategic demonstrations' of highly compliant behaviour that prisoners with terrorist backgrounds had been specially trained for:

We know exactly who it is, but we can't do anything about it because the people who are in charge of those people who run it are polite; their cells are immaculate, they don't challenge us, they don't do anything wrong, they go to work, they play the game perfectly because they get lower people to do their acts for them. So they're untouchable, almost. There's nothing on them, because on paper they are perfect prisoners, they're playing the game, [they] do what they're told, clean and tidy, their hands are clean (Officer).

Communication between individuals was constrained, apparently by religious doctrines:

Three or four years ago I noticed it. Before that, when I was at Long Lartin it wasn't such a big thing because they were isolated; the fanatical path. You had Muslims before but it wasn't a fanatical thing, you know? I mean I've even heard people telling people not to speak to non-believers (Prisoner).

I haven't personally heard it myself, but I've heard people preaching, talking, in a way that I would have to pull someone up on, I would say "hang on, what you're saying is wrong". "No it's not!" So, we have conflict. I decided to stay away from that kind of thing before I got into conflict with people (Prisoner).

Mutual communication was replaced by fearful silence, and second hand accounts and speculations about the inner lives and agendas of terrorist offenders prevailed. Prisoners 'high up in the hierarchy' were seen to be withdrawing from relationships with staff and other prisoners. Unless relationships could be used as a tool to realise strategic interests, extremist prisoners had no interest in them — they were 'taking cover':

Especially the extreme people; they're not daft. They're university-educated and that, so they know social skills, they know how to manipulate social skills (Prisoner).

What was clearer was the awe in which some high profile prisoners were held by younger prisoners, and the lack of clear reasoning about this sense of status or its meaning: leadership qualities were attributed by those looking for guidance. Those 'with trainers', with influence, or with charisma, were appealing. It sometimes took time to work out that some aspects of the ideologies on offer, about crime as well as about Islam, were distorted, or to see the pressure coming:

R: If you're in a ghetto where crime is rife shall we say, and you've seen people getting seriously hurt and killed every day, you say hang on a second here, do I carry a weapon that could possibly save my life or do I

not carry a weapon and end up like a victim ... You've got to look at it as being like in the jungle, like animals. I: So these are the experiences you've grown up with? R: If you're a young kid and you see somebody wearing expensive trainers you want expensive trainers, you're more likely to listen to that guy than to listen to someone who hasn't got expensive trainers who says you have to take the long route to get expensive trainers, when you can listen to the person that's saying well you can get the trainers, there's only a risk of going to prison ... but look at me, I've got the trainers, so ... I have people that ... what will I say ... give me motivation. People who I can relate to, so someone like Jay-Z, he's come from the community, he's successful. I'd say that I could benefit from his experience. You look for that. But then you get some people with extreme views and they take things out of context, so in a way it opens your eyes ... because they take things out of context to what suits them, they pick and choose, and a lot of that goes on in prison. The Government are very harsh, you do wrong you get punished, go to prison, and you're stereotyped for the rest of your life. Whereas in Islam, if you do something wrong, what ever, before you were a Muslim, it's all forgiven, so it's like a fresh start really. The Government is racist, the Government don't care about poor people, the Government are getting all the people in prison and making them high risk and A Cats because it brings them money. So in some situations you have no choice ... When you see people get stabbed and stuff ... and then sometimes a person could be in a situation where he had no choice but to say yes ... some of them say convert to Muslim, convert to Muslim. But the issue here is that ... people use it as a gang. Genuine Muslim is not taken to extreme (Prisoner).

There was resistance by most prisoners to extremism, even if there were also risky periods in their prison careers (early on, for example) and vulnerabilities of many kinds in the environment. The problem for staff was being alert to signs of radicalisation or extremism without alienating ordinary Muslim prisoners:

I'm not... unaware of the problems of radicalisation in prison, right, but I think these guys are so unaware of what radicalisation is and what Islam is, that if you have any sort of religious appearance outside, you're a threat. You're radicalised, you're dangerous and I think that's done out of malice, as well as, sometimes, just ignorance. I would say it's more towards the malice side of it (Prisoner).

Staff approaches towards and relationships with Muslim prisoners in this context are described in Chapter 7.

4.14 Radicalisation: risks, power and vulnerability

You take a bunch of people who are already disenchanted with life. They have no real sense of identity. They go into crime because that's who they're with, OK? To those people who have no sense of belonging, the nine-to-five isn't going to work for them. They have no connection to the world, so they basically tell the world to fuck off and do their own things. Drugs, joy ride in cars, whatever. They get their thrills somehow, OK? So you take these people who have no sense of belonging, no sense of

connection. Take them out of society and stuff them in a box. You haven't addressed the issue. Along comes somebody who says, 'yes, this is how you can belong. This is how you could have worth. This is how you can show the rest of the world how they got it wrong'. Bam; bomb in your shoe, onto a plane, boom. They aren't smart enough to figure out how to get it to work. But they have that desire because they think it's the way that they can prove to the world that they are somebody or something (Prisoner).

There was an awareness and understanding on the prisoners' side about the dangers of extremism and radicalisation, and about how a prison environment (a place of vulnerability) could facilitate processes geared towards radicalisation:

Some people come in here with agendas and they try very much to get other people to follow that agenda. So now the prisoners are suffering and the prisoners are being pressured, but when these Mullahs get the power they're accumulating now, sooner or later they're going to turn it on the system, so they, kind of, have to care, to be honest. This society as I can predict is going to suffer for what they're doing in this prison. Because some of these people are coming out. Some of these guys, when they've gone through all this mad brainwashing, I've known people who I was friends with and they don't talk to me again or don't communicate with me in the way they did because they have different ideas from what they had in the past, so I can see what's going to happen in the future (Prisoner).

I could kind of see why they're trying to do, why they're trying to get a grip on the book situation because there's a lot of radical-like authors out there that preach a lot of stuff that isn't really Islamic. It is Islamic, but it's misinterpreted and twisted to justify certain things. It can then lead to misinterpretation, lead to people getting the wrong idea, and then obviously acting in the wrong ways as well (Prisoner).

On the one hand, the nature of prison sentences provided the preconditions to change someone's mind set slowly but steadily:

Prisoners can become radicalised. I mean, we've got prisoners on here who weren't Muslim when they were sent to jail but are now being linked to all sorts of possible assaults and bullying and pressuring and, you know, I think they can be warped by it quite easily, 'cause they've got no escape from the doctrine or the dogma of what they're believing in. And if you're having some con that's continuously, relentlessly, you know, at you every day about, for example, the hatred of the West and of Western civilisation, if you've got someone every day convincing you, and all the rest of it, then eventually you are going to succumb to it. And some of these guys have had specific training in how to convince people of this stuff. But yeah, I think they have, some have, become radicalised since being inside (Officer).

On the other hand, the prisoner population comprised various kinds of seekers, looking for meaning, purpose, forgiveness, love, care, hope, and guidance. They

were ready to hear about new ideas, alternative life-concepts and ideologies, and to adopt them (as described in Chapter 3):

Well [sighs] these terrorists and these people that claim they know about Islam, what they say is, no matter what crimes or whatever you've committed when you're outside, once you come to prison and you convert to Islam, everything that you've done before is forgiven. That's what they say and I think that's one of the main attractions to people. I think if you commit murder and you believe in God, and you come to prison, you know that you've committed a crime that's one of the worst crimes you can commit. So if you've done that and then you come to prison, it's playing on your conscience so then you need to actually find the religion and ask for forgiveness and stuff like that because, you know, you fear God, but I think what these so-called terrorists are doing - they're preying on those sort of people (Prisoner).

Some staff (and prisoners) expressed a fear that 'prison is where the extremism of the future' might originate; it was a long-term and cumulative process that might 'start here'. The prison was described by some prisoners as 'a recruiting drive for the Taliban'; with extremists trying to convert and radicalise the vulnerable. It was difficult to disentangle fact from fear.

Most of the very limited evidence about, or examples of, radicalisation arising in the interviews or in observations were indirect ('it happened to a friend of mine in the next door cell — I could tell by the material he was reading, things he was saying', and 'prisoners receive help when they get here — for years before the pressure starts'). One prisoner (from Afghanistan) described in detail the pressure he was under to keep his 'anti-Taliban' attitudes to himself ('What you guys are teaching is unacceptable'). This public dispute led to a fight. Certain prisoners were (according to our interviewee) told that 'God will give them paradise if I am killed'. His throat was later cut at Friday prayers (see further, next chapter). This incident 'divided Muslims'.

Not all those looking for comfort were prone to change allegiances or religious denomination:

I believe in God. At the moment the most close religion to me is Islam. Due to the fact that some of the beliefs are more suited to my views. From where I was standing, you don't use violence, you try and strengthen your weaknesses if you have them, you try and be good to people in general. But then you get some people with extreme views and they take things out of context, so in a way it opens your eyes to definitions or interpretation. Because they take things out of context to what suits them, they pick and choose it, and a lot of that goes on in prison. In some situations you have no choice. When you see people get stabbed and stuff, sometimes a person could be in a situation where he had no choice but to say yes (Prisoner).

Some sympathy was expressed for the feeling of pressure that might precede the adoption of an extreme view:

It does happen in prison. I think the way that prisoners are treated in prison doesn't help the situation. They make it more likely to listen to somebody with extreme views because young lads, if they seem to be let down by the system, if they seem to be unfairly treated, then you get somebody who will say 'well look, look at these people, they're this/that, that blah-blah', and they're stereotyping somebody constantly. And sometimes they force theirself on people, so that makes them strong. If you've got a prisoner in a prison and there's loads of people with extreme views (Prisoner).

Influential individuals emerged 'out of the woodwork' in an environment in which opposition was acceptable:

R: This guy, thinking he's a scholar, like, when he come in six month ago in this prison, like everybody, look at him, he become a new leader. You understand? I: What qualities does he have that make him a leader? R: Here, in prison, you just spread hatred against the British government, against non-Muslims, that's it, you are leader, that's it (Prisoner).

An environment that was perceived as a continuation and extension of a life dominated by feelings of alienation, misrecognition and unfairness offered fertile ground for cultivating hatred of the state or society. This position influenced some prisoners. Others saw their position differently, feeling that putting the blame on anyone but themselves was 'no way forward'. They were still 'vulnerable' (to extremist or fanatical religious views), because they were also finding their way through their sentence, and were grateful for guidance. This kind of guidance (or modelling) was not available elsewhere:

The only people who have tried to offer religion to me have been people that are in prison for terrorism. But they weren't in the least bit aggressive about it, and they were willing to talk about their faith in a sort of, quite a sensible way. This is, one of the things I've found, that the people I'm told are raving fanatics, the ones that I've met have been anything but. They're devoutly religious and they're prepared to potentially either kill or die for that religion, but they aren't on a personal level 'bad people'. They're actually, I suppose, far better people than many of the inmates within the prison system, based on personal experience. So I could see why they could be influential and charismatic, because obviously if you're a young person and there's lots of them in the prison system, a person of this kind could potentially be quite a good mentor, where that would lead of course [inhales] ... (Prisoner).

What made prisoners vulnerable to fundamentalist or radical religious views was the notion of 'filling a void'. Most of those who toyed with the idea, or who felt tempted to convert to Islam (these processes were a long way from radicalisation) did not consider themselves to be 'typical' candidates. What charismatic Muslim 'key-players' were capitalising on when 'advertising' or propagating their faith was — apart from fear and pressure — the need individual prisoners felt to find an identity and a meaning in (prison) life. According to prisoners' accounts, they targeted prisoners who seemed 'lost' or who were in search of something transformative,

who were ready to change or re-invent themselves. These prisoners were 'open to what was on offer', and religious leaders offered themselves as trustworthy guides:

R: When the religions come into any life, then people are blind. They are just following blindly. I: Do you think that if anything else came up that would be similarly attractive or offering the help they are looking for, or the care, do you think they would follow that? R: No, no. You know why? Because religion promise you, unseen [gifts] (Prisoner).

Monotheistic religions based on 'blind' obedience and trust of 'the unseen', were prone to misuse or misinterpretation and were attractive in the prison setting. Those who put their beliefs across in convincing ways, and who modelled strength, self-control and forbearance, gained followers who relied on them as a source of trust and knowledge. Hamm shows in his two-year US study that the presence, behaviour and influence of Muslim prisoners varies according to the qualities and social conditions of the prison, so that in 'overcrowded maximum-security institutions like New Folsom Prison, where there are few rehabilitation programmes; a shortage of Chaplains to provide religious guidance to searchers; serious gang problems; and more politically charged living areas', the conditions for radicalisation are present. In a contrasting prison, a prisoner-led Islamic Studies Programme acted as both a rehabilitation programme and as a counter-weight against Islamic extremism (Hamm 2009).

4.15 Summary: a question of faith

This chapter has described a number of different faith manifestations and representations found or visible at Whitemoor, based on observations, and the testimonies of staff and prisoners. As with all typologies, not all individuals fitted neatly into each category. The research team were wary of probing into some aspects of faith and ideology in depth.

There were anxieties at Whitemoor related to the number of Muslim prisoners in the establishment. They presented as the 'superior number' in strength, and showed apparent levels of solidarity: 'If you take on one of them, they will all kick-off'. The rise in numbers had led to a perceived power imbalance that created uncertainty, fear, and some victims.

Staff and prisoners' awareness of the presence of terrorist offenders within the main population, many of whom held and expressed extremist views, contributed to the fear that vulnerable prisoners could be 'infected' by extreme ways of thinking, and might at some point be persuaded to carry out serious assaults on behalf of their leaders' agenda. This fear pervaded the atmosphere at Whitemoor and affected staff-prisoner-relationships, as well as intra-prisoner relationships. No direct evidence of this process in motion was found. The research team did not talk to any known 'radicalised' prisoners and were not able to clearly relate any of the prisoner-on-prisoner assaults directly or exclusively to the internalisation of an extremist version of Islamic principles, although certain testimonies support the view that attempts at radicalisation of prisoners went on, and some of the incidents of violence that took place during the fieldwork were thought by many to be faith related (see Chapter 5). These attempts were difficult to resist or counter balance, as there were sometimes repercussions. Many prisoners pointed out that extreme ideologies represented a negative and distorted interpretation of the Muslim faith.

But there were risks in saying so 'out loud'. It was clear that attempts to convert prisoners to the Muslim faith were going on.⁶³ Some of these conversions to Islam, and the following of its teachings among long-term believers, brought about positive effects and changes for prisoners at Whitemoor, when adopted sincerely.

The Muslim interviewees portrayed themselves as genuine Muslims (although a handful were not sure of their religious beliefs), but they differed in the performance of their faith as well as in their motivations for joining the Muslim community. At an individual level, religion was often used psychologically or emotionally, as a way to survive the sentence or as a way of giving life a new meaning and direction. At a collective level, the use of religion was more instrumental, and more overtly related to power struggles. Religious claims could be capitalised on by terrorist offenders seeking to gain followers to expedite their political agenda, as well as by 'heavy players' seeking enhanced power in prison. Politically inspired engagement (a struggle for power and social rights) became fused with religious background as a form of legitimation for assaults and bullying. Whether this form of religious engagement is exclusive to the prison context remains unknown.

During the fieldwork representations and perceptions of the Muslim population at Whitemoor presented themselves in highly complex ways. Motives for joining or leaving the 'group' (which was not a united and uniform group) were diverse. Whilst a majority of officers and a number of prisoners saw and treated the Muslim community as a 'whole', defined by their religious denomination, this portrayal overlooked the struggle for individual recognition which often motivated prisoners to join the Muslim faith community at Whitemoor. Uni-dimensional categorisation was neither useful, nor accurate.

The motives for joining the Muslim faith are outlined in Table 4.1. This Table was generated inductively by the research team following discussions of the interview material and drawing on Honneth's work on 'the struggle for recognition' (1995). It reflects the variety of reasons for, as well as the risks and benefits of, joining the Muslim community in prison, and some of the changes in personal goals and self-identity' involved (Maruna *et al* 2006: 166). Two of the motivation categories represent 'positive faith manifestations' and two represent 'negative faith manifestations'. Prisoners were looking for different means to 'fill the void' that a felt lack of recognition left in their conception of themselves as an agent. Taking on a role as a brother to other Muslims, for example, could provide them with trusted and family-like relationships lost on entry into prison (or never experienced). Being a member of this Muslim family subgroup could have disadvantages due to the heterogeneity of the whole group, and the requirement to follow its rules (imposed by some). A convert could be required, for example, to wear a specific religious robe instead of his own clothes. Being a Muslim brother to other Muslims also had collective benefits, and could enhance feelings of safety. It might also have negative effects on risk-categorisation, for example, because the group were perceived as potentially powerful and dangerous. The positive experience of being a valued and trusted member of this community could also have significant rehabilitative potential, building up the individual's self-confidence. On the other hand, other versions of the 'new framework' provided (or crystallised) a more oppositional kind of guidance or 'master story that allows individuals to 'read' the

⁶³ It is striking that attempts to convert others to Christianity are regarded as wholly positive, and in line with rehabilitation, in prison (Maruna *et al* 2006: 165).

world again' (Maruna *et al* 2006: 167). This process of identity development was potentially positive, likely in the circumstances (whilst facing a 'crisis of self-narrative') but was complex and sometimes distorted by the constraints and power struggles of prison life.

The appeal of faith, and the appeal of conversion to Islam in particular, were new and powerful themes at Whitemoor. This was complex, since conflicting assumptions about, as well as presentations of, faith were found. Fears relating to 'radicalisation' were widespread. But most of the faith related activities going on at Whitemoor were related to power, identity and survival. There were positive and negative manifestations of conversions to Islam at Whitemoor, and insufficient support for the most positive (as well as other) manifestations of spiritual development.

The next chapter looks at relationships between prisoners and the ways in which faith identities, changing hierarchies and disputes and frustrations played out in this new environment. The problems of violence and coercion, the presence of fear, and the effects of living in a low trust environment, are explored.

Table 4.1 Faith-identity manifestations and their implications

	POSITIVE MANIFESTATIONS		NEGATIVE/DISTORTED MANIFESTATIONS	
	THE MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD	THE DEVOUT MUSLIM	THE MUSLIM "GANG"	RADICAL ISLAMIST OFFENDERS
	<u>GROUP BONDING I:</u>	<u>SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE:</u>	<u>GROUP BONDING II:</u>	<u>POWER THROUGH OPPRESSION:</u>
	MEMBERSHIP OF A SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY	SENSE OF INTELLECTUAL OWNERSHIP	MEMBERSHIP OF A POWERBASE	FOLLOWING A POLITICAL AGENDA
FORMS OF RECOGNITION	Primary relationships (love, trust, friendships)	Legal relations (knowledge of rules and rights as a Muslim)	Community of value (solidarity)	Gain of material and symbolical power
MODE OF RECOGNITION	Emotional and social support	Cognitive respect	Social esteem (Instrumental)	Fear-respect (Instrumental)
DIMENSION OF PERSONALITY / IDENTITY	Needs and emotions; ability to form relationships	Moral responsibility (Doing what's right)	Having a voice, representation of power, resistance against perceived discrimination	Social and political resistance against perceived illegitimacy
INDIVIDUAL BENEFITS (PRACTICAL RELATION-TO-SELF)	Basic self-confidence, hope	Self-respect, legitimate identity apart from being an offender, more structure to one's life; something to believe in, hope, guidance	Self-esteem, protection	Status, outlet for anger
RISKS TO INDIVIDUAL	Obligations and limitations to self-(re)presentation /- expression; Possibility to be coerced into carrying out assaults, etc.	Expectations from other prisoners to tolerate distorted views and uses of the faith	Getting stuck in group, no safe way out; Stereotyped as more risky, no progress	Unlimited imprisonment (ad-infinitum), and scrutiny
COLLECTIVE BENEFITS	More intra-prisoner cohesion; one common belief, a leveller (e.g. no more gang enmities)	Freedom to express and follow one's faith; increasing credibility and popularity of the faith itself	More informal and formal power due to strength in numbers; extrinsic rewards (e.g. special food)	Domination / liberation
COLLECTIVE RISKS	Influence on risk-categorisation, stigmatisation as possibly radicalised or oppressing others, negative image	Influence on risk-categorisation, stigmatisation as possibly radicalised or oppressing others, negative image	Influence on risk-categorisation, stigmatisation as possibly radicalised or oppressing others, negative image	Segregation, oppression, surveillance
REHABILITATIVE POTENTIAL / DYNAMICS	Increased confidence and more trust in others, better inside and outside survival/adaptation/(re-)integration	A new/better/alternative identity, a fresh start and fresh outlook on oneself, motivation to change one's way of life (outside), a pro-social track	Few but some rebellious identities, activities and peer groups are positive	

Chapter 5 Social relationships between prisoners: violence, coercion, fear, safety and trust

This is not an honest prison (Prisoner).

5.1 Changes to solidarity and the traditional prison hierarchy since 1998

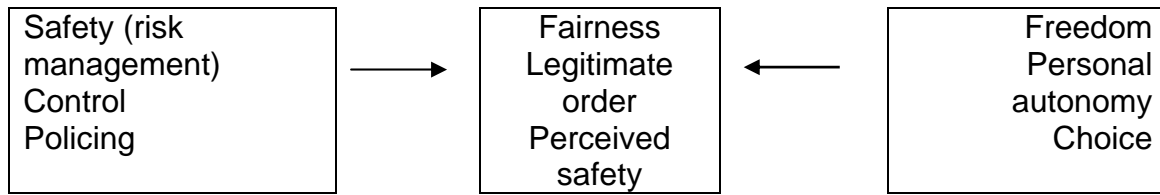
Relationships between prisoners at Whitemoor were difficult to disentangle and describe. They were described as fractured, were more deeply hidden than in the original study, and the 'traditional prison hierarchy' visible in high security and long-term prisons had changed.

Prison sociologists have long been interested in social relationships among prisoners, in the kinds of adaptations prisoners make to the prison environment, the codes or informal rules that arise, the nature of allegiances between them, and the formation of groups. These kinds of studies are now few and far between but constituted a longstanding tradition in studies of the prison throughout the 1950s to 1970s. Scholarship in this tradition conceptualises the prisoner 'community' as shaped in part by importation factors (habits, characteristics and values brought in to prison from outside) and in part by 'deprivation' factors (the conditions, constraints and deprivations of imprisonment). Any prison phenomenon (e.g. suicide, violence, disorder, or religious conversion) can be made sense of using a combination of importation and deprivation variables. One persistent feature of the prison sociological literature, challenged to different degrees in a few studies, has been an assumption that prisoners display (if not wholly subscribe to) a certain level of 'solidarity' (unity of purpose and mutual moral and other support) in opposition to prison officers in order to offset the pains and deprivations of imprisonment. There are limits to how far prisoners are willing to accept the authority of their custodians, and reasons for them to resist staff in both overt and covert ways.

Less clearly developed in the literature, but present nevertheless, is the reverse of this argument: that there is a causal link between the nature and quality of prisoners' relationships with staff, and the kinds of social relations to form among prisoners. Staff 'police' the prison environment to different degrees, and in different ways, thereby allowing different types and depths of prisoner social life to emerge.⁶⁴ A significant contribution to this analysis was made in 1996 by Sparks and colleagues, who showed that the regimes in operation at Albany and Long Lartin, both dispersal prisons at the time of the research, gave rise to radically different rates and types of violence between prisoners (Sparks *et al* 1996). At the somewhat tightly controlled Albany, assaults were often explained by 'spontaneous frustration' between pairs of prisoners, whereas at Long Lartin acts of violence were often pre-planned and deeply embedded in extensive social and economic networks. Long Lartin was less closely policed, but was generally regarded as the more legitimate prison, except by the vulnerable few, who felt unsafe. There are trade-offs, then, between safety (as risk management, or activity), control and policing, on the one hand, and freedom, personal autonomy and choice on the other. Both contribute to perceptions of safety, fairness and legitimacy in prison (see Figure 5.1).

⁶⁴ The analysis in Chapter 6 to follow suggests that staff had retreated from the liberal negotiation model ('light, absent, polite'), but their approach to order was now 'heavy absent', rather than 'dynamic' and not particularly respectful; that is, characterised by a 'thin' style of task completion, without always including meaningful interaction. See Liebling and Crewe 2012b, forthcoming; Crewe *et al* 2011; and Liebling 2011 for elaboration on these terms.

Figure 5.1 Value balance and the search for safety, fairness and order in prison



Solidarity and resistance have been found (in some instances) to be inversely related to the perceived fairness of regime conditions in prison, but the concept of solidarity among prisoners may be too blunt, as well as eroded, as a depiction of relationships among prisoners, perhaps especially post IEP, the pursuit of individualised progression through complex sentences, and the appearance of new faith-related divisions among prisoners. Contemporary accounts of the prison describe prisoners as individualised (atomised), self-protecting and divided. There seemed to be more solidarity among BME and many Muslim prisoners than among white and non-Muslim prisoners, although ‘counter-campaigns’ (to increase attendance at Catholic Mass, for example) were described. Some of this collective behaviour served individual needs and purposes, and the appropriation of power was used by some prisoners against others as well as to push back staff.

Classic sociological studies also describe a power hierarchy among prisoners, and a tendency for prison staff to work co-operatively with those at the higher end of this hierarchy, trading freedoms and trust for co-operation and a certain amount of self-policing among the prisoner community. In British long-term prisons, White, professional, older prisoners sometimes held this role, acting informally as go-betweens, spokesmen, negotiators and mentors for younger, less articulate prisoners, whilst contributing to order on the wing (and ‘getting away with’ some concessions). Variations on these established hierarchies existed, but older white prisoners in this study described and expressed nostalgia for it.

5.2 The contemporary prison

Those prisoners who remembered or subscribed to the ‘old hierarchy’ agreed that in the contemporary prison, ‘it had broken down’. This was largely to do with population composition changes – prisoners were younger, more regularly from minority ethnic and mixed race backgrounds, and ‘street life’ (and language) was more prominent in shaping prisoner values, behaviour and attitudes. Sentences were longer, and the offences for which prisoners received them more often involved violence, guns and knives. Young prisoners were more oppositional.

Older professional white prisoners ‘feel like an endangered species’, and looked out at the ‘young gang BME’ prisoners, ‘young white drug users’, and assorted ‘Muslim prisoners’ with some disapproval. There were still ‘out groups’: the learning disabled and mentally ill (who were predominantly white, but who had been tolerated or accommodated in the old order), and sex offenders, who had been largely shunned, but these prisoners were now ‘targeted by’ or ‘useful to’ some of the new ‘players’. The ‘old lag’ group condemned the new world: — it had broken the traditional hierarchy — ‘if you were vulnerable mentally (or a sex offender) you would have been left alone’. Now the sex offenders were ‘useful’. They feared for their own safety, might be intellectually limited, or have mental health problems and so were ‘vulnerable’.

In the past at Whitemoor, power had lain with three identifiable groups of prisoners: the IRA, who exerted considerable influence over conditions and treatment in prison,⁶⁵ drug dealers, and older, organised, professional criminals: 'old lags': White, often London-based 'faces' (e.g. armed robbers) who were respected for the seriousness but also the non-violent and 'honourable' nature of their crimes.⁶⁶ There were fewer of this group now, and they no longer occupied a position of power in the prison. Their role was different — they were onlookers, still communicating well with (and working alongside the authority of) staff, but with fewer 'mentees' to reach out to. Younger prisoners were gravitating to different places: the older professional criminal was no longer 'setting the tone'. This group were 'cool and steady', and 'knew how to behave' in prison in a way that ensured the best possible conditions and 'working relationships' with staff. Their position — as behaviour negotiators — had once been more or less accepted by staff and other prisoners, but this hierarchy was eroding. The 'old school' alliances had been largely voluntary, prisoners 'knew their places', the culture required self-control, was accepting of staff authority on the whole, and the positioning 'made sense'. Status and power depended on offence type, age, access to money, physical size and strength, one's associates outside, and intelligence.

Staff still had an allegiance with those who remained of this group, and the group had an allegiance with each other — they were not fighting or competing in the prison. They were quieter on the wings than other prisoners. There was no 'barrier' to overcome with staff (who also encouraged the research team to begin their interviews with this group). They did not pose a physical threat to anyone's safety. They had status and reputation. They were 'left alone by the Muslims'. They remained powerful and influential in some ways (one joked about converting to Islam, 'as a wind up'). They knew a lot about everyone, and in that sense, they were still 'in the mix'. But they no longer set the tone among prisoners.

The new world was different. Muslim prisoners had accumulated the power in numbers, but the power some of the heavier 'players' wielded was hidden, and difficult to describe or evidence. Some of the prisoners in this group were powerful and 'untouchable'. The rules were different: their code was more 'us and them' — they wanted no relationship with authority: 'don't talk to staff', and 'belong to the brotherhood' — If you are in trouble 'we all have to help you out'. Not all prisoners who belonged to this 'group' agreed with its code. The new formation was less consensual and more enforced. Loyalties were linked by fear as well as by shared interests.

The new arrangements were difficult to disentangle from age. There were no 'young generation bank robbers' coming in to Whitemoor. If there had been, there might have been more competition for power. There was no-one of the traditional value set vying for power. There were 'no older Muslims' either. Crudely stated, the types of prisoner groups identifiable included the following: 1. TACT prisoners (barely visible, but acting as ideological leaders). 2. Anti-social criminal 'gangs' (primarily, but not exclusively, containing Muslim and BME prisoners, who had 'muscle' and some fear-respect among other prisoners). 3. Those who 'tagged along' with the above group, for

⁶⁵ For example, during an evaluation of the implementation of IEP at Full Sutton in 1995-6, the research team participated in the negotiations staff held with IRA prisoners about the timing and workability of the policy. An account of the history of types of order sought in dispersal prisons up to 2001, a description of the 'true dispersal' negotiation model on a long-termers wing at Full Sutton in 1995, and the ways in which this model has come under scrutiny in more recent years, can be found in Liebling 2002.

⁶⁶ In the sense that they had committed different crimes from the majority — e.g. bank robberies; their violence was not gratuitous, it was rational/professional.

acceptance, safety and status (mixed). 4. 'Old lag' prisoners (as described above). 5. White 'gang' leaders and members (a younger group). 6. 'Ordinary' (non-gang-affiliated) Muslims. 7. Non-Muslim, Christian, Buddhist and Jewish and other prisoners. 8. The individualised, mentally ill or learning disabled. It was difficult to do a sentence without affiliation to some group. The relationship between groups 1 and 2 were difficult to fathom but did not seem 'hierarchical'.

5.3 Relationships and alliances between prisoners

Relationships between prisoners were cautious and limited. On the one hand, they were tense, strained, and temperamental. On the other, they were 'convenient' and instrumental. Interactions between prisoners had little substance: they might 'look OK on the surface', but they were extremely guarded. Prisoners were reluctant to give them the label 'relationships'; there was too much fear involved. Several non-Muslim prisoners were determined to get a transfer to Frankland, where 'they had heard' that life was better.

Relationships outside prison mattered more than last time; prisoners knew each other's brothers and cousins, and their relationships. There were far-reaching networks, complex outside allegiances, conflicts and entanglements determining who prisoners could and could not associate with in prison and the terms on which relationships or interactions could take place. The prison was less 'sealed'. This made relationships inside harder and made incidents of violence harder to untangle (see below).

Alliances were cultivated for reasons of safety, and taking into account the 'risk to your progression' or the 'security consequences to you'. Certain relationships could hinder progression, and individual prisoners described their own conflicts about this. Mates were 'people who aren't going to get you in to trouble'. Self-protecting prisoners would not 'be friends with volatile prisoners'. The emphasis on individual progression and risk assessment was one reason why prisoners did not openly challenge other prisoners they disagreed with.

Some prisoners dealt with interpersonal conflict indirectly and at a distance (including over long periods of time) via 'the Muslim issue'. Imposing religious expectations – 'you're not praying ...' - became a way of addressing conflict, under an umbrella. An example of a prisoner who had his eyes slashed in an assault, allegedly 'because he was not conforming to the faith', illustrated this trend – the apparent enforcement of religious practices becoming the route via which 'come-uppance' occurred, sometimes months later. This was an effective shield for prisoners who wanted to exert power, and use violence in the prison, precisely because it was so difficult to police.

Disputes about 'the phone' which could not be tackled directly, became disputes over faith. Normal prison issues were becoming 'channelled into faith-related deviations'. There were powerful incentives to draw on faith as a resource for structuring violence. Such disputes held power, were safe, and did not 'hinder progression'. 'Telling my brother you are not praying' was a good mask for retaliation for 'the fight we had the other day'.

Lots of conflict arose, was expressed, or simply felt among Muslim prisoners, because faith following was becoming the organising principle around which violence was 'justified' within the prisoner community. It was impossible to trace the origins of acts of violence (the research team did not interview many perpetrators), but there was

some evidence that violence in the prison disproportionately involved Muslims against 'reluctant-' or non-Muslims.

Of 61 assaults the research team had information for, some were spontaneous, interpersonal 'thin' assaults. But others (including the most serious) were part of a developing situation, in which faith became a reason for action, somewhere into the narrative.⁶⁷ Retaliation did not take place 'there and then', but perpetrators waited for an opportunity to 'frame the conflict' in the new context of faith. These assaults seemed calculated and meditated ('guns at noon'). People 'know its coming'. It seemed to prisoners (as well as to the research team) that there was a framing of conflict between prisoners, 'using the new issues' of faith identity and practices. This framing reinforced the power of the perpetrators, providing protection. What made disentangling the situation at Whitemoor so difficult was that some conflicts may have been about 'faith' and ideology, others were framed in that way by the prisoners involved or witness to them, and still others were *attributed to* faith conflict by staff or those reporting on the incident. More is said about these assaults below.

It is interesting to recall that prisoners convicted of terrorist offences led the negotiations for increased power and autonomy in the dispersal prisons of the 1980s (and had led the escapes from high security prisons in the 1990s). They were joined in their negotiations by other articulate, rational, well organised and self-controlled prisoners, who saw their role as increasing the standard of living for all prisoners. The campaign was for autonomy or self-determination, activities to offset the risks of stagnation, and material goods (such as the right to cook, and generous access to the gym) that would offset the deprivations of imprisonment or 'make strategic inroads into the conditions of their confinement', Liebling 2002: 109). It can be seen below that there are some similarities, but also some important differences between this period of prison history and management, and the current era.

5.4 Violence and fear of violence

The research team were aware that the threat of violence seemed more 'present' in day to day life and conversation than it had been in 'Study 1'. There was a high level of fear at Whitemoor during the current research, which was linked to, and was in part an outcome of, the distant and complex relationships, current conditions, and the population changes described so far. Staff and prisoners were aware of the risk of serious violence and this made the environment feel unsafe. A number of serious assaults, which the research team were made aware of, had occurred either just prior to, or during, the fieldwork period; these are outlined below. The negative effects of a 'fear-distance-conflict-violence-fear' cycle were evident.

Violence is currency in prison (Prisoner).

Violence is not a good thing and I don't really condone it yeah? But I know if you're rattling the cage, with the door open yeah? Then it might bite, you know what I mean? (Prisoner).

⁶⁷ An attempt to analyse the 61 assaults for which data were available more systematically and with questions in mind about the trends, were hampered by lack of relevant information. No data were available on the ethnicity, faith or age of most of the perpetrators or victims, and this proved difficult to retrieve. Given the changing nature of relationships and conflict between prisoners in the High Security Estate, it would be valuable to record these details in the future, whilst remaining mindful of the risks of projection and over-simplification. Likewise, it would be valuable to routinely analyse changing population composition trends, within the high security estate in general, and in particular establishments.

I grew up around violence; I mean my life's really been around violence (Prisoner).

The salience of violence at Whitemoor, and the anxieties this caused for staff and prisoners, was a recurrent theme, and one of the first to emerge as the research team 're-entered' the prison. This theme is addressed here, because it seemed to be an outcome of all the other trends identified so far. The general perception that violent incidents in the prison had increased in frequency and severity over the past two years was a source of concern throughout the interviews and informal conversations with staff and prisoners.⁶⁸ There were four main narratives: i) frustration with long-term imprisonment, over-complex routes out, and poor relationships with staff (general frustration and grievance), ii) the new prisoner world (a remaking of the prisoner hierarchy and responses to this), iii) the presence of prisoners with serious mental illness in the prison, and iv) coercion relating to conversion to Islam. Levels of assaults decreased significantly towards the end of the fieldwork and subsequently thereafter.

Between 1 March 2009 (three months before the fieldwork began) and 7 October 2010 (two months after the fieldwork was completed) there were 66 assault-related incidents reported at the prison. Of these, 15 (23 per cent) were deemed serious, due to the nature of the injuries received. Data were obtained on 61 of these incidents: in 30 per cent of cases the police were informed; in 28 per cent of cases there was a police investigation; and in 41 per cent of cases major injury resulted. Forty-one (67 per cent) were assaults on prisoners and 20 (33 per cent) were assaults on staff. In terms of location, although this information was missing in several cases, the highest proportion of assaults (20 per cent) took place on D Wing (the DSPD); 13 per cent each took place on A Wing and C Wing, 12 per cent took place on B Wing, and ten per cent took place in the Gym. In 18 (30 per cent) of the incidents a weapon was used; most commonly a knife or sharp blade. Incidents not involving weapons were likely to involve a prisoner being punched or hit (35 per cent); 26 per cent were fights between prisoners.

5.5 Prisoner assaults on staff

There were four particularly notable assaults by prisoners on staff that were the subject of much conversation. In one incident a prisoner assaulted six members of staff; in two other incidents a male officer was assaulted by one prisoner, and in a fourth incident (just before the research began) two officers were assaulted by a prisoner with a recognised mental illness. Whilst staff talked about these assaults in terms of the risks of their job and as illustrations of the unpredictable danger they faced from a volatile prisoner population, most of these events were interpreted by prisoners as the result of poor staff-prisoner relationships. Most of the assaults on staff were considered avoidable, and to have arisen as a result of poor staff attitudes and interactions and/or the ever increasing restrictions on prison life.⁶⁹

Prisoner aggression was an 'understandable reaction' to the pressures and constraints of the high security environment and violent outbursts were expressions of deep

⁶⁸ At the same time, several prisoners expressed surprise that there was not more violence in the prison given the number of prisoners convicted of violent offences, the potential for disagreements and arguments amongst prisoners living in close proximity for long periods of time, and the stresses of prison life. Some referred to their IPP status, being beyond tariff, and the lack of 'movement' as the main cause of their frustration.

⁶⁹ Some prisoner on staff assaults were accounted for in terms of a history of not getting on with each other or an ongoing dislike for an officer based on an incident in the past. However, the assault on staff that was attributed to mental illness was regarded as 'inexplicable'.

frustrations that were likely to have built up over time. With reference to the assault on six officers, one prisoner said:

I wish it had never really happened still. But at the same time ... they violate people so many times, mess with people's life, mess with people's emotions, mess with people's heads, yeah? And all the way they talk to people, yeah? And little tiny, little niggly things they just, they're big things in prison. What that does to a prisoner is, every time these little things happen it's like they're building blocks, it's just more fuel to the fire and for some of the prisoners, not all, it just takes one incident for the ignition, for it to go. Well you reap what you sow, yeah? And that's what it comes back to, them being fake and not working with their emotions and their logical commonsense... and I believe that's where it all exploded like there and then (Prisoner).

Another prisoner described the tension and associated levels of aggression on a wing in terms of peaks and troughs:

I think they've [staff-prisoner relationships] become a lot more tense, and I've noticed since I've been on [this] wing there's been like ... even from when I first came on here, there is like an underlying tension, but a few times now it's bubbled over ... like an officer was assaulted on Red Spur the other month, and then obviously that thing happened the other week where quite a few officers were assaulted, so it's like I think there's like an underlying tension that's always kind of been there, but now and again it tends to like bubble up, yeah, and then something will happen ... it's kind of like waves, it kind of like goes up and down, I think (Prisoner).

Prisoners provided other explanations of violence: for some it was used as a mode of communication in response to experiencing fear and distress:

I think you find in these places that the people who are the most violent are the ones that are usually the most scared aren't they? Because they can't communicate through ordinary, what society would call normal methods of communication, they use violence and intimidation on people to communicate. They're actually under distress, they're running fearful themselves (Prisoner).

The 'decision' to commit a violent act was connected with a sense of having nothing to lose as a result of serving a very long sentence:

Because of their sentences, the prison system and judges are giving out these like 40 years, 35 years and all that, they're not caring, they're in their 30's, they know they've got to do 35 years, they're in their 30's already, like me I'm 34 now, if I was to do 35 years I'm going to be 70 or 80 by the time I get out, I'm not going to care, so they're not caring, they've got nothing to lose so they're going to go around and ... if they've got an argument with an officer, they're gonna go and cut an officer, or they throw boiling hot fat over them (Prisoner).

Totally honest, I do not feel under threat. But, I get out, I look back at it, I will say it's probably a violent place. I would say that. If I was telling somebody I probably would say it is violent but at this moment in time I don't feel under threat or anything, but I can see yeah, there's definitely violence. Like I say, people's in a long time. People aren't coming out. They've got nothing to lose. (Prisoner)

There were conflicting views as to whether violent incidents were predictable or spontaneous. Some prisoners felt that those with serious mental health issues (as well as others) were capable of random and impulsive acts of aggression and violence ('you've got prisoners that would snap out of the blue'; 'you can never allow for that sudden outburst that just blows up in your face'), which warranted daily caution as prisoners went about their business, whilst others were adamant that acts of violence were always 'reasonably caused' and foreseeable:

There's not, like, really mad people running around that's attacking people ... It's always for a reason. There's no one just running around just doing stuff. If something's happened, it's happened because there's something going on. If something happened to me, yeah, I'm 99 per cent sure I would have known at least a ten, fifteen minutes before. That's the least, maybe it would be much longer than that, but, you would know that there's a situation, something's gone wrong somewhere ... Even if it's something that's happened a month ago and maybe someone's done something to someone, and then they've left it for a month and then they've attacked them when they're walking but still that was because of something that's happened. It's not there's going to be nothing's happened and someone just gets attacked for no reason. That's not going to happen. Even when the officers are getting attacked, they're getting attacked because they've done something to somebody (Prisoner).

Regardless of predictability, prisoners were exposed to violence or the risk of violence on a regular basis to the extent that it was described as 'pretty normal'; prisoners became accustomed to the type of assaults that took place. Whilst few prisoners openly admitted to feeling unsafe or fearful of threats to their physical well-being at Whitemoor, some comments were suggestive of an underlying wariness, a sense of being on edge, and an acknowledgement of the place of violence as inevitable within prison, and something that could not be prevented entirely:

I don't feel I have to look over my shoulder. I'm not completely relaxed, and it would be wrong to say that, anybody that says they're completely relaxed in this environment, that can never be true, because you're always aware of what we're in here for and that things happen (Prisoner).

I feel safe on my spur, more or less. But I also know that if things kick off, the compunction to not do violence is not there. The compunction which holds most people back in normal society doesn't exist in this prison (Prisoner).

Within three month of me being here I knew we was on a three-day lock down because someone got stabbed over on the landing just round the corner from mine, on C Wing, and I was like 'phew!' you know what I mean?

'Jesus Christ' ... and they took everyone's clothes off the landing, and I was like phew! Jeez... but after a while you get used to when kind of things are happening (Prisoner).

When violence occurred, it tended to be very serious (in comparison with the past). Planned assaults were more common now than spontaneous 'fights':

If two guys had a problem, they'd go in the gym, they'd have a little fight, shake hands after they were finished, which is called 'a straightener', do you know what I mean? That was the olden days, but that's disappeared now (Prisoner).

One explanation for 'higher than necessary' levels of violence was the lack of places or opportunities to release frustration:

You can see how much violent incidents have happened. People have got burnt up with ghee and things have happened to people in the gym. The violence is going up. Me personally, recently I started to feel ... not safe, unsafe, not unsafe, I mean, like, more aware, more aware of my surroundings. This is prison, Miss, yeah, things are going to happen in prison. You can't stop all forms of violence. There's violent people. Prison is for violent people, isn't it? So when a prisoner gets angry, who's he going to take that out on? On a fellow prisoner. That's what people tend to do. They're just waiting for some... if someone pisses me off right now, if I've got a family problem and these lot are getting on my nerves, yeah, I just wait for a prisoner to just get out of line ... It's like, you know, you're not angry with him, you just want somebody to direct the anger against (Prisoner).

In describing violent incidents they had witnessed, prisoners told of how they adapted and responded:

There was an attempted murder on Red Spur when I was on it. I didn't see it, but I saw the aftermath, I heard the screams when they were attacking him, and I saw him coming out of his cell. The way it challenged me was I wasn't happy with the way I reacted ... Because I think this environment makes you numb, because you do see a lot of violence in here, so I've become numb to violence in a lot of respects, and I can honestly say when I first saw him I thought right, coming out of his cell, and there was blood spurting out, my first thought was there's going to be a lock down, I'll have to go and get the papers so I've got something to read, and I've gone over that reaction a lot of times, and I've thought on the outside I would be somebody who would have been straight down there helping him and trying to resolve the situation. In here I'm a participating observer, I can't get involved, and life almost unravels as if you're not there, as if it's part of somebody else's life, but I think that's another coping strategy (Prisoner).

I seen a lot of violence in this prison. I seen, like, someone get burnt. Like, ghee thrown over them. I saw two of them on Blue Spur, yeah, three, four years ago. I seen that happen. That's a bad thing. I was a bit shocked 'cause I was new to this, I was younger, I was, kind of, new to the system. I haven't seen violence like that outside, like, I haven't seen a person scream

like that before. From the sound like a proper scream, like, a man, grown man ... that kind of scared me ... disfigured the geezer's face ... that was shocking, shocking ... (Prisoner).

5.6 Perceptions of safety

The prisoner survey results for the questionnaire items relating to feelings of safety show that just over a quarter of prisoners (28 per cent) feared for their physical safety and 31 per cent did not feel safe from being injured, bullied or threatened by other prisoners. Sixty-six per cent of prisoners either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement, 'Staff respond promptly to incidents and alarms in this prison'. Fifty-five per cent 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the item, 'In this prison I have to be wary of everyone around me' (see Appendix 3; Tables 3.14 – 3.15).

When prisoners' survey responses were analysed according to religion there were some interesting differences. Muslim prisoners were significantly more likely to 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with the statement, 'There is a lot of trouble between different groups of prisoners in here' (Table 3.2). They were not as confident that staff would respond promptly to incidents and alarms as Christian prisoners were. They were more likely to report that they could 'relax and be themselves' around other prisoners. Muslim prisoners also reported feeling slightly more physically safe than Christian prisoners, although this difference was not statistically significant. Results from the safety dimension analysed by faith group are included at Appendix 3 (Table 3.2), and other significant differences between prisoners identifying as 'Christian' and 'Muslim' prisoners are included in Table 3.28.

The atmosphere could feel tense when tempers flared. Prisoners were sensitive to both the potential for violence and of the complexity of decisions to get involved: loyalty versus risk to themselves:

I: When do you feel less safe, are there certain occasions or certain places?

R: When you can feel that there's ... I'm trying to think of a word ... that there is ... aggression say, on the wing, when you can feel that someone's got a problem with someone else and it might go off at any time. I: Yeah, a bit bubbly. R: Yeah, I feel unsafe then because ... have I got to get involved in it? You know what I mean. Is it one of my mates? Have I got to be involved? Like the officers are going to come and jump on him and bend him up, that means then I've got to definitely get involved because that's the way life is in prison. If one of your friends is done you've got to help them (Prisoner).

Prisoners also worried about their own capacity to control themselves and the environment:

My worst fear is I'll never get out of prison because I could end up hurting someone in the prison. Because you've always got to watch your back because an officer can't always be with you. They've got their own, other things to do, so you've always got to watch your own back. Or you've got someone to watch your back for you and you watch their back (Prisoner).

There was some scepticism amongst several prisoners, shared with the research team in informal conversations as well as in interviews, as to how seriously staff took

prisoners' admissions of threat from other prisoners whom they knew were located on the same wing and had 'enemies' whom they had reason to believe had a vendetta against them:

They was trying it with me ... and I said no, I've had enough of this, I went and told an officer, yeah, I said these are putting pressure on me ... the SO, yeah, went and got the two people and told them what I'd said. How about that? I had like eight of them come in my cell which was a bit intimidating ... yeah, and said, oh what you been telling the SO ... and the only thing I could think of off my head was ... oh, well you believe a screw do you? ... When I told the SO what was happening, he tried to make it something ... like what I was saying, he was trying to make it something different, like it was a delicate issue within this establishment, he was saying to me, are you in debt? Do you take drugs? I'm like no, I don't do any of them things, I'm on VDT, I'm being drug tested every week, I don't do nothing like that, and he was trying to twist it round like to make that problem not an issue, to make it into something else, because I think that is a bit of a delicate issue within here, and it is a big problem, but they don't know how to deal with it, I think (Prisoner).

At the beginning of the fieldwork a prisoner was seriously assaulted in the gym with a dumbbell. The victim of the attack was a white Muslim prisoner who had converted whilst in prison; he was suspected by some prisoners of supplying information to staff. He was vulnerable in many respects, including having some mental health problems. Whilst the gym was highly valued by prisoners, it was noted that the potential for violence there was higher than in other locations since there were no security cameras installed (they were fitted towards the end of the fieldwork). Similar observations were made when prisoners talked about the spur kitchens, the tensions around cooking, and the availability of weapons:

If ever anything's going to happen in this prison on the violent side, nine times out of ten it'll happen in the gym ... It's because there's no bloody cameras down there, that's why. And you've got heavy weights, dumbbells and all that, you could do some serious damage in an environment where you're not going to be seen (Prisoner).

The last couple of fights that were down the gymnasium, because there's no cameras down there, so if anybody's got a problem they just say "I'll see you down the gym" ... and it is a bit like 'OK Corral', so they go down there (Prisoner).

Violence had played a large part in the lives of many of the prisoners at Whitemoor. They explained that the nature of violence outside prison (and the offences for which prisoners had been convicted) had changed:

You've got people in here doing a long, long, long time. You've got people in here who've done a long time, you've got people in here who aren't getting out so when it comes to assaults, in other prisons, some people have an argument over the showers and they have a fight. They have a fisticuffs, whatever, but in here, 'cause of the serious nature of the crimes what people are in for and, you know, any incident's going to be much, much worse in

here than it is going to be in a normal prison and I don't think it's just here. I think that's all dispersals (Prisoner).

5.7 Violence in relation to Muslim prisoners: perceptions and reality

A significant number of prisoners talked about violence in relation to Muslim prisoners in interviews; several believed that 'the Muslim influence' was responsible for much of the violence in Whitemoor; others felt that it was simply a part of prison life that had to be accepted and that it was unrelated to faith issues:

When you start talking about gangs and this and that you start to relate it to violence, you start to relate it to solidarity of a gang, to retribution, to all those kind of things, and maybe in some respects, like I've said, prisoner on prisoner sort of retribution ... it might be there, I wouldn't say it's anything to do with a Muslim gang or anything to do with religion, it's more to do with just prison life and that's how prison life is, it just so happens that because there's a large population of Muslim prisoners, then they say 'oh, there's going to be conflicts between Muslims and non Muslims'. Not because the Muslims target non-Muslims, because that's not the case, but more because that's prison life and it's inevitably going to happen (Prisoner).

The alliances and allegiances amongst prisoners were complex: loyalties were equivocal, and the traditional sub-culture expectation that other prisoners would 'back you up' was fragile. The risk of being involved in the sub-culture or in violence was too great a threat to progression for some prisoners, whilst others maintained that they would step in to protect their friends in prison, even if reluctantly:

Well one of my friends, if someone was threatening them, or going to attack them, I'd be there for them, I wouldn't want to be taking part in the fight but if it came to it I'd be prepared to help them (Prisoner).

There was a sense of insecurity amongst prisoners: to identify a friend or foe was not straightforward. White, non-Muslim prisoners feared Muslim attacks and were aware of the possible consequences of an altercation with a Muslim prisoner:

You can't have a fight with one Muslim without all of them getting involved (Prisoner).

If I had an issue now with a fellow that was Muslim and I hit him or he hit me and I defended myself or something, then nine times out of ten you're watching your back now 'cause you're getting it with a weight down the gym or something because they say, like, if you hit a brother, we'll defend our brother and that's how it's escalated, like a vendetta, do you know what I mean? (Prisoner).

One thing it says in the Qur'an is basically if you see another brother getting attacked you should always intervene and try to stop the fight and that's what it is, so I think that's why a lot of people is converting into Muslims because if they become a Muslim now ... that person over there can't attack me because ... the brothers will stop it from happening. (Prisoner)

It's really gang orientated like, from the outside which has really opened my eyes. You know, the amount of assaults that go on in prison and you're, like, what happened there? And they're oh, it's to do with his co-defendant has shot his mate ten years ago in a gang. There's a lad I know ... he assaulted someone horrendously in his last prison because he got told to do it after three years of being looked after [by Muslim prisoners]. But it happens every day, every day. You can visibly see it, you know? (Prisoner)

In general, Muslim prisoners did not 'let each other fight' (although when incidents did occur, they were serious – see the attack on a prisoner in Friday prayer service, below).

The prominent incidents that took place during and shortly before the fieldwork (and which therefore structured staff and prisoners' experience at the time) were as follows:

5.8 Assaults on staff

One of the most serious assaults on staff occurred on B Wing in March 2009 when a prisoner attacked two officers; he punched one male officer, and assaulted him with a kitchen knife attempting to stab him in the face and head butted a female officer before repeatedly kicking her whilst she was on the floor, rendering her unconscious. Both officers were taken to hospital with serious injuries and the prisoner was removed in handcuff restraints to the Segregation Unit. A police investigation was carried out. The general belief was that the prisoner suffered from a mental illness. One prisoner's comment about this incident implied that an officer's lack of 'interaction skills' may result in them being the target of an assault:

You've got prisoners that would snap like that out of the blue. Not too long ago there was a stabbing incident; an officer got stabbed on Red Spur. The officer that got stabbed, he didn't have no interaction skills, always moody... and everyone knew where they stood with him but...another innocent officer [was] involved, because she was doing her job, she's had to come, but this was a mentally unstable prisoner, he's not distinguishing the difference, he's just ended up attacking, but that officer, he used to be quite bullish, you ask him a question: 'Guv?' 'No'. And he didn't give you a reason: 'No'. And just carry on walking (Prisoner).

At the beginning of December 2009 an officer on A Wing was assaulted by a prisoner; he sustained bite injuries behind his ear and to his finger as well as bruising to his face from a punch and was taken to hospital by ambulance. This incident was also investigated by the police. In January 2010 there was a further serious incident whereby a prisoner assaulted six officers on A Wing; although no weapon was used, staff suffered punches to their heads and faces and were knocked to the ground, sometimes twice. Five of the staff received cuts and bruising and one female officer was seriously injured with a broken jaw. The police were informed and an investigation carried out. The incident was raised by a number of prisoner interviewees who felt that the assault occurred because the prisoner was provoked by staff and stated that he had had a prior issue with the member of staff who was assaulted first:

The other day, an incident happened over there, the big geezer ... about four, five of them ... Danger, they call him Danger. But they was pressing his buttons, they was, like, winding him up. You understand, being petty ...

you see the geezer, yeah, he's big, yeah? I've never known him to attack no one: never. I've known him for years, and if he really wanted to he could be a horrible guy 'cause of his size, but he's not, he's a friendly guy. They really pissed him off for him to be like that. You understand? There's only so much you can do to someone (Prisoner).

I stand in the office sometimes chatting to them and they're looking out the window going, "look at the size of that. Can you imagine wrestling that to the ground?" And it happened not so long ago, I remember they all said that ... and [he] ended up, you know, fighting with seven of them, but he had history with that SO from two years ago when he was last here, I was on the Spur (Prisoner).

In March 2010 an officer was assaulted on C Wing; he was repeatedly punched and pushed. Whilst staff responded to the incident, various other prisoners arrived on the scene and challenged the staff whilst they applied C&R techniques. This resulted in another officer being assaulted by a prisoner and the first officer being hit by a saucepan. Both officers were taken to hospital for treatment and the incident was the subject of a police investigation. Again prisoner comments suggest that an officer's attitude and language towards prisoners may increase their risk of assault, or lead to its justification after the event:

Not so long ago an officer got completely battered on C Wing ... with the frying pan and before the frying pan he got punched up, and then the frying pan came afterwards and the officer is the most cheekiest officer in the prison system, he always swears, he swears a lot, and I think there's prisoners here that can't even, don't even watch TV because of their religious beliefs, don't swear, don't use foul language, so if you're talking to him saying "effing clean it up" you say "mate who are you telling to effing clean it up?", "if you're a man, shut up and just close the door and let's have it out", "yeah, no mate I'll fix that, effing shut up", boom he got punched. He got a complete punch (Prisoner).

5.9 Prisoner-on-prisoner assaults

There was a serious assault on a prisoner in the gym in July 2009; the PE staff were alerted by another prisoner and subsequently discovered a prisoner in the weights room bleeding badly from an injury to his head believed to have been caused by an assault with a dumbbell. The prisoner was taken to hospital in an ambulance and the gym was closed for police investigation. The victim had apparently converted to Islam in prison and was suspected (by some prisoners) of giving information to staff.

In October 2009 a prisoner was attacked by two prisoners in his cell on B Wing with a knife drawn by one of the assailants from the spur office. There was an internal investigation and a police investigation. A few days after this a prisoner was assaulted in the gym, receiving serious facial injuries that resulted in an overnight stay in hospital and an operation. This incident was also referred to the police. There was an incident at the end of January 2010 whereby a prisoner on C Wing was assaulted by three other prisoners with hot oil (termed 'ghee'). The prisoner required specialist burns treatment and this was again referred to the police for investigation.

On Wednesday 10th March 2010 there were two General Alarms within 15 minutes of each other; one on B Wing followed by one on A Wing. Both involved prisoners fighting. During the serving of lunch on B Wing two prisoners were involved in a fight (three other prisoners subsequently actively stepped in). The incident resulted in a lock-down of the wing for over three hours and the planned removal of two prisoners to the Segregation Unit. Whilst conflict amongst prisoners was to be expected, what was considered unusual and, to some Muslim prisoners, disappointing about this incident was that the original fight involved two Muslims (one of these prisoners was a TACT prisoner and it was the research team's interpretation that the clash was to do with issues of power, honour, and pride):

Even the screws must have been surprised when that happened, because they don't normally see that. Where they normally see either see a Muslim guy's fighting with a non-Muslim and then all of the Muslims will jump in, so when they seen two Muslims fighting like they're saying 'oh, what's going on there?' but at the same time everyone has disputes, you understand, everyone has disputes (Prisoner).

It was crazy, I don't know, a misunderstanding between the two lads, tensions build up from before... and they ended up fighting. People got involved, people want to protect their friends, people are caught up within that environment, and as friends, as someone that knows all of them, I was disappointed that some lad would try to attack another lad, but these things are to be expected, a lot of prisoners are getting heated (Prisoner).

One of the prisoners present at the incident gave his perspective:

I: Have you ever had to jump in and help one of your friends? R: Nearly. I was very close to jumping in, but I got dragged away from it; couple of weeks ago. I: Was it the one when two prisoners were fighting? What was that all about? R: Well actually the officers were wrong with my mate, yeah, he's my pal, so I didn't agree with what the officers did and I was going to sort of jump in, but then [name] said just leave it now ... He's back on the wing, yeah. I: But the other one is still in the Seg? R: The other three, there was three involved, four altogether. I: Would you say that they represent different groups on this spur? R: No, I don't think anyone represents anything on here only your own person at the end of the day. What I think it was just ... an argument got out of hand, one person was saying something about another person, as they call it 'Chinese Whispers', and he put it on that person and that person then got a bit aggro about it; it was handbags at 50 paces. I: Yeah, it was a bit like the Wild West, let's meet at noon! It happened at noon, I just happened to look at the clock. R: Yeah, it weren't a real fight, it was the wussiest thing I've ever seen. But I don't like to see violence anyway, I come in like a violent person, I mean all my life was surrounded around violence, I've got two uncles just finished life sentences for murder, I mean all my life I've been around violence or drugs and drink. I've come away in prison and I've tried to change that and get away from drugs, get away from violence. If I have an argument with someone I'd rather just say "look mate, all right, forget it", you know what I mean? "Drop me out ... just don't talk to me" (Prisoner).

Another prisoner provided an explanation for what happened, illustrating the expectation that Muslim prisoners did not fight amongst themselves:

What it is, you see what it is with this guy yeah? For me personally I don't really like the guy [prisoner X] because of his attitude towards life, and his attitude towards, you know, what he's in for and stuff like that. But the other guy [prisoner Y] he's actually one of my best friends in this prison, yeah because we've been on the wing round about the same amount of time, he couldn't really speak English so, you know, I taught him how to speak English and whatever. And he is one of the most gentlest guys I've ever met, you know, and what's happened is basically [prisoner X] has been saying things about [prisoner Y] ... He's actually come to me and he said "look what shall I do about this situation? Because I'm getting a bit wound up about it" and I said "look don't go and speak to him whilst you're in this mood now because, you know, something might jump off, just wait till later on until you've calmed down and then, you know, if you want I'll come with you, we'll sit down and we'll talk about it", he said "okay, okay". So then he's gone for his food and as he's come back he's actually seen him, so he's thinking 'right I'm going to speak to him now' so he's spoken to him, but because [prisoner X] is the sort of person that, his character's very negative, he's a very negative guy, and he's really deep into Islam but a different type of deepness, and he just jumped off basically, he just jumped off ... there's a lot of politics that goes on around in prison and what should have happened that day, this is what should have happened, if those two people are fighting, according to Islam what's supposed to happen is, you're supposed to stop them, you know, we're not supposed to allow them to fight. But what happened that day was you had some people that were trying to stop it and you had some people that was joining in, and that caused problems with the rest of the place because we're thinking "hold on, you're jumping in? You're not supposed to choose sides, you're supposed to just stop it", you know, and just pull them apart sort of thing, and that caused then like little waves around the place (Prisoner).

In a follow-up incident to this fight on the wing, just over five weeks later, prisoner Y was seriously assaulted by several prisoners whilst attending the Muslim Friday prayer service in one of the workshops; he had had his face and throat slashed. The injuries he sustained led to severe bleeding and he was taken to hospital for surgery requiring fifty stitches. The incident was referred to the police for investigation and was, apparently, considered to be a case of attempted murder, possibly to avenge the previous attack on prisoner X. Prisoners talked about the divisive impact the location of this incident had within the Muslim community; that it was instigated in a place of worship was considered disrespectful:⁷⁰

This assault happened two Fridays ago. That's created a huge divide in the Muslims, that has. I knew who it was but he's such a nice fella but wolf in sheep's clothing, isn't it? That's shook everyone up, that has 'cause of where it happened; in the prayer service. I mean, churches don't even get done because you don't do things in sacred places so, you know, a lot of the Muslims now are, sort of, saying it shouldn't have happened and they're

⁷⁰ Two months later there was another incident during Muslim prayers whereby several prisoners were fighting.

bang out of order. Whereas the other Muslims were saying well no, he was right to do it 'cause the fella was a wrong 'un. They were all of them Muslims, yeah, at Muslim service (Prisoner).

Another prisoner told how staff intervened to deal with the incident:

No, I didn't really see it happen, but I seen the commotion after. There was a lot of blood, but there wasn't a lot of chaos, the officers kind of got involved and stopped it. So it wasn't really going on for that long. There was a lot of people that obviously weren't involved what just got sprayed with blood (Prisoner).

In July 2010 there was another incident where a prisoner's throat was slashed; this time on A Wing. Due to the severity of the injuries (which required forty stitches) a decision was made to call an Air Ambulance: police were called to investigate.

These incidents shaped staff and prisoner perceptions and behaviour, showing that in some ways, the risk of serious violence was a more pressing problem at Whitemoor than the risk of radicalisation.

Beneath the violence, there were complex pressures exerted. Prisoners and staff talked about other forms of coercion, in particular, in relation to forced conversions to Islam. A constant feature of prison life, this was one of its contemporary manifestations.

5.10 Coercion, intimidation, and power

I've worked on the landings for God knows how many years, I know what threat these people are under, what life is like, it's an animal world in here ... they have no choice, it's either they do that or they die, or they end up in hospital with severe injuries (Officer).

Prisoners compared living at Whitemoor to 'swimming in a shark tank.' A high-security prison environment held multiple potential threats to one's life and safety, and required people to adapt rapidly. 'Survival' meant, amongst other things, finding out about and complying with codes of conduct imposed by powerful groups. Some prisoners exerted influence, and prisoners and staff were aware of the universality of these social and group mechanisms but felt the power being wielded had become confounded by faith disputes, identities and presentations:

You get ... that social structure just because there's going to be someone who's the boss and if you can get in with them then you've got a form of protection and that also leads to bullying and some people just see it [conversion to Islam] as an easy way to do their time. Whereas, they'll leave and they probably won't have anything to do with it ever again (Officer).

It doesn't matter where you go, prisoners will be under pressure at some stage by someone to either contribute to something or to hand something over, and I think that those people that are vulnerable are those people which are not affiliated or attached to a particular gang who will come under ... that kind of pressure, so if this Muslim thing never existed we'd have

something else in place, it would be a different type of gang. But that's the world over isn't it ... it's the same principle, that three blokes, four blokes together are going to impose their will on one man, so it works in that kind of way. I don't think the Muslim thing is anything different, I think that most people that attach themselves ... try and protect themselves (Officer).

Staff described the pressure that prisoners were under to choose sides, or strategically join the most dominant group and thus be protected, or to fight alone. Prisoners' struggle for physical and psychological survival during a very long sentence made them vulnerable. Any weakness constituted the point of attack for leaders and other influential prisoners wanting to gain followers to build up or strengthen their own powerbase:

I think it's just about ... getting more people on side, kind of thing, it's kind of like the football mentality, you know you get football hooliganism when people go just to cause trouble and you get big groups? I think it's kind of like that mentality, sort of the more we have the more powerful we are, and then the fear comes from what that big group could do, the potential of that group, you know? (Officer)

Once a group were high in numbers, they held more power to exert serious pressure on everyone. The group were able to capitalise on feelings like fear, hopelessness or loneliness to make people join in. The most effective means to gain (immediate) power over individuals were threats to life, or the promise of violence.

The current powerful group were represented by Muslim prisoners at Whitemoor at the time of the research. Prisoners and staff described some acts of intimidation and coercion as follows:

I had to take the poppy off and then they found out me brother was in the army so I went through a lot of shit. Out the windows, people shouting out the windows. Yeah, when the squaddies were getting killed out the windows, hope it's your brother ... You're wife's burning in hell 'cause she's not a Muslim and, like, ridiculous shit, like, but it gets you down. It does get you down. It is hard (Prisoner).

We had a fellow come into the Seg, he was in Healthcare, I took him to hospital, big black fellow, and he had been scalded with whatever they had used ... and it had gone over his head, his shoulders, chest and arm I think, and he was in [a] Serious Burns Unit. I took the same, the very same fellow to the hospital in Peterborough two weeks before that ... [he] said "they won't touch me because I've told them I'm not going to be a Muslim, I'm not this and that" he's a big gym goer so he's a big old boy, two weeks later I was on a bed watch ... because he had refused to go over ... So that's what they do ... it's not a faith, it's a gang and if you're not going to be in our gang you're not going to be in any gang ... I mean there's threats to their families ... threats to them, there's pressure too, the normal bullying thing is like taking money off them ... all sorts of things (Officer).

I think it is an issue that has been hyped up, I think prisoners will always get away with bullying each other if they can, it does seem to be the latest

theme which I think is just reflected [in outside] society, certainly in my last jail ... a lot of the boys would report that it was a problem that they were experiencing ... they were getting kind of forced to convert to some gang or the other (Officer).

R: The cynic in me says 'how many of these lads will be going to a mosque when they get out?' I: So it's a prison thing? R: Yeah, I think it's a protection thing, for some people ... there's certainly that element to it, it's like if you become a Muslim then no one will bother you, you know, it's like you're looked after and you'll look after us kind of thing ... When they started this they was very clever because they were going to have to tap into a resource there and pull a lot of people together (Officer).

According to staff and prisoners 'the Muslim issue' represented one version of a typical prison and social phenomenon:

I think there's fears because there's always been prisoners who will bully, as the percentage of Muslims rises the chances that one of those bullies is a Muslim is always there. I mean I think we've got a prisoner on the anti-bullying scheme at the moment who is a Muslim but is also a prisoner who's always been a bully, he's very unpredictable, he's assaulted lots of members of staff at this establishment and other establishments, but I don't for one minute think that if he became a Christian tomorrow that would stop, he's always going to be a bully, I've seen his sentence, his report, his pre-convictions, what his offence was, what his upbringing was, how he grew up, and that's what he's like, that's his circumstance, that's not to do with him being a Muslim (Officer).

Actions and loyalties were strategic: everyone 'used' others within the prisoner population to follow their own agenda. Individual reasons for action were diverse and well hidden, but they revolved around self-protection and integration. Any kind of outsider status, like having no income, no family-ties or friendships on the outside, or no associates on the inside, constituted an Achilles' Heel:

And also there is financial ... like, the money we provide for the new guy coming in to become a Muslim ... you know that if I look after you in prison ... for example, buy you clothes, buy you shoes, buy you canteen, outside money, then I can use you ... like you are slave [sic], you understand? (Prisoner).

All those people are now Muslims ... and there's a lot of fear and anxiety amongst the people who are joining the Muslims. If you don't join the Muslim population some people say, if you don't join it then you get taxed ... you have to pay a price for not joining the Muslims yeah, so you get looked after ... It could be a chicken or it could be tobacco, it could be anything, so that you get protected, or you join the Muslim (Officer).

This 'entrepreneurial' crime concept or racketeering made vulnerable prisoners enter into dependency relationships that could be abused by dominant groups:

It's some madness. Inside prison it's everybody making money at the end of the day. (Prisoner)

It was important to be a member of the most powerful group, to attain other advantages, like preferred access to hard-fought territories. One particular sphere of space control was the spur's kitchen where prisoners could cook their own food. It was one of the most coveted facilities by long-term prisoners. Because its space and opening hours were limited, it was a scarce good:

***R:** We have kitchens here and we can go and cook meals, we've had incidences on this spur even, going in there, try and do yourself a bacon sandwich, or cooking a bit of pork in the oven. **I:** So it restricts or makes you feel like you can't do what you would normally do? **R:** No, they tell you straight! "Take that off the oven I want to cook", whatever they're bloody cooking. You point out "I was here first" and you've got every other bloody Muslim on your back then as well. **I:** Right, so is there an element of fear amongst other prisoners that aren't Muslim prisoners to not do that then? **R:** [Affirmative noise] most of them won't own up to fear but there is that fear there, you have a problem with a Muslim you've got a problem with however many hundred there is here (Prisoner).*

***I:** Why can't you use the kitchen? **R:** We've got the Muslim problem then. **I:** So do they really dominate that? **R:** It's gone quiet in there a little bit at the moment, but there is still ... me and me mate used to cook every week, but we've stopped that because it was just not worth the aggravation. Someone obviously hasn't put thought into it. If you want that many Muslims in here you need to set up kitchens for them as well. **I:** It's only a small kitchen anyway. **R:** Yeah it's poxy for forty-odd blokes, one bloody cooker and that's it. **I:** So it's quite easy to kind of get control of that area in a way? **R:** Yeah they just dominate it, they do (Prisoner).*

Membership of the Muslim community and certain tenets of the faith could be abused by subgroups or individuals to "legitimately" perpetuate outside criminal and gang behaviour:

Obviously, you have got the knobheads that are using it for power. It's mostly the black geezers who got this, kind of, gang type of mentality, who are using it because they're supposed to look after each other and no one else should be able to harm a Muslim and all this kind of stuff. So that is, like, breeding gang rules. It's kind of an underlying thing, like, in the street, that's the same type of thing you'd apply in a gang, where you'd say "You can't touch him 'cause he's with me." Sets them kind of things up easily you can, sort of, twist it in a way ... And you can manipulate certain things, so then you've got certain guys around who are in groups, manipulating it like that (Prisoner).

***I:** There have been some nasty incidents that we're told are due to people either wanting to leave the Muslim faith or not be converted, or they've done things like listen to music at night when they shouldn't, and that sounds really serious. **R:** It's not as simple as that, though. That's more like a myth. What it is, is people get into arguments with people over things and then*

these guys, what are using it as this gang, type of thing, they then find something that is agreeable to the real staunch Muslims. So for instance, me and you are alright, you're not a Muslim, we have a little argument. I want to do something to you but I don't really want to do it myself or I don't really want to be seen to just be doing something to you because ... alright, let's for instance say me and you are selling drugs, yeah? Something goes wrong and I'm angry with you over these drugs. I'm a Muslim. I'm not supposed to be selling drugs, so I can't go to my Muslim brothers and say I was selling drugs and my man ran through the drugs, or anything like that, 'cause they're going to say what you doing selling drugs? But if I wait a couple of weeks and I can say he keeps playing music loud when I'm trying to pray, someone speaks to him, couple of weeks later you say it again. He keeps doing it. He keeps playing his music. Next thing you know, now someone wants to do something to him and really all it was is that he ran off with your drugs or he done whatever else, but you just used the situation. You've manipulated the situation and obviously these guys in the middle, what are really university geezers, internet geeks and that, they don't know about the street (Prisoner).

Prisoners engaged in forms of intimidation and sometimes gave this away in their interviews. That is how the following remarks were interpreted, in the light of observations of the kitchen area:

I: And with the kitchen, I have to say that I've heard stories about people aren't allowed into the kitchen, especially with cooking bacon or what ever because of ... R: No, no, that's all rubbish, because obviously there's ... on every spur in this prison, yeah, there's a lot of Muslim prisoners, yeah, so obviously the Muslims they don't eat pork, but saying that, we're not going to stop someone else coming into the kitchen and cooking what they're cooking, you understand what I'm saying? What you have to remember is ... the prison, they do issue a few pots and pans and that, but the majority of the people who cook in this prison, they have their own equipment. That means that we've got our own pots and that, so obviously the person ... the person ain't going to be using like my pot and cooking pork. What it is, I've got my own pots, I cook my food in my pots, and if I know that someone's going to cook pork in a pot that belongs to me, I'll tell them that, listen, I don't eat pork personally, so I wouldn't want pork to be cooked in my pot. I: But where do these rumours come from then? R: No, because obviously you've got one or two like ... you've got some prisoners that want to go into the kitchen and cook ... like cook their bacon and whatever, but they feel ashamed of doing it. I: Ashamed? R: Yeah, that's all it is, it's a pride thing. Because obviously there is going to be prisoners that's there and they don't like the smell of it, you understand what I'm saying? I: OK, and they will ... show it ...? R: No, they might say something, but they're not going to tell them, oi, you can't cook no pork in here ... because it's not our kitchen. And all this person has to do is go to one of the officers and they lock down the kitchen for that, you understand, so that's all rubbish (Prisoner).

There was dispute about what was 'respect' for each other's rules, and what constituted intimidation, or what was a 'gang' and what was 'a few of us with a nice atmosphere'. It was often difficult for staff and prisoners to know what was 'really'

going on. Action was covert. Interpretations of events were inconsistent, and myths emerged:

We don't know exactly, I mean Security ask us to look at certain names that we're given and we know, and you can see they do have influence. But sometimes I think a lot of stuff within prisons is done in other people's name without them particularly knowing it's been done in their name always, and if it's like, if they haven't got a big feeling towards it they're quite happy for things to be done in their name (Officer).

Prisoner relationships were difficult to evaluate because much activity was instrumental and strategic. Faith was confounded with race. Individual prisoners would relate to groups or other individuals because they were forced to do so, or wanted to take advantage of them. But they would not have related to them on the outside. According to staff and prisoners, life in the high-security estate resembled a 'parallel universe' with its own reality and rules. People within it would rarely display their true allegiances or their true self. They were preoccupied with their own adaptation:

At the end of the day this thing is not real. This thing what everyone's doing, it's not real. And obviously, if you have a real friendship, it can combat it. But it's all these kind of fake friendships (Prisoner).

R: It's certain parts of the system and once they hit Cat A, a lot of them are saying they hope that when they hit Cat B, Cat C, that all of this is a long forgotten painful memory. I: So it's got something to do with surviving in High Security? R: Yeah, and a lot of them think once they hit Cat B and C, locals, that all that silliness is over (Officer).

There was a clear perception among prisoners that a new power base had emerged. It was not clear how far faith mattered in its composition and appearance in prison or how willing its members were to 'belong'. Some organisation and strategy was detectable, with some resonances with (but also some important differences from) other periods of penal history.

5.11 Identity and resistance

To the extent that there was evidence of growing bids for power made by new Muslim sub-groups, many similarities (and some important differences) could be detected between the phenomenon of politicised prisoners organising themselves to push back staff in Northern Ireland and elsewhere, and a (less politicised, and less organised) group of prisoners exerting a form of collective power at Whitemoor. Prison scholars have described the ways in which paramilitary prisoners 'resisted' (that is, generated and displayed opposition to the application of power) during their imprisonment over several decades, including strategies of a) escape, b) dirty protest and hunger strike, c) violence, and d) attitudes towards and use of the law (McEvoy 2001). They also resisted the prison regime in other ways, establishing accepted practices that gradually enhanced their living conditions. This kind of campaigning was often regarded as 'legitimate', but merged into 'conditioning' – a form of pushing back (e.g. resisting searching) that culminated in the escapes of six High Risk Category A prisoners (five of whom were convicted IRA terrorists) from Whitemoor in 1994.

Drawing on these insights, it might be plausible to characterise the ‘resistance’ of a minority of activist Muslim prisoners at Whitemoor as follows:⁷¹

1. Strengthening their claims to religious practices and identities (the collective assertion of religious status)
2. Avoidance of and distancing from staff
3. Conversion of others – recruitment into the faith
4. Violence and ‘enforcement’ of religious practices (such as forbidding the cooking of bacon in spur kitchens, or of undressing to shower)
5. Use of the law (e.g. application for judicial review of segregation); and
6. Rejection of the authority of ‘prison Imams’ by ideological leaders.

Evidence of ‘confronting’: escaping, hunger strikes or dirty protest was not seen. Most of the above strategies fall into Cohen and Taylor’s categories of ‘self-protection’ and ‘campaigning’ (see footnote below), and a new category of ‘recruiting’. Cohen and Taylor suggest that prisoners are shown in most sociological studies to adapt rather than resist.⁷² These strategies were undermining, in the sense that staff were unclear about their authority in these areas, but they included legitimate claims. There were many ways in which prisoners could ‘appear resistant’ visually, or by accumulating ‘controversial’ material goods like multiple foreign language religious texts, but these activities and signals were contestable (they could be ‘mere assertions of identity’) in a way that efforts to ‘control space’ (i.e. determine what went on in the kitchens) were not. It seemed to be the case (but this requires further investigation) that few of the faith-related behaviours defended by many whilst in prison had been imported from prisoners’ lives outside. A prison specific version of faith-related claims had developed.

The relevance of the Cohen and Taylor analysis, as applied to Whitemoor in 2010, is that prisoners needed a workable sustaining ideology in order to survive long-term imprisonment. Those without retreated or fought in self-destructive ways; their day-to-day problems became easier to deal with in un-reflexive ways, but the ultimate existential problem (which was, then, fear of deterioration) became more and more acute. In Whitemoor in 2010, the major existential problem was no longer, ‘how am I going to be when I get out?’ but ‘how can I create meaning and identity in an environment with so little hope?’ This was a fundamentally different kind of problem related to the length of sentences, their indeterminate nature, and aggregate or non-personalised as well as cautious approaches to risk assessment. The authors argued that whatever ideology is adopted for surviving imprisonment is related to prisoners’

⁷¹ Resistance might be used as a term in situations where rebellious acts are connected to perceptions of repressive behaviour and values, aspects of the social structure, and class relationships.

⁷² Few studies explore the meaning of prisoners’ adaptive lives. These modes of resistance or adaptations are historically sited. The authors identified five ‘types of resistance’ at the time of their research (late 1960s/early 1970s): (i) Self-protecting. This has been called ‘gleaning’ in other studies — taking things from prison; assertively playing ‘real’ roles, making active sense of what is happening; mind-building, realising the self against the institution rather than within it. This is a quest for a legitimate deviant identity. (ii) Campaigning. This is persistent professional complaining (what Mathiesen called ‘censoriousness’) — on individual and collective issues. (iii) Escape. Contemplating escape is an effective diversion and serves an important function in a prisoners’ relationship to authority (whose main role is to prevent escapes). (iv) Striking. Hunger strikes are powerful and evoke a sympathetic response. (v) Confronting. Political campaigning (anti-authoritarian). This may unite some prisoners on race or class grounds — touching a collective political sentiment, building a common identity and sense of purpose. Prisoners responded to prison differently, but there were links between their outside criminal characteristics and careers (and especially the nature of their relationship with authority) and their prison adaptations (Cohen and Taylor 1972, p.151). Some adaptations ‘work’ better than others.

view of authority. The appeal of the Muslim faith was understandable under current conditions.

Finally this chapter describes the low levels of trust in the prison.

5.12 Trust and lack of trust at Whitemoor

If distrust reaches upper limits, it can produce escalation of mutual suspicion and hostility. Trust operates as a 'lubricant of social co-operation' but is also necessary for individual mental health' (Liebling, assisted by Arnold 2004: 243).

Trust had declined at Whitemoor, for complex reasons relating to changing conditions and terms of imprisonment, population characteristics and relationships, and official priorities. The difference between 'a little' trust, and 'even less' was small (statistically speaking) in a prison setting (see Liebling, assisted by Arnold 2004: 240-51), but had major social implications.⁷³ Trust was a requirement of hope and also of human flourishing (Liebling, assisted by Arnold 2004: 240), and identity.

The research team's conversations with prisoners, both in the Dialogue group and in interviews, confirmed their early impression both that trust *mattered* ('It's all about trust, innit?') *and* that there was a 'problem of trust' in the prison.⁷⁴

That is difficult, who to trust in prison (Prisoner).

Trust is the biggest thing (Officer).

You talk about trust in this environment and, you know, in reflecting on what trust there is, there's not really much of it, you know, because there's not a lot to trust (Prisoner).⁷⁵

If trust involves a 'willingness to be vulnerable to another party', an expectation that the trusted party 'will behave in a way beneficial to the trustor', 'risk of harm to the trustor if the trustee does not behave accordingly' and 'the absence of control over actions performed by the trustee' (see Stompka 2001), in many ways it is not surprising that a maximum security prison is a generally low trust environment. It is also the case, however, that: higher levels of trust were found in Whitemoor in 1998/9; and levels of trust in Whitemoor were lower (although not to a statistically significant level) than in

⁷³ For example, in the 'moral performance' research conducted by two of the authors, the proportion of prisoners who agreed with the item, 'I trust the officers in this prison' were: 31 per cent at Belmarsh, 29 per cent at Holme House, 22 per cent at Risley, 40 per cent at Doncaster and 25 per cent at Wandsworth. See further, Liebling, assisted by Arnold 2004: 249. Prison staff can place too much trust in prisoners – so that at Doncaster, 38 per cent of prisoners agreed that 'this prison is good at placing trust in prisoners' compared to around 20 per cent elsewhere (a fact linked to two later escapes). See also the relatively high ('outlier') score at Lowdham Grange (38 per cent; Appendix 3, Table 3.27). Some trust, of a guarded kind, essential, but it should not be undisciplined, and should not outweigh trust of senior managers (Liebling, assisted by Arnold 2004: 244).

⁷⁴ The research team had some problems 'trusting the environment', that had not been encountered in the first study. For example, they sometimes felt uncomfortable spending evenings mingling with prisoners on association.

⁷⁵ Onora O'Neill has argued that empirical studies of trust are rare (and that surveys are rarely 'deep'), and that when we consider trust as risk (that is, 'mistrust' or the absence of trust) we should also consider *trustworthiness*. We should align trust with trustworthiness, and so should pay more attention to the question of how to judge another's trustworthiness (rather than their 'risk'): 'A more serious and practical approach to trust would concentrate on showing what we need to judge others' honesty, reliability, competence, so that we can place and refuse trust intelligently' (O'Neill 2009: 1). We consider this argument further in the concluding chapter.

three other high security prisons (according to MQPL Survey results in 2009-10; see Table 3.27).

There was 'a culture of distrust' at Whitemoor (see Table 3.27). Only 12 per cent of prisoners 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' with the statement, 'I trust the officers in this prison'; nine per cent felt that 'this prison is good at placing trust in prisoners; 54 per cent 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' with the statement 'I feel that I am trusted quite a lot in this prison'; and 24 per cent 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they trusted other prisoners. Levels of trust were lowest between Muslim prisoners and staff (see Table 3.27 in the Appendix), and (according to broader discussions) between prisoners in general and psychologists.

Levels of trust between groups were also low at Whitemoor. Muslim prisoners trusted staff less than other prisoners did (six per cent of Muslim prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that 'I trust the officers in this prison', compared to 14 per cent of Christian prisoners) but trusted prisoners a little more (28 per cent of Muslim prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that 'I trust other prisoners in this prison', compared to 19 per cent of Christian prisoners; this difference was statistically significant). Only six per cent of Muslim prisoners agreed or strongly agreed that 'I am trusted quite a lot in this prison' (58 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed) compared to 17 per cent of Christian prisoners (50 per cent disagreed or strongly disagreed).

Trust had a significant impact on relationships within the prison: to trust carried considerable risk and so had limits. Whilst some prisoners acknowledged a need for trust, many denied it to themselves, claiming not to trust anyone, and tried to negate the need ('I don't put myself in a place where I need to trust someone'). Prisoners trusted most other prisoners they had known outside prison and only extended this to one or two other prisoners. For several prisoners their trust in others (or 'the system') had been 'destroyed' as a result of the way in which they had been convicted in situations where they had granted trust and this had been betrayed by another prisoner or by the police. Prisoners' general lack of trust in the Criminal Justice System pervaded the prison environment. They were distrustful of risk assessment processes and the procedures for progression. This led to disengagement, frustration and bitterness. As one prisoner said, "You've got to trust the system to work with it". Another said:

I feel alienated, I feel strange, I shouldn't be here, why am I here? The mental effect is there. You don't engage, you don't trust, and it makes you very lonely and anti-social in a way (Prisoner).⁷⁶

The most common form of trust that existed was reserved and somewhat pragmatic; it was a 'working trust' specific to the prison environment rather than a 'personal trust' whereby expressions of emotional vulnerability and personal thoughts and feelings were disclosed in confidence. Prisoners made a distinction between formal and informal trust and between emotional and material trust. For example:

There are two variations of trust, really. Like ... formal trust and informal trust, do you know what I mean? Where an officer would be more formal trust, and I'll trust them to do things and I'll trust them to be open and if he

⁷⁶ Uniformed staff were similarly clear that they did not trust prisoners, or anyone, 100 per cent (see Chapter 6). The corresponding figures were higher in the other dispersal prisons; see Table 3.27.

said he had done it then I'd believe him and stuff like that ... Whereas with the inmates, the ones that I choose, I know that they'll have my backing 100 per cent and they're not going to turn, and they'll be true to themselves. Whereas an officer is only true to a point that his job allows, do you know what I mean? There's no boundaries with an inmate, like, there's no restrictions on it, where obviously they've got professionalism and, like, they're bound by their job, aren't they, to an extent, and they'll be fair and open and honest and stuff like that, and I'll trust them on a professional level, but I wouldn't trust them as much on a personal level (Prisoner).

'Working trust' was demonstrated by the fact that prisoners felt trusted by staff to conform to the regime or perform a trusted job; prisoners trusted staff to fulfil their job description (their obligations of a Duty of Care to prevent them coming to harm and to provide basic amenities); prisoners trusted each other to return borrowed items and not to steal their belongings; and staff trusted each other to be there to back them up physically and verbally in confrontations with prisoners.

I think trust is important just for your day to day security, just for your day to day security of how you interact with your surroundings. I suppose it is important to have some level of trust to know that the officers are going to provide you with the basics for survival, that they're going to at least try and provide a basic level of security and safety for you (Prisoner).

When I've trusted a prisoner? Well, for example, I leave my stuff in the freezer bag downstairs in the trust that nobody steals it and I've left my pot cooking on the side while I've had my shower and I've trusted that a prisoner hasn't put broken glass in there or done anything untoward and I've left my cell open and you trust a prisoner won't go in there and steal out of my cell (Prisoner).

One prisoner suggested that to trust could be detrimental to the prospect of release and staying out of prison:

The Prison Service told me I am not supposed to trust no one. The Prison Service say, if you come out of prison and you congregate or associate with another criminal, you're coming back to prison. So you have to get that in your mind, you're to trust no one, congregate with no one or have no relationship with nobody, prisoner nor staff, so you have to depend on yourself, be individual, that's it (Prisoner).

Reserved forms of trust existed in the gym, in education, in some workshops and in the chapel, as we described in chapter 3. Prisoners often trusted specialist staff such as teachers and chaplains more than uniformed staff because they felt they were there to help them, had their interests at heart and saw beyond their crime and convicted criminal status. There were higher levels of trust on some spurs, for example, on an 'enhanced' spur:

R: *There's a huge element of trust on here from the staff to us and from us to each other, because you can walk off this spur like I do, and I leave my cell door open, as do many others, nothing ever goes missing. I:* *Do you think that's due to the character of the people or the fact that they don't want*

to lose their status, their IEP level? **R:** Well there is that element of it, but I think it's more that you're making a statement to them: 'I trust you, don't break that trust', because in some instances where that kind of trust has happened, the repercussions are pretty terrifying. **I:** Like what? **R:** Oh, violence. They'll break your hands. They'll slam your hands in the cell door. But as I say, I've never witnessed it, but I know it happens. Or you get jugged. **I:** Jugged? **R:** The kettle, the boiling water, with a load of sugar in it, so it goes like syrup, mix it all up until the kettle's boiling, so it goes like syrup and then chuck it over your face. Scarred for life ... As I said, never seen it, but I know it happens, you know? (Prisoner)

No uniformed staff and only three per cent of non-discipline staff agreed with the statement 'I trust prisoners in this prison'; 57 per cent of non-discipline staff and 80 per cent of uniformed staff disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement (Tables 4.2 and 4.3). Among staff, however, levels of trust were somewhat higher: 42 per cent of non-discipline staff and 13 per cent of uniformed staff agreed or strongly agreed that 'I trust the senior managers in this prison' (26 per cent and 54 per cent respectively disagreed or strongly disagreed). Staff were more likely to trust their line managers (58 per cent and 57 per cent respectively). Although 82 per cent of non-discipline staff and 60 per cent of uniformed staff agreed or strongly agreed that 'I trust colleagues in this prison' these figures are lower than are typically found elsewhere.

5.13 Summary

Whitemoor was suffering from 'a problem of trust' at the time of Study 2. Paradoxical, perhaps, in a high security prison, but it is significant that some trust flowed in Study 1, and this small quantity of guarded trust helped the prison to function, and the prisoners to feel treated humanely.

Explanations for the low levels of trust of prisoners by staff included the emphasis in the prison on the risk of 'conditioning' and manipulation by prisoners; the emphasis on the threats posed by terrorist risk, extremism and radicalisation; the lack of opportunities for interaction outside of brief and formal regime or sentence planning processes; a moderate risk of serious assault; a shift away from personal officer and personal development work in high security prisons in favour of intelligence gathering, security, and risk management; previous abuse of trust by prisoners, with reference to the escapes ("Fundamental to the lack of trust is the escapes"; Officer) but also to other breaches of boundaries; and an increased reliance on formal authority and SIRs rather than human relationships:

We don't need the trust of a prisoner. We can work efficiently without that trust from a prisoner. Like I don't need to be able to trust a prisoner, because I wouldn't be in a position that we need to trust a prisoner. I'm not going to ask a prisoner to go and lock himself away. I'm not going to ask him for anything back so there is no need for me to trust a prisoner (Officer).

Explanations for the low levels of trust of staff by prisoners included an increasing social and cultural distance between staff and prisoners — ethnicity was a 'barrier to trust'; information sharing, report writing and the lack of confidentiality in the prison (prisoners felt 'misrepresented' on file); a (growing) prisoner culture of disengagement from staff; with negative peer perceptions of extended contact ('screw-boy'); experiences of inconsistency in the rules/regime/staff attitudes and friendliness; the job

description of an officer, which denotes that in some circumstances a good relationship is irrelevant and is over-ridden by security; and prisoners witnessing staff breaking the rules (for example, taking short cuts) or acts of 'unprofessionalism'.

Explanations for the low levels of trust of prisoners by other prisoners included perceptions that relationships were not genuine, but were based on convenience, usefulness and personal/group agendas. The prisoner culture was more individualistic than 'solidarity' as a result of the emphasis on risk assessment and a desire to progress through the system. The group dynamics were newly complicated (a new order was under formation), with changing allegiances one of the features of this new order. There were unknowns in the environment, including the reputation, nationality, offence, and personas/fake identities of other prisoners; and there were assumptions about the increased use of informants, involving disclosure to the authorities (police) and officers.

Explanations for the relatively low levels of trust of (uniformed) staff by other uniformed staff included the potential for conditioning and corruption; inexperience and a belief that (female) officers and specialists were easily influenced or manipulated; officers witnessing other officers turning their backs on incidents and not going to the aid of colleagues; a developing culture whereby officers were encouraged to 'paper' each other (report on inappropriate conduct); an erosion of traditional officer cultural norms (such as not disrespecting other officers in the presence of prisoners); lack of trust from managers (to make decisions, use discretion and initiative and problem-solve on the landings) filtering down to wing staff; a lack of consistency in applying the rules and some apparent prisoner appeasement: there was 'conflict' between two groups of staff: those who challenged prisoners and those who did not.

At best, prisoners were seen by staff as decent and trustworthy to a point, but there were serious consequences, for prison officers, of trust being betrayed. Prisoners understood that they often paid the price for the overt untrustworthiness of others.

So prison life went on 'without trust' and this was experienced as difficult and painful. It also meant that there was almost an 'anti-information flow' rather than a 'dynamic' information flow in the prison. Talk and contact had been replaced by recorded information and SIRs, and prisoners were careful about their presentation and talk. This made working out the role and alliances of different prisoner groups and individuals, as well as managing the prison on a day to day basis, extremely difficult.

Staff perceptions are considered in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 Staff perspectives

Anyone can work in black and white; the real good stuff is in the grey. Prisons are all about relationships and that's a personal thing that cannot be legislated for (Officer).

I feel like the little snowman in a snow globe (Officer).

This chapter outlines the viewpoints of staff at Whitemoor about their relationships with prisoners in general, the problems they faced, the work they did, and the context in which they faced new problems of safety, authority and control. As in the original study, the research team deliberately solicited positive examples of 'good officer work'. The culture or atmosphere at Whitemoor at the time of the first study had been 'present-professional': active, engaged staff constantly working at good and effective relationships with prisoners (Liebling and Price 2001; Liebling and Crewe 2012b). By 2010 the culture or atmosphere was, at least in places, more 'heavy-absent': relationships were less close and power flowed less effectively through them, even though staff were relatively numerous and they had frequent contact with prisoners.⁷⁷ Some aspects of the 'heaviness' prisoners described were not related to staff attitudes but were a result of new aspects and practices of imprisonment. There were new complexities to the relationships observed, and to prison officer work with a new and more diverse population. There were outstanding officers doing some outstanding work, and there were areas of best practice, and the research team attempt to reflect these in the account to follow. But there was also, as described so far, new problems of 'risk' and 'difference'.⁷⁸

6.1 Background

The first study identified and described the complex and highly skilled work that prison officers do, the range of roles they perform, and the centrality of relationships and discretion or decision-making to their work (Liebling and Price 2001; 2nd edition 2010). Officers were gatekeepers to highly valued services, goods and specialists, as well as guardians, advocates and managers of prisoners in their own right. Their approach to their role set the tone on a wing, and affected outcomes for, and relationships between, prisoners. Staff shaped the prison experience, determining to a large extent how legitimate this experience was in the eyes of prisoners. The role, self-concept and competence of prison officers shape the quality of prison life in highly significant ways. As the deliverers of long-term, maximum security imprisonment, prison staff working at Whitemoor represented the overall mood and tone of the Prison Service (see p. 1).

Staff engaged in the research this time around with energy and enthusiasm, providing the researchers with time, information, and access to prisoners, as well as finding extended periods in their working weeks (and in eight cases, on their rest days) to participate in interviews. They cooperated with good humour and generosity with requests to shadow them, talk about the wing, or their area of work, and to elaborate on the management of particular incidents. They were open and insightful throughout our discussions.

⁷⁷ These terms have arisen from work comparing quality of life and staff approaches to work in public and private sector prisons; see, for example, Crewe *et al.* 2011.

⁷⁸ The next chapter looks separately at relationships between staff and Muslim prisoners in particular.

They described the most significant aspect of their work as 'making a difference', 'turning someone round', and 'solving problems'. But they described 'retreating into the basic elements of the job': safe containment, and implementing the routine. They wanted to be doing a more meaningful job (involving more than 'going home safe') but this was difficult.

6.2 Overview

Examples of excellent practices and attitudes were found, along with energy and enthusiasm among staff:

When people ask me to do something, I usually try and do it, if possible and reasonable. I'm reliable and keep my word. It's about trust. I know they will defend my corner. [If he should ever be assaulted, he believes there will be prisoners to jump in and help]. My idea of the job is: We are here to get through this together. You like to think you have an influence on a prisoner, that what you do has a meaning ... that it can turn them round (Officer).

We had that problem case, Mr. [name] who was very argumentative, disruptive, used to shout a lot. At one point we told him it was no use and he should try and smile instead. We told him: 'Whenever someone's bothering you, just smile at him, say 'Thank you' and turn around'. We've been working with him for 12 months now ... he's been doing remarkably fine, so you have to praise him for that ... We have to tell and teach them what's right and what's wrong. If you get praise as well as wiggling, you will be a more balanced person and you'll know you deserve both, the good and the bad when it comes down on you (Officer).

Here on this wing we are very direct with prisoners, so they know we're not fake and they know they're treated fair and open. They appreciate that. We are using our power carefully. Most of the prisoners are very young and face very long sentences. Or they are over 50 and fear the thought of the prison being their final destination where they're gonna die. So how do you motivate them, every day? It's important to keep them busy somehow, let them go to the gym and the workshops. And if it kicks off and a prisoner starts shouting at you and being disruptive, you don't use all the power you could use (like putting him on adjudication, or locking him up), but you just go away, take a step back, give him 15 minutes and then come back and say 'Look, I didn't deserve this. Do you still think it was right?' and in nine-out-of-ten cases he will admit that he did the wrong thing and apologise (Officer).

We have a strategy here to have a joke and a laugh before unlocking, so staff will go to prisoners with a smile on their faces (Officer).

Staff recognised the importance of relationships with prisoners, and respect:

Respect is not so much connected to age, but you earn it in the way you treat people. If you help them out, they will respect you ... It's important to be a good listener and to be able to defuse a situation (Officer).

I: If you were in charge of training prison staff what would you emphasise most about *how officers should relate to prisoners*? **R:** *Yeah, I suppose I'd be saying they are human beings and if you can treat them with respect regardless of what they've done and you have to be pro-social and their role model then that would be as much sometimes as we could do (Officer).*

They're human beings. They've done a crime, right? They've ... probably had a bad upbringing. They might not have had a bad upbringing. They might have been desperate and robbed somewhere ... things happened in their life what has made them criminals, but they're still human beings ... they are a human being (Officer).

Whilst relationships between staff and prisoners were good in places, they were not as good in general as they had been in the original study. They were more distant, and prisoners expressed more frustration towards staff. There were reasons for this. Some overt and basic tensions between relationships and security emerged, reflecting an understandable but renewed lack of clarity about what 'right' relationships might look like in the current climate, what they were for, and where the appropriate boundaries lay. Prisoners were serving longer and more complicated sentences, and needed staff more than they had in the past, to challenge false information in their files, access specialists and offender managers, recommend them for jobs, and facilitate opportunities for a change in image and reputation. Staff were divided on matters of detail, as well as the ends their relationships with prisoners served, and observed each others' interactions somewhat critically. The vision of prison work in a maximum security setting had changed, in barely articulated ways. Staff were uncertain of their role, identity, and purpose in this new climate.

There were several specific difficulties faced by staff at Whitemoor, which may explain their somewhat less confident account of their work and their more distant relationships with (some) prisoners. This chapter elaborates on their 'discomfort' further. The research found:

- A preoccupation with 'conditioning', and a lack of consensus about precisely what this was.
- Some resistance by new groups of prisoners to relationships with staff.
- A new, younger, more diverse and challenging population.
- A change to the sources, status, and uses of information about prisoners, and an adverse reaction to this by prisoners (leading to 'fake' behaviour and relationships).
- A change in the meaning of prison work in the high security estate, from 'assessment and progression' to 'settlement and containment'.
- A 'narrow' versus a 'broad' interpretation of the job of a wing officer among some staff: that is, a focus on smooth routine implementation versus a focus on supporting and influencing individual prisoners.
- Some relationships that 'went wrong' in both directions: professional boundaries were breached; and there were serious incidents of violence against staff by prisoners, without 'healing' or sufficient discussion.
- A more demanding and 'performance-oriented' work context, and new grades of staff.
- More distant relationships with senior managers.
- Fewer material and external resources (that is, outside organisations coming in).

Some of the matters outlined in this chapter may be relevant for all prison officers. Others are related to the specific context of a high security prison, and a third category may be related to the circumstances at Whitemoor in particular (for example, the unusually high proportion of Muslim prisoners). Staff were in conflict over the 'lethargic' versus 'energetic' (more personally committed and involved) version of a prison officer's day, and one way in which this manifested itself was in conflict over whether prisoners were deserving of help and support or undeserving and manipulative. Each staff group saw the other as naïve or lazy respectively. This struggle went largely unnoticed by senior managers and unaddressed by line managers, according to prison officers, but caused considerable anxiety among staff, who linked it to safety. 'Naïve' staff were taking risks, whereas 'lazy' or 'antagonistic' staff were creating frustration, losing the good will of prisoners and failing to complete essential procedures. Staff in small or special areas of the prison (the Segregation Unit, D Wing, F Wing, the induction spur and the 'older prisoners' club') experienced less of this tension, as they knew their prisoners better, had more of a sense of purpose about their work and had 'permission' to care, within a well organised framework.

6.3 Discretion vs bureaucracy

Within this uneasy context, in which the old 'negotiation-and support' (shared powers) style of prison work in long-term prisons seemed to be in conflict with the new 'rule following-for-security' (bureaucratic) style of long-term imprisonment, many good relationships went on.⁷⁹ But there was conflict over what was allowed or appropriate, and what constituted 'permissible care':

I: Who's a trustworthy member of staff? R: [name], this old boy who was just out there. I: Right, why is he trustworthy? R: He's just seeing out his job now, he does his job, don't get me wrong, he's not corruptible or nothing like that. But he doesn't overdo it. I'll give you an example: I've got a friend at the minute who's down the seg, he'll be down there till he moves, right? Now every Sunday I'll go to church, but I go to church anyway, and I take ½ oz of tobacco down there with me. Not supposed to do it, but I do it because he's a friend. Now [Name] took me down the other week, down to the chapel, so he said 'what, are you going down to see [prisoner]?' I went 'yeah, I've got a bit of snout here for him'; and he's not interested. If I would have said that to another screw they would have gone 'oh, hang on a minute', you know what I mean, strip search. But that's how prison runs (Prisoner).

This was illustrative of the traditional (liberal) model of long-term imprisonment, in which acts of kindness and humanity were seen as consistent with 'dynamic security' (Liebling 2002). Long serving prisoners, as well as long serving staff, believed in this model, and saw the purpose of such moderate accommodations as humanising and constructive. But some catastrophic escapes, a changing political and policy climate, and a new generation of less experienced staff, trained differently, gave rise to

⁷⁹ See Barak-Glantz (1981). These styles were related to values, so that the former 'shared powers' style had been infused with an officially declared rehabilitation-humanitarian ideology, whereas the new 'bureaucratic style' had become, inadvertently, linked to punishment and containment. The tone of senior management language had harshened. See Crewe and Liebling 2011.

competing models of, and orientations towards, long-term high security prison work. For example, there was conflict between staff over use of first names:

R: A lot of people think I'm too nice to them, too patient. I let things go. Which I do because I look at the big picture and I'll go 'morning Mister-so-and-so', and they're going 'what you calling them Mister for?' And I go 'because I want to'. 'Because they like it'. I'll call them Brian, I'll call them their name, I don't care. I'm not calling them 'shit bag'. I don't care, it's irrelevant. They go: 'I'm not called Mister, I don't want nobody calling me Mister'. I: What's that about, then, what do you think? What are other officers trying to do or say? R: Trying to make themselves look above them. Maybe they're scared of them, I don't know (Officer).

6.4 Communication, boundaries and relationships

Staff understood that communication was the key to relationships with prisoners:

Communicate. Communication is the thing, but positive communication. If you're wrong, tell them. If you say you're going to do something, do it. But communicate (Officer).

This could take the form of casual chat, light hearted banter or serious discussions about prisoners' circumstances:

There's a guy on here who I can always go and chat to if I want to, and he'll have another cup of tea, a game of snooker, talk about life on the outside, talk about his sentence, about everything, really (Officer).

I always make a point of saying good morning. Some of them will say good morning back, some won't (Officer).

They know what you're like and you know what they're like, then you can build rapport with them, and have a laugh and a joke with them. You can take the mickey out of them a little bit. They can even take it out of you a little bit, as long as you, obviously, don't go over the border lines. And that's the side of the job I do quite enjoy (Officer).

I can have a good laugh and banter with certain prisoners on Green Spur, on Blue Spur, on Red Spur. [Name]; I can make him scream. We always have a laugh and a joke (Officer).

Part of the skill of being a good officer was recognising where 'the line' was with individuals. This line could vary, according to the prisoner and the member of staff:

It does depend on the prisoner, though, you know? I can have a really good giggle with one person and I could actually say to their face, "Fuck off now, you're being a twat. I don't like you". He'd be, like, "All right, Miss, no worries. I'll talk to you tomorrow" and we're back to normal again, that's fine. Whereas if I did that to another prisoner I'd probably get my face caved in for being so rude (Officer).

I always have a laugh and a joke with certain prisoners, and there's certain prisoners that I can have that sort of relationship with, and there's certain prisoners I wouldn't even attempt to do that with. But if a new member of staff sees you doing it with one prisoner, and doesn't realise that it won't work with all of them, then they can put themselves in a sticky situation (Officer).

Cultivating relationships in which humour could be used professionally was one aspect of 'jail craft', developed over time and with experience:

There's one on A Wing, we take the mickey out of each other and he says things that aren't completely politically correct or he can say things to me and I'll say things to him, and if a Governor or anybody else heard they'd probably cringe and think, 'God, what're you saying?' But it's just that rapport that we've built up over knowing each other for several years as it's been now. Given time working together, and being, well, not working together but me working on the wing where he lives, we started having a bit of banter and you take the mickey out of each-other, or I'll take the mickey out of him a little bit, he comes back with a little bit and as long as it doesn't go too far, I think that's reasonable. It's not 'professional', in as much as they don't teach you it at training school (Officer).

Officers felt that, in the right circumstances, informal teasing and relaxed banter encouraged better relationships with prisoners, on which trust, support and influence could be built. Using a prisoner's first name was seen by many staff as a good way to build relationships, but in a newly diverse context, this could be complicated, in ways not all officers understood:

[A prisoner] sat down and I said to him, "What's your name?" and he told me his surname. I said "No, no, no, no, what's your Christian name?" and he, sort of, looked at me, and he told me his Christian name. I said "I'm [Name]." He said "I can't call you [Name], Miss." I said "I know. I'm [Name]. You just told me your name and that's how it is. If you've got no objections, I've got no objections. I'll call you by your Christian name, you can call me by my Christian name". And just by doing that, it's completely changed the atmosphere, because they've come in all tense and hyped up, don't know what they're going to get, and then the first thing we're told is "What's your Christian name?" and I tell them mine, and the atmosphere and everything is just completely gone (Officer).

Building relationships took patience and courage:

You know, the latest one I've got is a lad and I'm his Personal Officer. Very, very dangerous man. Really dangerous, very aggressive. And it's taken me about eighteen months to even get to a stage where we could talk. And I'm not full on with people, you know what I mean? Some people would run in his cell and say 'come on then, what shall we do?', but I waited for him to come to me. Let him know I was there and, if he asked me for anything, we'd sort it out, but I didn't go looking for him. I think that's why it worked with him. It took about eighteen months before he started opening up, but now he'll sit 'round and talk to me (Officer).

We've got another prisoner. He's very dangerous. When he goes off his medication, he goes off his head. He's really very, very dangerous, and very scary, and big. There was an incident about a year ago where he was at the gate and he was absolutely looking for a fight. There's no doubt about it, he was looking for a fight this particular day. [One officer] who was in the office with me, went out to talk to [prisoner] to try and calm him down, and he went inside the gate, and he looked at him right in the eye and he says '[prisoner], it's [officer]', and I thought that was so brave. No doubt about it, all he wanted was fury and anger, you know? And I said to [officer] afterwards that was quite a brave thing to do. He said 'I never thought twice about it'. And that is what we do on [this] Wing. We personalise it (Officer).

[A prisoner] said he likes talking to me, he says; "oh, you know, you're one of the good ones and, you know, you listen and blah-blah"; so a lot of it's about listening. They do seem to value that a lot rather than just dismissing anything they say, which I suppose can feel quite rejecting to them. I do stand and listen to them even if it's a load of waffle. So I suppose I sort of step out of the authority role then so I am just like another person chatting to them, and for the needy ones and the more challenging ones, that seems to work quite well (Officer).

There's one particular one that started off, he was always very aggressive. It was just a case of me empathising and showing him that 'that must be really difficult' and just having that empathy in there, reflecting back what I thought it. And when I was wrong, saying so, and apologising basically. Just going from there, and that consistency of just keep going back (Officer).

One officer talked about how he enjoyed the continuity of relationships:

The job is what you make of it. Some officers will come in, militant frame of mind: 'they are prisoners, I am an officer'; rules, regimes, regulations, and stick by them, and it makes them the officer that they are. Myself, I tend to go for the personal side. I create relationships, maintain relationships, and to me it's fun - I enjoy it. I never thought I'd say that, but prison is different, just because you're dealing with the same people every day. Whereas working with the public, they're unpredictable, unorganised. Don't get me wrong, staff and prisoners can be unpredictable and unorganised, but you always get that chance to build, re-build, or break down, because you're here every day, it's a real experience (Officer).

Prisoners sometimes disclosed personal and often emotional issues to staff. These conversations were linked to the journey prisoners were on in their own development, and in their attitude towards their own offending, and staff had to find a 'way in' or simply make themselves available at the right time:

If I think they're going to be reasonable with me then I'll go and strike up a conversation with them and you sometimes have a bit of a chat. It might just be about what was on telly last night or who's coming to visit them at the weekend or whatever. Whatever it can be about really, you just find somebody you can chat to and get the barriers down, which fall when you

start talking to them. I had a real in-depth one the other day. He was telling me all about his family ties. He had a bit of a wobble at Christmas time. He was quite down and depressed, and it turned out that he had a letter come through from his sister who he hadn't spoke to for six years because of the family rift that they have. Then this letter came through with photographs of her daughters; his nieces, that he didn't even know existed. And he was telling me all about the bad things that he'd done in his life prior to the family fall-outs, which led to the big family rift that they had, and she's now offered him, like, an olive branch to try and get back in contact with each other. And how he'd seen the error of his ways and he was going to try and move on and be a more respected member of the family and whatnot. He seemed quite genuine with it. Whether he is or not; time will tell, but he seemed like he'd learned his lessons and realised he wanted to better himself and he'd missed out on his family and he didn't want to do it again (Officer).

I'll visit prisoners that I know are going through a bad time, like [a prisoner] whose daughter's died. Nearly every day I go to his door and just say 'how are you today?', you know? This happened, and he'll have a moan about something (Officer).

Such relationships were often challenging and difficult for staff. For example, on D Wing, where prisoners talked very positively about their relationships with and treatment by staff, officers often described a fairly long and complex process of overcoming barriers of their own:

I think one of the most challenging things that I've done in recent years was that I experienced working with VPs in my early days; Vulnerable Prisoners. I didn't particularly like their interactions of grooming, so I avoided them. But going onto D Wing, they actually gave me a prisoner who was a child molester, which was like, with me being a grandfather, I really struggled with my inner feelings about how horrible this person was. And when he first came here, because he sought therapy, he needed to talk about all that stuff, straight off. So I needed help and guidance, and I went to the two psychologists that were working at the unit at the time. They said "right, say to him; 'thank you very much for trusting me with all that'" and they just helped me for the first two weeks of actually slowing this person down and getting him through. I had to challenge so many of my own boundaries working closely with him. Obviously he's very vulnerable on the wing as well, so he needed somebody to, sort of, look after him as well. So that was a massive challenge for me, and I got through that, and we have a great relationship now. I really like this particular prisoner, as a person, I mean - obviously I don't like his crime (Officer).

By offering non-judgemental support, staff often saw improvements in prisoners' behaviour. One prisoner (an example of many similar) arrived at Whitemoor in a body belt, due to his violent behaviour, but was now an enhanced prisoner, an 'insider' (a peer supporter on induction), and was behaving well:

He came to us with quite a reputation and we cracked down on him from the word go. We said, "You know, this is a fresh start. We hold nothing against you." This is what we tell all of them. "Whatever reason you're here for, is

whatever reason you're here for. This is a fresh start. If you mess up here, that's down to you. If you don't, then at the end of the day you move on and everything's fine". You cannot believe the difference in this guy now, and all we did was just give him a chance to prove that he was actually worth while spending some time with (Officer).

In the interview with this prisoner, it was clear that two members of staff in particular had managed a highly volatile, emotionally challenging individual over a considerable period of time to achieve this new stability. Staff built meaningful relationships by getting to know prisoners, through positive interactions in which they listened, supported and *noticed* individual prisoners:

I used to get on quite well with [a prisoner]. He used to be a drug taker. He used to be really big. He got heavily in debt in drugs, and I'd spotted that when his face was clear, he wasn't on the drugs. When his face was all spotty, he was on the drugs, and I told him this and when he used to have a spotty face we used to say to him "You back on the drugs again, [Name]?" and he'd say "Yeah, but not for long" or whatever he used to say and he made a point of saying one day, he said "You're the only person that's ever noticed that." I said; "I always know when you're on drugs", I said; "because your face", I said; "your complexion", I said "you can't hide it." I said; "You get all spotty. Every time you're on drugs, you get all spotty", and that's the reason why we got on so well because I picked up on that (Officer).

Recently [a particular prisoner] has gone quiet. He doesn't talk, he doesn't interact with us, he mopes. So the other day he was at the gate, and I know him quite well, because I've known him for a lot of years now, and I said; 'are you going downhill, because you're not the same person'. He said; 'do you know what it is?' he said; 'I'm really stressed'. He said; 'they're trying to knock me off. I'm over my tariff and they won't let me out until I do this course and now they've said the course has been put back two years, so that means I've got another two years'. He said; 'I don't know whether I'm going to the loony bin. I don't know whether I'm staying here'. He said; 'I'm so stressed I don't know what's happening with me at the moment and I don't see the point of being happy at the moment'. And no one knew this because no one had asked him. But I'd noticed his personality had completely changed. And I said; 'well, if you ever need to talk, let me know, we'll go in the office and you can just offload and I'll help you if I can'. And he was, like; 'I really appreciate that, thank you'. Well, I was aware that he was bubbling and was getting twitchy and he's withdrawn a little bit and I've been watching him because I know he'd got the potential to be very, very violent a long while ago, and he's come on so well (Officer).

This type of relationship was extremely important in a maximum security prison, where prisoners were brooding over long sentences, narrow and difficult routes out, and slow and uncertain progress. Officers used care (and time and patience) to manage and support prisoners, sometimes keeping them on a wing or spur in order to do so. This was officer work at its best. However, there were some risks to this way of working:

R: *I remember one prisoner, this self-harmer, who'd been horrifically abused as a child, scared of his own reflection, and he used to cry and tell me about*

it. He opened up to me for about the first time, and he said to me; 'I want you to care for me'. And he said; 'why can't you just care?' and I said; 'I can't care'. I did. I felt really sorry, and I used to have to look out the window to stop crying because the stories were so horrific. I said; 'I cannot care for you, I'm not allowed to care', because he would have me then, and he was getting too attached as it was. Because, I was the only one he trusted, and they actually took me off as his Personal officer after a while because he was getting too much. He was like a sheep. He was following me all over the place, but I felt so sorry for him. I had time for him, because he was genuine. He wasn't attention-seeking, he was just desperate. But no, I said; 'I can't care for you', you know? And although I was really worried about it, I used to go home and dream about him, as in his abuse and as in how sad he was, and I had to distance myself. I: Right, to protect yourself? R: Yeah, and I've had prisoners tell me they love me. And I've had prisoners ask if they can send gifts in, and it's always been 'no, definitely not'. I used to say to one of them; 'No, I work for the prison. You're one side of the wall, I'm the other side of the wall' (Officer).

This was the problem faced by 'good' officers at Whitemoor: how to provide professional support, maintain boundaries, be 'human' and yet remain an officer. Some officers avoided these difficulties by 'turning their backs' on prisoners as people and withdrawing from them. But distance was also dangerous. Some officers expressed negative or hostile views about prisoners, referring to them as 'evil', or 'despicable'. Prisoners were aware of these attitudes, held by some staff in particular.

Most staff recognised the benefits of engaging in positive relationships with prisoners: better information flow, a more 'peaceful' and 'enjoyable' life for both staff and prisoners, and the possibility of encouraging prisoners to take up opportunities to improve their future. The benefits were professional and instrumental: 'dynamic security', the maintenance of control, and a good atmosphere on the wing:

I: What are the benefits of good staff prisoner relationships when they are good? R: When they are good we know what's happening before it's going to happen, because we know what everyone else around feels, and prisoners themselves feel safer. So safety is the main thing that comes through it, from everyone, and then the better it gets, the more pleasant that atmosphere is (Officer).

Good relationships promoted safety in general, and (usually) prevented prisoners becoming aggressive with staff:

It does make me feel good that they think I'm trustworthy, and if I've got their trust then, good, it means I'm not going to get attacked (Officer).

If I was the last line of freedom between one of these prisoners and being on their toes, not one of them would hesitate to kill, possibly, or seriously hurt me to be there. But I have to work with them day in, day out, for the last twenty years and the next fifteen. So it's in my interests to have relaxed working relations with everybody. I have no issue with the prisoners calling me by my first name, and if they're happy with it I've got no issues with

calling them by their first name on an informal basis, but in a formal surrounding (Officer).

I've got one guy on the wing who's never ever been a grass. He's never ever been a grass in his whole life, and he's one of what you would call the 'old daddies', and he needed to speak to me. So I had a call up, and he named probably eight officers that were in danger, at the moment, because of their attitude. That is scary, because when he's telling you ... well, he wouldn't name them; I read off the list and he was then able to say 'yes' or 'no', because that way he felt he wasn't grassing. But that is scary, because if there's that many, then something's gone wrong somewhere. Everybody used to carry, you know, an odd one that was disliked, but now it's getting quite difficult (Officer).

A number of staff described occasions whereby prisoners with whom they had developed a relationship had intervened in incidents involving other prisoners, helping them maintain control:

It was years ago, a very long time ago: there was almost a riot on B Wing and the alarm bell was pressed, and me and two officers from A Wing responded, and the incident was happening on Blue Spur on the 1's [first landing] where the DST staff was fighting with a prisoner, but they were surrounded by cons. So there was a lad who had been in the job quite a while at that time, I'd only been in about four or five years, he's gone down. I've followed him, and this other lad's followed us. I just remember looking to my left, and watching him as this con was in his face, and he just started picking cons up and throwing them back, and I thought well it's a do-or-die kind of thing. It was just one of them situations where you just had to front it out, and we did until the rest of the staff got there. Fortunately the incident calmed down not long after that, through, of all things, football. We'd played football a couple of days before with the cons, and a couple of us recognised a couple of the football lads who we were playing against, so we sort of like got them to calm the con down who was being bent up. It just de-escalated the whole situation (Officer).

There were countless examples of these kinds of shifts in relationships via sport, compassion, an act of kindness, or a shared interest or activity. Positive relationships, even where staff did not 'like' the individual, saved lives and maintained order:

I've got one particular prisoner: totally unreasonable, totally paranoid, very loud, very snappy, but I can get him to do stuff that others can't. Because I listen to him and I help when I can, and he says; 'I get on with you. I don't get on with them, but I get on with you'. And he'll go; 'I don't want to go to work this morning'. I said; 'well, you have to go, really, don't you?'. He'll go; 'I don't want to'. I said; 'well, you don't have to. You know, if you don't go, you don't go, but you do realise you'll get a warning. But I would advise you go, you know?'. And a minute later, he's gone. And it's not like I've ordered him. I'm softly-softly with that one. I just treat him differently. Like, all the prison officers hate him because he's so snappy and horrible to them, but he likes me, because I listen to him. When he has a rant, I just stand there and

listen. But the others say 'get lost, get back to your cell', and; 'I'm not putting up with you'. I do give them a lot of time, a lot of time (Officer).

On nights, we had a prisoner who had been really disruptive during the day, giving staff a really hard time, and he was put up to level three, which means that his unlock level increases. But come the night-time, when I'd come in, and we'd had a really good chat and everything, he actually said "oh because you're here and you're on nights, I'm not going to play up, I'm just going to go to sleep" [laughs]; and he did. I think that was because I'd given him a bit of time, talked to him, listened to him (Officer).

Officers overestimated the 'split' between staff and prisoners and assumed that prisoners disliked them. But they understood, at their best, that part of their role was to influence prisoners positively:

***R:** You always do something during the day that you can be proud of, or feel good about. **I:** Can you give me a couple of examples? **R:** I think it just goes back to helping someone. A silly little thing; there's a few prisoners that can't read and write and I've helped them to get a message across to someone, or you help to organise a phone call. There's always something that you're going to do during the day where you just know, even though you don't get any recognition, you just know you've made a difference somewhere. Even if, well, there's people on here with not the best possible hygiene, and you just know that if you give them a mop and bucket, you're teaching them something. Or just giving them advice. The smallest bit of advice, you just know that later on, you'll look back and you think: I made a difference to them. That's to your achievement. Because you are, not controlling, but influencing peoples' lives, day in-day out. As much as prisoners hate officers, always have done, always will, they still need us, look up to us and we have to influence them (Officer).*

The longing for better staff-prisoner relationships, to treat each other with more humanity, was clear on both sides:

***I:** If you had one wish for staff-prisoner relationships what would it be? **R:** The smallest fear could disappear for an hour, yeah sort of almost like the old Paul McCartney's Pipes of Peace video, sort of Christmas, down tools, or weapons in the war, sort of thing and let's just sit down and be human again for a minute and see if that changes anything (Officer).*

Most of the staff described staff-prisoner relationships at Whitemoor as good, even if prisoners were less likely to. In the survey, 60 per cent of uniformed officers agreed that they had a good relationship with prisoners (only five per cent disagreed). There were many examples of good interactions and relationships with prisoners and impressive examples (many reported by prisoners) of staff helping prisoners to make a change in behaviour or attitude, often over long periods of time. Several staff felt that staff-prisoner relationships had improved over the last ten years:

I think staff-prisoner relationships are very good; officers aren't loitering together at the end of wings, there is more interaction (Officer).

It is a lot more relaxed here than ten years ago, on the wings. There is more interaction between staff and prisoners now (Officer).

Staff were proud of the fact that they managed a 'difficult' and 'dangerous' population well and with professionalism, and they were skilled at dealing with prisoners with mental health problems. This was recognised by the prisoners:

The officers are very tolerant on here, on A Wing. They put the prisoners who are finding it hard on Green spur. Here they try to help first. They try to understand the prisoners (Prisoner).

Another officer came into the SO's office to discuss what to do with a prisoner who was displaying unusual behaviour, unlike his usual self. He had come from Belmarsh and had noticeably "gone downhill" in terms of his personal hygiene; they were concerned about this and had contacted Belmarsh to establish whether this was normal behaviour for the prisoner: they confirmed that it was not. The SO advised the officer that the Personal officer should speak to the prisoner and try to find out what was going on and should also contact the in-reach team to come and talk to him (Fieldwork notes).

Staff acknowledged, however, that with respect to their relationships with prisoners, 'power is not flowing through them ... in the right direction'. The good rapport apparent on the surface disguised some of the problems with the power flow at Whitemoor. Less authority was flowing, and prisoners felt the effects of this on safety.

6.5 Problems with and limits to relationships

One of the most significant influences on staff-prisoner relationships was the social and cultural distance between staff (who were nearly all White) and the majority of prisoners (who were mostly BME). There was a degree of fear and uncertainty about prisoners' physical capabilities, but also of the potential for allegations and litigation. The 'new emphasis on political correctness' had undermined officers' confidence in their jail craft and the use of banter, not only with prisoners but also with other staff; officers were 'always on guard' and wary of causing offence that might result in a disciplinary charge. These factors led to a certain amount of withdrawal and disengagement from relationships and informal interactions with prisoners.

There was an inconsistency in rule enforcement and regime application and evidence that staff were reluctant to challenge prisoners; it was considered either a waste of time (because other staff did not) or too much of a risk:

Not all staff are prepared to challenge prisoners. Some will see a prisoner do, or not do, something, and just let it go, and some staff don't. If you challenge them you will get a hard time so people don't want to do it. There are lots of differences in officers in what they will allow and some turn a blind eye, they have a 'you leave me alone, I'll leave you alone' attitude. Your job as an officer is to challenge but it is stressful to do it (Officer).

Staff tended to gravitate towards those prisoners they had more in common with (prisoners of White, British origin), where informal conversations were 'safer'. The

divide between the Muslim and non-Muslim prisoners created something of an allegiance between staff and non-Muslims prisoners (see next chapter):

The Muslims are the biggest problem we have. Staff are very wary of the Muslim population. You've got a prison population and staff that tend to be siding with each other in opposition to the Muslims because they're both being undermined and outdone by the Muslims, so you have a bit of unity there (Officer).

Although the majority of interactions were described as co-operative and civil by both staff and prisoners they were also mainly instrumental. The motivations raised by staff when talking about relationships were mostly about dynamic security, personal safety, and an 'easier' life.

There were some cultural inhibitions keeping staff and prisoners apart: both the prisoner culture and the staff culture seemed to suggest that prisoners and staff should not engage with each other. For prisoners, being seen 'talking too much' with officers was frowned upon by peers and risked attracting the label of a 'screw boy'. According to staff, 'prisoners choose to have relationships if they want them': 'It's all on their terms' and 'talking too much' with prisoners was something to be suspicious of:

At my last jail during an association session I could spend the whole session chatting to a prisoner. Let's just say he's talking about his issues, and before you know it an hour and a half's gone by and you've spent the whole evening talking to them, and you would think 'oh yeah that was good, I had a really good chat with him'. At Whitemoor, if that was the case someone would probably SIR that, you know: '[Name] spent a whole hour and a half, or two hours speaking to this one particular prisoner, what's going on?' when actually nothing's going on. I'm just talking to that prisoner. So I've learned at Whitemoor that you don't engage as much with prisoners as I would have done perhaps at my last jail. I would not spend a whole evening, or I would be conscious of it. I'm not saying I wouldn't, because I would probably document it, and make sure everybody knew that actually we were talking about this, that and the other. But there's just this air of suspicion that if you're talking to that prisoner for a long time, 'what are you talking about?' (Officer).

The model of professional practice staff appeared to be working to was defined by security and regime delivery; by 'physical' work rather than relational work. Relationships were functional but not harmonious. In workshop discussions staff used words like 'manipulative', 'strained', 'intimidating', 'fearful', 'mistrustful', 'controlled' and 'volatile' to describe staff-prisoner relationships, alongside more positive descriptions like 'proactive', 'respectful', 'friendly', and 'caring'.

Staff were very wary of having 'close' relationships with prisoners for fear of (what was for them the real possibility) of being conditioned or manipulated:

I: Can you describe a relationship you have with an individual prisoner that you think is particularly good? R: I wouldn't say with any one individual prisoner, because I don't think it's healthy to be too close to any one

prisoner. Because then you're leaving yourself open to things like conditioning and what-have-you (Officer).

I: Are staff vulnerable to manipulation and conditioning, do you think? **R:** Yeah, very vulnerable, and you have to be very strong, and very, very astute and you have to always be constantly aware (Officer).

I mean we're all conditioned, to a certain extent, all through the day, aren't we? We can all be conditioned into giving somebody an extra shower gel, or an extra towel, or an extra ten minutes on the exercise yard (Officer).

I: Do you think that officers are vulnerable to things like conditioning? Lots of people talk about conditioning all the time. What does it mean? **R:** I've seen it done. It means he can befriend you, and get you to do things that you wouldn't normally do. Or, they could say to you, 'I've got, in that cabinet there, a hundred photos of my other-half in not a lot of clothing. You've searched that, and you've seen them, there's nothing new in there. Don't have a look at them'. You know him quite well and you go 'oh, I'll leave it this time'. And over a period of time you stop searching there. I can then put in whatever I want. And I've seen that done, the exact thing. The prisoner, he had a list of names he was supplying to, a hundred-and-ten pounds, in cash, a lot of heroin stashed in a box full of naked pictures of his wife. And he conditioned staff into leaving it alone. Conditioning's a slow process over a period of time, but they will get you to do things, change your beliefs, or do whatever, you know what I mean? They can get you to do things that you may not normally do (Officer).

'Conditioning' was a powerful theme that permeated the conversations and interviews with staff and represented one way in which staff felt at risk and vulnerable in their jobs. Some staff said they observed 'chronic conditioning' and talked about how concern about staff being conditioned could affect staff relationships with each other:

R: I think prison staff are subject to being conditioned every day of the week. If they let their barrier down then they are vulnerable to conditioning and manipulation and so on. A lot depends on their make up, their character. I mean, a comment was made to me the other day by somebody that has been in the job, ten years I suppose, but he made a comment to me that everybody has their price. As far as being conditioned and worrying about it, because it's rammed down their throat all the time to 'watch out for your colleague who is being conditioned', 'if you see somebody being conditioned, inform the management'; so straight away they are educating people to grass each other up, you know? **I:** Is that a difference to ten years ago? Is that a newer thing? **R:** Yeah it is, I mean they would use the words 'support each other' and 'watch out for each other' and so on, but not 'if you feel that somebody is being conditioned, put it on paper, SIR it'. It's a witch hunt (Officer).

When staff did invest in relationships with prisoners there were limitations. Relationships were strongly boundaried. Staff were always aware of a prisoner's status as prisoner; of not revealing personal information that could jeopardise safety

and security or blur the boundaries of officer and prisoner, and of the 'side' they fell back on when there were acts of indiscipline:

I've always been an advocate of building up relationships and saying; 'that's what it's about'. I've never forgotten that I'm an officer and they're prisoners. When things go terribly wrong, when you're having riots and demonstrations, there is a line and you can't cross that. You can't support them, and they wouldn't support you, because it's too dangerous for both sides. I would say, it's probably about 75 per cent of staff that build relationships, if not all of them to some degree. There's some that don't tolerate prisoners that much, and are still very black-and-white, but it takes all sorts (Officer).

6.6 The role and purpose of prison work at Whitemoor

Most officers wanted to give positive guidance to prisoners, to be (pro-social) role models, to deal with prisoners' needs, to offer advice, to help them change their lives, to engage with prisoners in meaningful ways, and to help them progress through their sentence. In the survey, 84 per cent of uniformed officers agreed that supporting prisoners was part of their job. However, staff did not always feel they had the scope to succeed in these roles and felt restricted in what they could do on a daily basis:

I'll probably refer to it a lot as 'the old days'; you had more jurisdiction, you could make decisions. Nowadays all the decisions are taken away from you, so you want to make a decision to allow, you know, a prisoner has a heartfelt reason that they need to make an urgent phone call, so you have to apply through a Governor and so-and-so, and they don't know the full story, they think the worst, you know, that the prisoner is trying to pull the wool over their eyes, so you have no jurisdiction. You have less ability to help people (Officer).

There's decisions here in a place like Whitemoor that an officer can't make, that the Principal Officer will have to make. But as an officer I've been making those decisions through the whole of my career, and it seems as though to get the smallest things done you need the highest authority to authorise it, and it's like the reins have all been pulled in and the craft that I've learnt and the experience that I've gained is not being used, and I think there's a lot of staff that aren't being used to their full potential because there is this feeling that makes you feel mistrusted. But I don't say it's my direct manager or the managers, I think it's a general spear that's gone straight through the Service, and it's a politics involved as well (Officer).

The 'settlement and security' vision driving staff work at Whitemoor was narrow. Staff operated without a sense of the resources or guidance to achieve anything more than that vision. There was an increased emphasis on compliance (rather than control) and providing a safe environment for everyone:

The philosophy, I think it's about sort of keeping everybody safe in the prison, prisoners and staff, creating a safe working environment for everyone. I know you've got KPTs and everything else that comes into that, but ultimately I think it's about creating a safe environment. It's to keep people that are in prison safe, I think, to look after them, and to work with them really as best we can, to try and help them sort of through their time in prison. I think also reducing offending comes into it, so reducing their risk, but first and foremost I think it's to keep people safe and ensure the smooth running of the prison on a daily basis (Officer).

In the original study, the authors argued that in order to perform at their best staff need a 'professional' orientation which required a clear sense of direction and purpose and a strong management lead. At the time of this research staff felt that the future of the prison was uncertain; that there was insufficient support and recognition from senior managers and that there was a lack of sustained leadership as a result of the high turnover of Governors in charge.⁸⁰ Staff felt ill-informed and powerless, and

⁸⁰ In the staff survey, 23.8 per cent of uniformed staff agreed that they felt 'supported by senior managers in their work'; 21.5 per cent felt that 'the success they achieve in their working day is recognised and rewarded'; and 45 per cent agreed that 'it is

complained that they lacked leadership on the issues raised earlier in the report: on managing the new prisoner population and mix in particular. Their third Governor in two years took up post at the time of writing. Gaps had occurred between postings. Staff longed for a strong and stable senior management team.

Overall, officers expressed a sense of pride in their job: 70 per cent of staff agreed that they felt 'proud of the job they did', and responses to this questionnaire item produced no significant differences between uniformed and non-uniformed staff. However, this was constrained by the context in which they were working: the changing prisoner population they were dealing with; the political environment (and change of government) and legislation (including race equality and diversity policies); the prison's management (there was too much emphasis on efficiency savings and accountability); and a culture of fear, mistrust and risk. Staff felt they did an important and difficult job, but that this was not valued:⁸¹

I: What's the most important thing about your job? R: Having a sense of purpose I think, you know, I think we as officers tend to undermine, undervalue the job that we do. I think the public definitely undervalues the job that we do. But having a sense of purpose, we are there to protect the public, we're there to look after ourselves, we're there to look after each other and we're there to try and help the prisoners' progress, so actually it's quite a big role that we play. I think we forget that sometimes in the hum-drum of going to work every day. I think the public definitely don't get what we do. So having a sense of purpose and perhaps being valued for that. I: Being seen and being valued by whom? R: By each other, by our sort of, management. I would like to think we're valued by the public but I don't think we are. But perhaps being appreciated, you know? I'm proud when I say I'm a prison officer. I suppose over time I've been quite disappointed in the reactions that you can get from people outside of the job (Officer).

There was a sense that maintaining order and security – extraordinarily demanding tasks – were invisible and taken for granted accomplishments, both externally and within the prison:

Whitemoor is this outstanding prison because we're dealing with them all. But we are only just dealing with it. We're just holding it, and only just. However, at the end of the month, we've kept them under control for another month, and Whitemoor's this amazing prison that's dealt with them (Officer).

Staff wanted to do 'more than containment' but were unsure how this could be accomplished unless they had a specific role that demanded this. There was a lack of 'permission' to deliver creative and innovative activities for prisoners as a result of the recent media coverage and political position, and the consequent messages from area and national management level to produce 'no noise' and to go 'back to basics'. The 'basics' meant getting security right. So, whilst many officers we interviewed talked of their aspirations to contribute to rehabilitation, it was maintaining security (particularly physical security, such as searching) and considerations of risk that pervaded:

not worth putting in extra effort as it would go unrecognised'.

⁸¹ Just over a quarter of uniformed staff agreed that they were 'valued by senior management' (28 per cent); and just under a quarter agreed that they were 'valued by the Prison Service' (24 per cent).

There's a lot of attention ... security is always our main focus, we're always thinking about security, that's got to be our main focus. One thing the staff do all the time, and sometimes they don't even realise it, is the risk assessments. You risk assess the prisoners all the time. Every time a prisoner is approaching, they risk assess him, they're looking to see if there's any subtle changes. We don't realise how good we are at that because we do it so often every single day (Officer).

Beneath what sounded like cynicism, staff expressed a sense of dissatisfaction, arguing that they too had important needs and values which were 'being denied'. Staff wanted to be 'put back in touch with what brought them into the Service in the first place', and to 'take pride in the difficult bits'.

6.7 The use of authority

Officers agreed in principle that 'the best way to manage prisoners' was through 'relationships, talk and negotiation' (they also felt less at risk from any repercussions or injustices prisoners felt, this way):⁸²

R: I think the job is becoming less about discipline and more about rehabilitation. I think that approach is more obvious now. I've been in the job seven years and I think even in that time I've seen things change, and prisoners do seem to have more privileges and sort of 'freedom', if I can use that word - if that makes sense, now than they did even seven years ago. So I think officers actually have less control now than they did. I: Do you get control through relationships? R: You do get control through relationships. I think ultimately it's still about control but when officers try to exercise control, sometimes that's taken away from them. For example, let's say an officer places a prisoner on report for something that he has asked him to do, and the prisoner hasn't done it: then the prisoner will go into his adjudication and give his side of the story, and the adjudication will be dismissed. I think it can leave an officer feeling a little bit annoyed; 'well hang on a minute, I'm trying to ensure that prisoners are doing what they're supposed to be doing, when they're supposed to be doing it'. So the Governor dismissing it, is kind of undermining that officer's control. That happens more frequently now than it used to. So I think that's because Governors are afraid to find adjudications proven, for the fear of having them overturned, because there's pressure on them not to have adjudications overturned, so they'd rather dismiss it than find them guilty and have it overturned. It kind of sends out a message to the prisoners, and the prison officers that you can do that, and you might get away with it, you might not. It's fifty-fifty, you know? Hedge-your-bets kind of thing (Officer).

Staff were less confident in the use of authority than they had been in the original study. This meant in practice that prisoners often felt that authority was over-used by those officers who did follow the rules, or who 'jumped forward' after a period of standing back, or that authority was used in the wrong places: 'sometimes they use a

⁸² These findings were reflected in the survey results for the dimension 'Dynamic Authority', on which uniformed staff scored significantly higher than non-uniformed staff. Specifically, 56 per cent of uniformed officers disagreed with the statement 'friendly relationships with prisoners undermine your authority' (compared to 27 per cent of non-uniformed staff); 63 per cent disagreed that 'the best way to deal with prisoners is to be firm and distant' (compared to 26 per cent of non-uniformed staff); and 57 per cent disagreed that 'I keep conversations with prisoners short and business like' (compared to 26 per cent of non-uniformed staff).

sledgehammer to crack a walnut'. Staff were less confident in their physical safety, in the support of colleagues and managers in decision-making, in their ways of interacting with prisoners and the use of sanctions, in their knowledge of prisoners, in their ability to interact with prisoners from different cultural backgrounds and religious faiths, and of their value to the prison and the Prison Service.

The Incentives and Earned Privileges (IEP) Scheme was used by officers as a means to manage prisoners' behaviour (and to gain control and compliance) rather than placing prisoners on report:

The first step you'll go to is a written warning, and then the next step will be a second written warning, which will instigate an IEP review, which will more-often-than-not involve being placed on basic regime for a week. Although we're told not to look at the IEP system as a punishment, to a certain extent it is, because often that short-sharp-shock of being placed in prison clothing, no television and only, you know, three or four association periods a week, will be enough to tell that prisoner; 'right, I ain't going to do that any more' (Officer).

Although staff felt they had less control than in the past, they were reluctant to resort to 'nicking' prisoners, for two main reasons: they felt that appropriate punishments were not always given by adjudicating Governors, and that too many adjudications were dismissed or found 'not guilty': both of these outcomes, staff felt, reflected a lack of care for officers' safety and well-being, and a lack of support for their authority and decisions, especially when the adjudication was for violent behaviour or an assault on staff. Sixty-four per cent of uniformed officers felt that 'the adjudication system did not teach prisoners anything.'⁸³

Staff agreed that there was inconsistency in the application of the rules, the challenging of prisoners and the use of formal warnings or adjudications, and that this reduced the amount of authority they had:

Most Governors will adjourn for fourteen days' legal, because they don't know what to do, because they're frightened of losing on a technicality, so therefore the power swing is back to the prisoner again (Officer).

Humanity seeped in to the prison world when a crisis occurred or when someone needed it, and a member of staff came to give comfort:

But then when you see a prisoner in conflict and he's actually got a problem, I do see humanity coming out when people stop and actually say OK, right, let's talk about this, and they do give them that time, and they are treated in a humane kind of way (Officer).

I've had peers crying on one shoulder and I've had prisoners crying on the other shoulder through various things, I've cried on shoulders, you know, we do it, we're all human (Officer).

⁸³ Some of these expressed views appear in many prisons, particularly where 'traditional cultures' exist (see Liebling 2008; 2011). Staff at Whitemoor did not generally seem 'traditional-resistant' (see later), but expressed quite positive aspirations about their work with prisoners. They seemed poised between slipping into disaffection and rallying round, under the right and consistent leadership.

Showing care was considered acceptable when it was a last resort, a natural reaction to extreme feelings, when these were uttered. But it was regarded as potentially in conflict with authority.

Tensions arose between staff if prisoners flirted with female staff or tried to charm them. Some of the female staff excelled at using their authority, and cajoled prisoners into behaving well. Officers talked about the need to be aware of prisoners' predicaments in prison and to be prudent in their use of power. One officer talked about the effects of a focus on negative behaviour:

I think responding to negative and bad behaviour gets a bit too much attention. I think the negative thing, and this is both staff and prisoners, gets focused on more. It's like that old saying 'you can do a hundred good deeds but you're always remembered for your last bad deed' – it's the same for prisoners and staff. So I think there are too many people that focus, and I'm just as guilty as everyone else, on looking for the bad. They are looking for the person who's passing, the person who has a fight, and the person who has drugs. The person who is assaulting someone else, rather than looking for the good things to report. We are always looking for bad things and it is just unfortunate. It's just something you fall into as an officer (Officer).

6.8 Fear, power and safety

One of the key themes raised by staff (particularly uniformed officers) at Whitemoor was fear. This was associated with uncertainty about organisational issues, and with perceptions of safety and the power of the prisoner population. In the survey, half of the uniformed staff (52 per cent) said they felt safe in their working environment. Seventy-nine per cent agreed that 'the level of power prisoners had in Whitemoor' was 'too high' (this is a higher proportion than typically found elsewhere). Staff expressed considerable anxiety about the future of the prison and the security of their jobs; they were very aware of continuing efficiency savings and the threat of market-testing. Staff felt they were 'losing their power' and that national as well as local policies were undermining and demoralising. They were also anxious about some of the imminent changes within the prison, such as the outcome of the re-profiling exercise and the impact of (what was still referred to as) 'workforce modernisation':

Something that's been talked a lot about I suppose, since the new government got into power, was that the Conservatives have already said before, that they would want to privatise us, so people are concerned about that, I think. It's just a matter of waiting to see what happens (Officer).

Their sense of a lack of power was closely related to their feeling of a lack of authority. In the past, staff felt that they had 'had the last word', and that decisions on the landings were made by them.⁸⁴ Now, however, they felt that prisoners could 'bypass' officers and that they more often sought decisions, information and action from middle management and senior management level:

Years ago, or even when I first started, an officer was the final word. Prisoners now have found a way of getting past the officer. If I was to give

⁸⁴ Here, 'the past' meant around the time of the last study, rather than any earlier period. These shifts in the balance of power between staff and prisoners are clearly cyclical (see Liebling 2002) and often subtle.

you a written warning, the first thing they do is go and see the SO who would turn it around. All prisoners have caught on to this, so they just tend to ignore the officer. Whatever an officer does now, if prisoners don't like it, they'll go straight to the SO. Don't like it? They'll go to the PO. Don't like it? They'll complain to a governor (Officer).

Whilst in the opinion of many officers the 'Number One' Governor had the most power in the prison, staff felt that the 'balance of power' in the prison had 'shifted towards prisoners'. This was as a result of staff: prisoner ratios (staff were outnumbered by prisoners, but staffing levels had also reduced over the years), and increasing attention to Human Rights and access to, or use of, legal advocacy. Prisoners' complaints, including those about the behaviour of staff, were taken more seriously:

If a group of prisoners on a spur which has got a maximum of 42 prisoners, wanted to take control of that spur at any time, they could. Because 80 per cent of the day there's only one member of staff on a spur to 42 prisoners. So physically if you're there on your own as an officer, you're not going to stop 42 prisoners from doing what they want. If they turned round and said; 'get off this spur because we're now going to riot', well, what are you going to do, stand there and let them beat the shit out of you? No, you're not, you're going to get off. So if they want to take a spur they can take a spur (Officer).

One officer provided this description of the most powerful or influential prisoners:

They are clever enough, and shrewd enough, and experienced enough, to distance themselves on the face of things. There are individuals that you can liken to a swan; they're sitting on the top of the water very gracefully, very elegant looking, and underneath the surface of the water their feet are going very, very quick and there's a lot of activity. In the same way, some of the more astute clever prisoners, whether it's within the Muslim community, or whether it's within the drug dealing community, or whether it's attacks and then bullying, they're very, very able to appear to be quite detached from everything. But they're still working the strings and controlling what's going on around them (Officer).

Safety in the prison felt 'precarious'. Uniformed staff scored significantly lower than non-uniformed staff on the questionnaire dimension, 'Safety, Control and Security'. Staff expressed significant concerns about their own safety and position of vulnerability. These anxieties became more prevalent following a number of very serious assaults on staff at which point the level of tension rose ('it could have been me'; 'it could have been more serious'). Staff felt that the type of prisoner population at Whitemoor (mostly convicted of serious violence), the decreasing number of staff in post, and the sense of nothing to lose in the case of many prisoners given long sentences, increased the likelihood of violent assaults against staff.⁸⁵ As one officer explained:

I'm constantly wary but it's not a burden and it's not something I lose sleep over. I am getting more and more concerned, because the levels of violence

⁸⁵ Thirty per cent of uniformed staff disagreed that 'assaults by prisoners on staff were rare'.

against officers are increasing in frequency and severity. We're getting people into prison who are a lot, lot younger, serving huge, huge sentences with very little to lose. If you're serving life on a very long tariff, the prospect is you're going to go and do somebody some very severe damage, and get very, very little - if anything - added to your sentence. So you've got very little to gain. My theory is; what can you take from somebody who's got nothing? And all the time the staff are diminishing in number (Officer).

Another officer made a comparison with the past:

Up until recently it's been a safer place to work than it was in the early days because it's been quiet, and because we had that middle bit where we were in control of it. Having said that, back in the early days it was a very safe place to work because we all watched out for each other. Now it's getting to the point where it's not. My opinion is that looking at the place for the last two - three years, the way it's gone, somebody at some point at Whitemoor will die. That is my opinion and whether it will be a prisoner or whether it will be a white shirt is debatable, but somebody will die at Whitemoor. I say that for a number of reasons, because the amount of assaults on staff are increasing no end, the amounts of assaults on prisoners are increasing, and the severity is building up. The last one that happened with a member of staff, instead of it being an isolated one-on-one or whatever, everybody joined in. That's becoming more frequent. You've got ghettos on the wings now. So I think although it's been safe to work in the prison, at Whitemoor we're back on the slide down, downwards (Officer).

In the formal interviews, when asked what their biggest fear was, the most common responses were about threats to their physical well-being: being badly assaulted or getting hurt:

The only fear that you have is basically you could have hot oil poured over you as an officer; you could be stabbed, assaulted, or taken hostage (Officer).

Levels and types of fear impact significantly on perceptions of and attitudes towards prisoners, as well as on officer orientations towards the purpose of their work.

6.9 Perceptions and characterisations of prisoners

Staff expressed a degree of empathy for prisoners' circumstances (particularly those who were either more mature in age or who had been given a very long sentence or tariff) and showed a good understanding of prisoners' disadvantaged backgrounds. Staff often theorised about why people committed crime and their thoughts ventured into the subject of the psychology of criminal conduct and how certain prisoners they dealt with had ended up in prison:

Ninety per cent of the time, prisoners can be quite nice people. It's just that selfish side. I'm the only prison officer in the family, and when I first joined the job, my family used to say, "What are they like? What are they like?" and I was struggling to find a common denominator for prisoners; what's the thing that is common to all prisoners? And I think its selfishness, they're all 'me, me, me', you know? To commit the crimes that they've done, they've

put themselves above others, but it took me a long time to actually look at that and realise that it's probably selfishness. They're really selfish and they're like 'I'm entitled to'. I wouldn't mind having a penny for every time I've heard; "I'm entitled to this". I think it must be a precursor to be able to commit, to give them the permission to commit crimes against other people. The other thing that I said to my family is that I'm amazed how much talent we had, locked behind doors. Some of them are so gifted in so many different ways. Some of the art work here, you must have seen some of the art work that these people produce, and it's fantastic. It really is. There's some really talented people and it's just a shame that they couldn't put that talent to better use (Officer).

I'm certainly a lot less judgemental than I was when I came in here. A lot less judgemental, it's just that age old thing, that socially you're told, as you're growing up that if people break the law, if people kill people, then they're evil bad people, and they should be locked away forever in a very dark hole and never let out. Truth is, they're all human beings, they've all had different reasons for being here and doing what they did. Some of them have never had a chance and were always going to end up here because of their own social circle and their own family structure and how they've grown up. So, you have to become less closed-minded (Officer).

I think that they are, in general, the people in life and society that perhaps haven't had a very good start in life and their life events have brought them to be where they are for whatever reason. That covers all types of offending behaviour, so whether they're gang members, whether they're sex offenders, whether they're terrorists, it's the blueprint of their life, if you like, that's taken them to where they are. I do actually think it's really unfortunate for some of them, I do. There's some that I do empathise with and others that I find it harder to. There's some that I think prison is the best place for them to be, and, they really would be a danger to the public on the outside, and there's others that I think, 'maybe prison isn't the best place for them to be' and that it could be a negative experience for them. But I don't look at them really negatively and think [groans], you know, 'prisoners', you know? Look down on them. There's some actually really likeable people that are in prison. I've met some fascinating characters in prison, and people that I've genuinely liked and when they go, I think to myself 'I really do hope they make a go of it, because they're alright'. But their life circumstances have led them to be where they are (Officer).

In contrast to their fairly tolerant or 'enlightened' views about prisoners' backgrounds, staff treated prisoners in the present with suspicion: no uniformed officers in the survey agreed that they trusted prisoners. Officers were very aware of the potential for getting hurt at the hands of prisoners:

You are very, very wary. You're very aware of your personal space. You're very aware of where people are and the fact of what he's in here for, you know? 'Could he hurt me?' That sort of thing. You can't help having those thoughts going through your head. You can be as well trained as you want, but it only takes that one time for you to make a mistake or for someone to catch you off guard, and you're in a lot of trouble. Ninety-nine per cent of

the time they will only be friendly with you because they want something, but that's what they do. To have to try and get by, to get those little extra creature comforts (Officer).

They've all got the potential for taking someone hostage. They've all got the potential. As far as I'm concerned, every single one of those in the whole prison has got the potential to do whatever. You do not end up in Whitemoor unless you've done something really wrong. So you have to remember that every single one of them has got the potential to do almost anything, otherwise they wouldn't be in Whitemoor in the first place (Officer).

At the end of the day they're all in a high security prison, and they're not in there for pinching sweets out of the corner shop. They're in there for something serious. Which means they've got it in their make-up, they're able and willing and capable of doing something if their buttons are pressed and they're stressed, or whatever (Officer).

This high awareness of the dangerousness of their population in general left little room for optimism about their future potential.

When asked to describe prisoners as a group, staff found it difficult to generalise or 'pigeonhole' people ('there are as many different types of prisoners as there are prisoners'):

I think they're too diverse a group to label, really. There's loads of different types of prisoners. You've got your ones who are respectful, and all they're trying to do is just do their time and get through, and they never do anything wrong. Then you've got the ones that are doing their time and trying to get through but occasionally will break the rules by brewing a bit of hooch or, this, that or the other. Or maybe they'll smoke some drugs or something, you know? But generally they're pretty good with staff and they're just using those things as a means to get by the same way that people on the outside do. And then you've got the ones who seem to just enjoy getting into trouble and try to be involved in every kind of possible thing they can: hiding phones, hiding weapons, hiding drugs. Then you've got the ones that are extremely violent and have nothing but disdain and contempt for staff and are never respectful — there's loads. Prison is a reflection of society and it will be as diverse as society is. It would be exactly the same as getting a hundred and twenty-five random people off the street, sticking them in a room and then saying what have all these people got in common? You could never do it (Officer).

There were some individuals who had committed offences from which staff distanced themselves, and others for whom they had more empathy: in terms of social distance several staff quoted the adage, 'it could have been me'. One officer suggested that 'it's a very fine line between standing on the side of good and going wrong'. Several staff were adamant that although prisoners should be treated as human beings, with respect and fairness, there were boundaries to their compassion, as officers:⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Discipline staff scored lowest on the dimension, 'Positive Attitudes to Prisoners', compared to non-discipline staff (2.31, compared to 2.67), See Table 4.19.

You can be personable, you can be friendly, you can empathise, but you'll never be their friend (Officer).

Officers commonly said that it was not their responsibility to punish prisoners, although some felt that prison was too comfortable, or too 'soft', and that prisoners were given too many privileges and material goods. Two thirds (66 per cent) of uniformed officers in the survey agreed that Whitemoor was 'too comfortable for prisoners' (Table 4.16). In some cases, this could contribute to feelings of resentment towards prisoners, a view that 'they get too much and we don't get enough'.

Where we should have been treating them decently and respectfully and what-not, I think we've gone a little bit too far now, and we've got to the stage where we bend over backwards to keep them happy at times and do more for them than what they really deserve. We do it because we're told in today's culture and today's world that we have to do it. But I think that we treat them too well at times, and too much emphasis is put on them, and their rights, rather than staff's rights or staff's safety and happiness and what-not. I think if the victims of these prisoners' crimes were aware of how well they are treated at times in prison, they'd be gutted. To know how well these prisoners are sometimes treated, and how far we go to appease them, and how far we go to treat them (Officer).

Only ten per cent of uniformed staff agreed that 'most prisoners are decent people' (Table 4.19), whilst in interviews, prisoners were variously described as 'people with problems' who 'seem to have different morals'; as 'clients' or 'residents' to be treated with respect; as 'potential risks'; as 'lost'; as 'like children at times, but very big and very dangerous children'; the older staff in particular talked about how their relationships with prisoners drew out a parental sentiment.

Only twelve per cent of uniformed staff agreed that 'most prisoners can be rehabilitated'.⁸⁷ In interviews, however, most staff agreed that prisoners could change their offending behaviour; that many prisoners made real attempts to change their behaviour; and that prisoners had the potential to change if they wanted to. Prisoners described as 'genuine' and 'decent', who made a concerted effort to change, were supported by staff; they wanted to see them progress (84 per cent of uniformed staff agreed that 'supporting prisoners' was 'part of their job', Table 4.18). Whilst agreeing that staff should work with prisoners to help them change their attitudes, officers tended to feel that the 'formal' methods of addressing offence-related thinking and behaviour (e.g. attendance on accredited offending behaviour programmes) were ineffective and reflected a process of prisoners 'jumping through the hoops' in order to progress through the system. A better alternative was to invest in rehabilitative practices earlier in the lives of offenders:

Long have gone the days where rehabilitation is the answer. Because it hasn't worked; we've tried it for hundreds of years, and society just doesn't want these people on the street. The sooner that we as a nation accept

⁸⁷ Compared to 28 per cent of non-uniformed staff; Table 4.19. These figures are low by comparison with some other establishments (e.g., 16 per cent of uniformed staff at Garth agreed or strongly agreed that 'most prisoners can be rehabilitated', and more than a third of uniformed staff at three private Cat B prisons agreed or strongly agreed that 'most prisoners can be rehabilitated', but higher than the figures for Full Sutton (four per cent of uniformed staff agreed that 'most prisoners are decent people', and six per cent of uniformed staff agreed that 'most prisoners can be rehabilitated').

that, the better off we'll be. I'm not saying you shouldn't work with them. I'm not saying you shouldn't rehabilitate. But I think the millions and millions and millions of pounds that we spend at Whitemoor prison is wasted. I don't know how much it costs, but if you put all those millions into a YP unit, you may stop some of them getting to Whitemoor, then you've got a success rate. At Whitemoor they're already on the career criminal listing, they've done it for years, they're never going to change. You're just throwing good money after bad money. I'm not going to say they're all incapable of changing when they get to Whitemoor, but I think if you wanted a bigger success rate, you've got to work at the beginning part of the cycle rather than the tail end of it (Officer).

6.10 Staff relationships and officer culture

The culture among staff at Whitemoor was ambivalent and avoidant rather than punitive. Staff were aware of the dangerousness of their population, often wanted to help individuals move forward, but were 'skating on ice', trying to find the right kind of relationship without taking risks. Staff were uncertain of their role rather than against prisoners, but they also had to absorb and make sense of a number of serious assaults on their colleagues. They were often 'present' rather than 'engaged', completing tasks 'lightly' rather than forming relationships. Staff and prisoners encountered each other 'in role' rather than out of it (on the main wings), but this meant that they often did not 'know each other' well enough to discard fears and stereotypes. Appendix 5 and 6 show the survey responses of staff on 'traditional culture' and 'punitiveness' dimensions, compared to staff in selected familiar Cat B establishments (Tables 5.3 and 6.3). It can be seen that staff felt more strongly that they were unsupported by managers than they felt negatively towards prisoners. That is, their scores on attitudes towards prisoners are towards the low end of a range, but not out of line with views expressed at other establishments. Their views on and levels of trust in senior managers were significantly lower than at other establishments. There was a tendency for those staff who did form relationships, or work closely with prisoners to be isolated. It was easy for staff to 'fall back on' the basic security tasks.

At the time of the research one of the key issues for staff was the high proportion of new and inexperienced officers. Staff talked about the importance of 'the team' on the residential wings and how the loss of several 'strong', experienced, and 'dependable' individuals in a short space of time could be quite disruptive to the running of a residential wing. As one officer with only two years experience explained:

We've had a large influx of new staff over a very, very short period of time and, despite only having just under two years experience as an officer myself, I'm finding there's more people on the wing coming to me for advice and guidance. I have more people coming to me than I have to go to myself. When I first arrived, there were a very strong group of officers on here, very, very strong. We had a lot of people who had been on here for quite a few years. It's changed now, it's definitely changed over the past couple of years, and it's changed only in the sense that, like I've said before, we've had so many new staff come in all at one time that it has weakened the team somewhat. But it's a team that's strengthening over time. When I first joined, I was quite lucky. I was one of the only newer members of staff to have worked with the team as it was then, which was the strongest. I think everyone knew the expectations and everyone followed them. Even if

you were someone who was more lenient, or more strict, you knew what to expect, you knew that if you needed something doing then there would be a person in the group who could facilitate that need. It came from the fact that obviously everyone in the group had already defined themselves as the kind of officer they are. Whereas at the moment, we've got a lot of staff who are in varying stages of defining who they are, and finding out the kind of role that they're going to work, it makes the status quo not really 'happen'. It's quite uneven, and you tend to find that it comes across that people appear not to be as dependable as you think. Some do get very lazy, some start lazy and get really, really good, really dependable. So that's the way I see it as having changed, I think (Officer).

Another officer described how unsettling the loss of experienced staff could be. When asked to describe the group of officers on the wing he worked he replied as follows:

Troubled at the moment, only through a lot of changes. In the last year there's been significant changes to the amount of staff. Experienced staff members have either left the job or left the wing. A lot of new starters have come on, so it upsets the balance, upsets what they're used to, so we've got to get back. Once we've all gelled and spent more time working together, we can then get back to that unity. There's too many 'unsures' at the moment. Not quite sure who each other are, how they work, but it will come back together in time (Officer).

Staff repeatedly argued that working with their colleagues, and the relationships they had with each other, provided most job satisfaction. Although 92 per cent of uniformed staff felt that they had good relationships with colleagues, staff-staff relationships had changed in one respect: levels of trust were lower than they had been when the original study was conducted (see Liebling and Price 1999: 35). During the fieldwork there were several on-going investigations of staff which was 'causing a lot of bad feeling in some parts of the prison' and 'that sort of seeps into other areas'. There were certain circumstances (most notably during and after an incident) when staff pulled together and relationships were characterised by support, cohesion, camaraderie and a collective spirit. After such incidents staff confidence was boosted and their sense of being in control increased. With reference to a recent assault on staff by a prisoner, one officer said the following about staff relationships:

They're your colleagues: some of them are your friends, and together we're a family. But all families have their problems, if you want to put it in such ways. There's a lot of back stabbing goes on. But as previous events have shown, they all prevail, they all pull through and they all look after one another, no matter what the differences are personally, how big or small. When something happens we're all there. When needed they all stick together, no matter what their differences are. When it needs to be done we do it, and we do it very well (Officer).

There was a level of trust among staff (60.4 per cent of uniformed staff agreed that they trusted colleagues, whilst 73.3 per cent believed that they were trusted by their colleagues; Table 4.3) and its importance was certainly advocated by staff:

If you didn't have trust in the people you're working with you've failed anyway, so you have to, just by walking on the spur, you have to have that trust in people (Officer).

You have to trust your own staff, you know? Even if you don't like them, you have to trust them. And you know, I suppose, going on a landing, I know that staff would be behind me, I do know that, and vice versa. So I do trust staff (Officer).

Relationships amongst staff were highly valued; when asked in interview 'what is the best thing about your job?' replies included the following:

For me, the reason I come to work every day: it's the staff. I enjoy working with the staff, the other officers (Officer).

A lot of humour and a lot of banter. We do laugh a lot as a group, which I think is really important. It really gets us through. There's a good sense of camaraderie. That's quite bonding, if you like (Officer).

Staff. The community unit. Family feeling. You're always going to find someone who wants to listen to your problem and try and help you, always (Officer).

Just the support that you feel from your staff, who might not necessarily be your friends, but colleagues in general. When you're in a bit of a sticky situation with a prisoner and he may be threatening to kick the shit out of you, or whatever; then you get someone come up behind you and stand up for you, back you up and support you. That's happened a few times and you think, 'I'm glad he was stood behind me because it could have gone horribly wrong if he hadn't have been there'. When you're going through a difficult time, whether it be in work or out of work. I think that's staff morale, you know? The way they stick together is good (Officer).

Without that camaraderie, and without that togetherness, the prisoners will pick up on it and they will isolate you, and that's when you become the weakest link in the security (Officer).

Despite the camaraderie, staff talked about feeling less safe than they did in the past; they were less confident of 'back-up' from colleagues and felt there was less teamwork (and therefore a less safe environment) than there had also been in the past ('it was a really close-knit group, you were watched and safe').⁸⁸ Relationships amongst officer grades on the landings were sometimes fractious; staff talked about a 'blame culture' and a learned and expected suspiciousness of their colleagues. The lack of trust amongst staff undermined their strength as a team as well as their authority:

We're the top prison in the country, the most secure prison in northern Europe. We've got the most dangerous prisoners in Britain alone. The

⁸⁸ Eighty-one per cent of uniformed staff agreed they were 'supported in their work by their colleagues', whilst 16 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed and three per cent disagreed. The staff survey scores on 'Relationships with Peers' were relatively high, with uniformed staff scoring 3.76 (maximum 5) and non-uniformed staff scoring 3.92 (significantly higher). See Table 4.14.

prisoners know how to take full advantage of us at the moment, because we haven't got the strength we used to have within ourselves as a team. Once we all know where we stand, we can stand strong. But because of this blame culture that we have at the moment, the backstabbing culture; all of these aspects, we are unsure of ourselves. The prisoners know there's a certain feeling of vulnerability between the staff (Officer).

Threats to staff safety could have an impact on the interpersonal relationships between staff:

We've had a lot of assaults lately. A lot of violence, a lot more than we've had for years. So the staff are on edge at the minute, and consequently they're bickering, and they're separated a little bit at the moment. They've been miserable and they've been moaning, and it's probably because they're scared (Officer).

The 'blame culture' staff described was borne of security consciousness: the recognition that staff could be manipulated and conditioned by prisoners, the emphasis on gathering security intelligence, and the fear of losing their job through actions considered to be unprofessional or accusations by prisoners.⁸⁹ When asked 'what do you think is the biggest issue amongst staff at Whitemoor?' one officer responded as follows:

I think a fear of, not fear, I think it's this grass-each-other-up sort of, it is a fear really. Instead of resolving issues between themselves, I think it's this grievance process that staff are more aware of, probably because at the moment there are some pretty big investigations (Officer).

Another officer speculated on how it might be different at Whitemoor given the focus on security:

I notice it more at Whitemoor. I never knew at my last jail of anybody papering anybody up, and anybody being investigated. But at Whitemoor, and I don't know if it's because it goes with the High Security territory, but anything you do that could be seen as a breach of security or anything you do that could undermine the security of the prison, is a big no-no. But I've noticed it a lot more at Whitemoor (Officer).

Other officers told us how blame filtered downwards through the levels of management as a result of the pressure to perform; how, instead of confronting staff personally they were 'encouraged' to report colleagues, 'put it on paper' and pass information on to the Security Department; and how the compensation culture in society was 'creeping' into the Prison Service. Staff were somewhat wary of each other, of what they could say to each other (in terms of what was deemed politically correct), and they were fearful that 'people get sacked for making silly comments because somebody finds it offensive':

To be honest, one thing I would say is the culture now seems to be tell on people. Slightest little thing; put it on an SIR, drop that member of staff.

⁸⁹ In order to combat some of these issues, staff wanted more team-building events: 'all people talk about is work because that's the only connection that binds us, so if we were to have two, three, times a year team-building days I think that would be a very good idea' (Officer).

They may have done something perfectly legal and within the law, but if another member of staff (and I've seen it over the years) doesn't like that member of staff, they make up something. That member of staff gets suspended. Whereas before, you would work more as a team. Now it seems to be let's just moan about people, let's belittle people, let's highlight something that they haven't done. There seems to be a culture of that at the moment (Officer).

There are factions. The culture within staff of how we deal with problems between staff is changing for the worse. There are staff here now who, if you had an argument, put it on paper and put it to the governor, gets you investigated. I know a member of staff here who had a paper put in against him because he talked in an aggressive manner. Society has changed, hasn't it? OK, we've got the blame culture, we've got the compensation culture, and that is moving through all of society. And I think that's now creeping in to the Prison Service. You're almost encouraged to uphold political correctness at all times. In fact you're told to. It doesn't make sense. You know, we're only human. And we're not allowed to make any mistakes, you know? (Officer).

Staff also felt scrutinised by management in their efforts to try and prevent staff corruption, and described how this had a knock-on effect on the way that staff looked at each other.⁹⁰

R: *We've now got a Compliance Team. We always had bent screws, but now for some reason we have Compliance Teams and we have all sorts of different things. There's a big emphasis on getting bent staff out. Now I agree with that; I don't like bent staff, don't get me wrong. But to teach everybody, straightaway that my priority is to watch you in case you're being conditioned and then paper you up, it's not the right way to do it. It shouldn't be put in my mind that that's what I'm expecting, which is almost what's happening, you know? It should be the last resort. I shouldn't be working with you thinking 'I think she's a bit bent, this one'. But that's what you've got, all the time. I: So there's a kind of suspiciousness, not only about what prisoners are up to but what your colleagues are up to as well? **R:** [Affirmative noise] *it's becoming the culture really (Officer).**

One officer described how there were fluctuations in the closeness of staff relationships; they could feel very different from day to day:

It's strange, at times, it can seem really, really unified and you feel really good about the people you work with. And other times, you feel that they're just doing everything they can to try and undermine you, undercut you. It changes from day to day. Some days you have a really good team spirit and then other days, you'll have people who can't stand to work together, but then I suppose that comes with working with people who you often see more than your own family, you know? And your own friends. So you're

⁹⁰ The knock-on effect could also stem from the nature of staff-prisoner relationships; when staff corruption had been exposed, staff became more wary of prisoners and their potential to manipulate and condition officers as well as more wary of staff who might be 'engaging too far' with prisoners. As one officer suggested, 'I wonder if that breeds this kind of suspicious sort of way of looking at everybody'.

going to annoy each other occasionally. So it's fairly good, the relationship between staff. It could be a lot better, but what we need is people who are actually going to sit us down and make us bond as a team (Officer).

In the survey, around one-in-five (19 per cent) of uniformed staff stated they felt that staff morale was good at Whitemoor. In interviews, some officers felt that it had dropped since the rise in the number of Muslim prisoners, the 'corresponding' rise in violence, the increase in the number of new staff, and the consequent rise in fear. Another officer said:

Morale is very low. It used to be years ago, it was quite strange, because one wing would have low morale, there'd be an incident, and then that would lift and it would be almost like a cycle. But at the moment it seems to be [low] across the prison. Which is quite sad, and it's been quite a while it's been low (Officer).

There was some discord between officers which suggested underlying differences in approaches to managing prisoners and inconsistency in willingness to challenge their behaviour. This reflected a lack of clarity about how prisoners should be treated and why. One Officer gave the following example:

Depending on who the member of staff is, you tend to find that some staff will get called some not-very-nice-names at times, and the member of staff won't challenge back ... We had an incident this morning where one of the prisoners got very irate because he thought something was happening with him and it was cancelled. He spoke to a member of staff really disrespectfully. I was the collator, so I got out of my chair, because I could hear what was going on, and thinking 'well, if I can hear what's going on, other staff must be able to hear what's going on, but where is the other staff?' Naturally I'm thinking people will drift towards this, but people didn't drift. Anyway, I got out my chair and I went and told this prisoner in no uncertain terms that he doesn't speak to staff in that way. And as he walked down the landing with this member of staff, he said to this member of staff, 'I can't stand her and she can't stand me. The feeling's mutual.' Instead of the member of staff then saying 'irrespective of that, what she was saying to you is right. You do not speak to me in that manner. I do not speak to you in that manner', he just left it, and when he came back into the office I said to him, 'Did he apologise to you?' He said 'No, leave it.' I said 'When he comes back out, I'm going to tell him to apologise to you because you should not be spoken to in that manner.' And he said 'No, leave it, leave it.' Then he came to me five or ten minutes later and said to me 'I mean it, [name], just leave it.' He said 'I don't want to antagonise him any more.' I said 'It's not about antagonising him, it's about showing him the boundaries of respect and you don't speak to people like that.' But a) I was disappointed that staff didn't drift that way, and b) I was thinking I shouldn't have to be telling somebody that, a person I worked with, that a prisoner should not be speaking to you that way. He should be able to say that to the prisoner (Officer).

Another officer said:

There's days that go by and you think 'well, why should I keep challenging them when there's staff stood there letting them do it?' Do you know what I mean? I've bought this up time and time again. We're supposed to work as a team, challenge more, but it'll happen for five minutes then it'll go, you know? Nobody's doing the same job. There's only a few that are doing the same job. And everybody else runs away from it. There's the strong, and the challenging. There is the weak that might challenge if they've got somebody with them. Then there's the ones that run away, that are the weakest, that want an easy life. That won't challenge, won't run around for them (Officer).

There were some weaknesses in line management arrangements, staff suggested, in part linked to a high number of temporary promotions and acting up roles at SO level:

Many staff can have a nose-to-nose, say no, and then the SO gives in to them and you're made to look stupid in front of prisoners and other officers (Officer).

I think that we have very little power now. On paper we have no less. But in real terms, if you say something to a prisoner and he doesn't agree with it, he will go and see the SO and the SOs then take over. Whereas in days gone by, the SO would say "deal with your own stuff". They wouldn't step on your toes, they wouldn't undermine you, but now they do. It's all for the quiet life really (Officer).

Significant changes were being made to the management arrangements on the wings at the time of the research, including the abolition of the Principal Officer role. Although a number of line managers were well liked by their colleagues, some were considered to be weak at maintaining authority. As with relationships between staff and prisoners, staff indicated that relationships between staff and Senior Officers were 'friendly' but power did not flow effectively through them. There was often a high degree of personal support, but not much 'clear guidance'. Line managers were not always reliable when issues of control or the need to challenge poor staff behaviour arose:

Sometimes they'll see someone as being a good manager just because they take the time and trouble to come and talk to them and get to know their names. That is a good trait, but it doesn't necessarily mean you're a good manager (Officer).

Collectively, line managers were expected to 'maintain standards' with both staff and prisoners, so should not be afraid to challenge, or tackle inconsistency:

I: What's the worst thing about your job? What frustrates you most? R: Inconsistency. I: Among staff? R: Yeah, and managers. You can have it, not so much now, but a few months ago it was ... you can have one manager come on duty one day and tell you something one way, and then you have a different manager come on the next day and tell you something a different way. And what I used to find infuriating was, I used to think 'if I was the prisoner in that cell, I want to know from A-to-Z what's going to happen'. Now, we go and tell him one thing one day, then we go and tell

him something different a different day. Then they wonder why they get upset. Now, I get upset 'cause I think I need to know, and if I need to know, he needs to know. Now, you need to know what's right, and you have to stick to the same thing. Everybody, every day, 'cause everything lives within a time scale. Everything is done there within time scales. The feeding, the going to work, their exercise, their gym. Everything is set on a time scale, 'cause it has to be because of your limitations. Inconsistency's terrible, makes me really angry (Officer).

Good managers were described as those with 'a good manner', who were 'unified' with one another, and who listened to and consulted staff when making decisions. They had 'man management skills':

When they make a decision, they're unified, so they come out, all three of them, saying we're going to do this, this and this. You don't have someone going, 'I don't agree with that', you don't have someone saying that's a bad idea. They've seemed to talk about it before they make their mind up. A lot of things that they do, with regards to interviewing prisoners, if they're on anti-bullying strategies, and things like that, a lot of what I read and a lot of what they've done makes sense. And with [manager], I like the fact that she'll ask us before she does anything. Recently she reviewed a certain prisoner, and said 'I think I'm going to lift this restriction'. I disagreed because this prisoner had thrown hot butter over another prisoner, and they wanted to lift the kitchen restriction. I disagreed because I think that should be last. But I suggested that the restriction just to stay on the 2's landing should be lifted, because that makes him able to use the shower, and go to exercise, and get his food without having to ask my permission, which makes my job easier and makes his life a bit better as well. And she listened. She agreed, and that's what happened. I like that as well (Officer).

Talking about a particularly good SO, one officer explained:

I'd say because she was able to maintain sort of a balance between the disciplinarian, needing to get the job done, i.e. meeting your targets and objectives, but also very much there in a personal sort of way so that you could talk to her very honestly and openly about things. You knew she wouldn't judge you, you knew she wouldn't go off and tell anyone else about it, so yeah, very good for both parts; the personal support, but also the professional side of it as well (Officer).

Some development work on line management was underway as the research was being completed.

6.11 Staff views of senior management

Staff (like prisoners) felt invisible, that they were not being given the opportunity to achieve their potential, and that their voices were 'not being heard'. The inquests from a series of deaths in custody were ongoing, and this made staff feelings of exposure more overt. The message staff were hearing from senior and Directorate management level was 'back to basics' ('mops in buckets', they said, as a refrain) and the importance of 'no noise from the High Security Estate'. This meant an 'absence' of trouble rather than the achievement of clear goals. The focus of the job was

performing security whilst maintaining professionalism and confidentiality about what went on inside the walls. Under a third (30 per cent) of uniformed staff agreed that 'the Governor is concerned about the wellbeing of staff' and 79 per cent agreed that 'there are times where Governors fail to support staff when dealing with prisoners' (Tables 4.4 and 4.5); 28 per cent of staff felt 'valued by senior managers' and 24 per cent felt 'supported in my work by senior managers' (Table 4.6).⁹¹

The message to 'get security right' included an expectation that the role of staff was to gather and report security intelligence; they were encouraged put in an Security Information Report about anything they felt concerned or suspicious about, whether it involved a prisoner or a member of staff. This practice unintentionally exacerbated mistrust within the prison and contributed to a *lack* of knowledge about the prisoners staff had to manage on the wings (especially High Risk or High Profile prisoners where there were issues of confidentiality). Staff felt uninformed by senior management (41 per cent of uniformed staff disagreed with the statement 'I am kept well informed of what is going on in the prison'; Table 4.5); they complained that important security information was not being fed back and that the population was becoming an 'unknown quantity'. They knew that information existed but did not have access to it or did not have it passed on to them in sufficient depth or frequency.⁹² Staff said 'we don't know whether we are fishing for the police or helping him [the Governor] run a good prison':

I think what's happening, the biggest problem we have is [staff] feel a little bit left out, they're not getting the information they require. They want to do their job and they want to do it well, and they want to achieve and, you know? Do all the things that we can, but sometimes we're just left a little bit in the dark, or there's some decisions and we don't know why they've been made, so it is a communication problem (Officer).

It's such a very obvious thing to say, and it's probably a word that's going to get thrown around so much, but communication is important. It's important in the sense that we need to know, we need to have up-to-date information, we need to know what it is we're supposed to be challenging, what it is we're supposed to be looking for. This is not just from senior managers, this is from security and other departments in the prison. Which prisoner is the one who is suspected of having the mobile phone? Which prisoner should we be looking at for dealing drugs? And, what is acceptable, and what is not acceptable? I think senior managers should be on the wings a lot more (Officer).

Staff wanted clearer direction, and more visibility from senior managers:

When I started, I used to be on the landing, years ago, a governor would come on the wing every day and walk around the wing every day. You

⁹¹ In group discussions, staff expressed lowest levels of trust towards senior managers and highest levels towards officer colleagues. However, it was also widely acknowledged that the level of trust between officers was diminishing. Officers described a lack of trust in the organisation as a whole. As one officer commented: "It's changed because there seems to me to be a lack of trust ... and it's not just from management to staff level, it's potentially right through the whole Prison Service" (Officer).

⁹² As in the original report, 'without knowledge, [of prisoners] officers become deskilled. With knowledge (through relationships), their observations are meaningful, their judgement can be informed, and they know how to handle potentially dangerous situations. Staff ... use information to deploy their authority wisely and carefully with the complexities and sensitivities of their population in mind' (Liebling and Price 1999: 24).

would automatically go and escort them. It was for their protection. You knew where they were, you know? Courtesy, respect, it was a respectful thing. Governors now, I don't even know their names, because we see them so rarely. So many of them are mirror men; 'I'll look into it, I'll look into it', and never get back to you. They're almost scared of the inmates. There's a couple that do come on the landings, but it is a couple. The rest of them never come on the landings, so they're not approachable, and they've got no respect from the prisoners and they don't gain the respect of the staff. But there used to be one governor and he'd come on the wing, and he'd walk around. Every time he'd come on, if it was his shift, he would come on and he'd walk round the wing. He would come up to you and he knew who you were. He took the time because he learned, and he came up to me one day and he'd carry on the conversation from the time before. It's silly things like that, you think, 'hang on, I'd do anything for that man, because he took the time to know his staff, know a little bit about us', and that makes all the difference. Now, one of them walked past me the other day and said 'are you the lady that I've just seen on the video, you know, from the assault?' Don't know your name, just recognised me from the video. And I'm thinking, there's no respect for the higher management any more. It's visible from the prisoners as well. Yes, definite lack of loyalty. Years ago I could tell you every governor and what their area of responsibility was, and now I haven't got a clue because they seem to change every few months, and it's just not clear what people are doing any more (Officer).

At the same time that staff 'saw' officer numbers being reduced they also saw the number of managers or 'suits' increasing:

They're getting rid of officers, they're cutting us down, we're on the landings on our own. If they wanted to kill one of us, or hurt one of us, it would be a lot cheaper to pay us off, because we are just a number. Because they don't know our names, they don't know who we are any more, and it's a lot easier just to pay us off than pay all the time for extra staff to be on, and that is the general feeling. When I started 10 years ago, we were always on ASL, actual staffing levels. The last eight years or so, we've always been on Minimum Staffing Level (MSL). We never ever work above MSL. So I do think we're dispensable now. I don't think they could give two hoots who we are or how the job's done as long as the lid stays on, nobody escapes. Because we are expendable, if you like (Officer).

There are too many managers here, and with this workforce modernisation that's going to come in, we're going to have even more managers. So I can't see the efficiency saving in that. You just wind up with lots of chiefs and very few Indians. You wind up with, you know, you watch a rowing race, you wind up with a lot of people shouting at one rower. So there'll be a lot of noise and not getting very far with a very tired person at the end of it (Officer).

Staff called for a more 'person-centred' approach from senior managers. Officers and Senior Officers felt that the Prison Service was too concerned with saving money and cutting resources without fully considering the impact on those on 'the front line'.

Almost half of uniformed staff did not trust the Prison Service (48 per cent) or feel valued by the Prison Service (46 per cent; Table 4.9)). Whilst understanding that KPTs were important, around one-in-ten (nine per cent) of uniformed staff had confidence in the system of performance measurement used at Whitemoor (Table 4.5) and some staff felt that safety should be the priority:

I think a management team with quite a person-based approach, person-centred approach, so they're happy to talk to people about things, get people's ideas on things, feedback, listen. Rather than just enforcing the rules and regulations and 'you will do this whatever'; I think that gets people's backs up. I think listening to staff, what they want, what they feel, and [Governor x] has really been doing that. He's been going around a lot of the parts of the prison and chatting to staff, and it makes staff feel that he's actually listening to what they've got to say. I think [Governor y] was a bit more detached from all that, so definitely a sort of personal approach to things, making them feel involved and part of it all. I know you've got Key Performance Targets and everything else that comes into that, but ultimately I think it's about creating a safe environment (Officer).

6.12 Views of senior managers

Four senior managers were formally interviewed (including both Governors in post at the time of the research). The research team spoke informally with or shadowed others, attended four full staff meetings, and observed 16 senior management morning meetings, taking full notes at each. The contact with senior managers was less extensive than contact with staff and prisoners, as the main focus was on describing life 'in the prison' and the nature and quality of staff-prisoner relationships on the wings, but on the other hand, these observations were regular, and generously facilitated. The report was written without detailed knowledge of (especially recent and rapidly evolving) the SMT vision of the future, or all of the efforts being made on a day to day basis to combat violence, faith-related anxieties, or prisoner and staff concerns. One of the difficulties faced in describing senior management at Whitemoor in this study was the high turnover of Governors (three in the period of the research), with a Deputy acting up in the gaps between postings. A third Governor arrived as the research team began drafting this report.

Liebling and Price (1999, 2001) argued in the first study that the role of senior managers is to set direction and provide leadership. Individuals do this in different ways, resulting in distinct evaluations of their fairness and effectiveness by staff, who are arguably their key 'audience'.⁹³ All leaders or power-holders make claims to be 'legitimate', but the nature and extent of these claims, and the extent of audience recognition of or assent to their legitimacy (that is, by staff and prisoners) varies significantly. Power-holders' own assessments of their legitimacy 'cannot be the ultimate test' of it (Bottoms and Tankebe 2011). Neither can 'performance' of the prison according to official measures, although this can be relevant.⁹⁴

⁹³ See Bottoms and Tankebe 2011. Other key audiences are prisoners, and their own line managers. Evaluations of Governors (as well as other high profile senior managers) are likely to be based on distinctive criteria: prisoners look for visibility, willingness to listen to their concerns, and the introduction of new practices and procedures (such as restrictions on access to purchased goods or the gym); among line managers, official 'performance' will be highly significant. Governors differ in the extent to which they regard prisoners or staff as their primary 'audience'.

⁹⁴ There was a perception, even among senior managers, that 'You've all got to pretend that everything's rosy and getting better and better, whereas the reality is that things are getting tighter and tighter and more difficult' (Senior manager). The SQL results showed that senior managers held a much more positive view of the(ir) quality of life in Whitemoor than either

Senior managers at Whitemoor were disproportionately, at the time of the research, 'new penological' (young, managerialist, highly risk-aware, performance-oriented, and operating to a 'responsibility model' of offending,⁹⁵ with a few operationally experienced, 'old school' team players in key positions. Some of those who were operationally experienced were culturally 'traditional'. At one point the researchers observed a conversation in a senior management meeting about counting security intelligence interviews with prisoners as 'purposeful activity'. The performance-orientation was 'a requirement', given the emphasis within the Prison Service on contestability and accountability. Governors were severely constrained by external (Ministerial) concerns (see Chapter 1) and talked with some emotion about 'having to change course' and 'lead Whitemoor out of certain situations' rather than having a clear brief (or permission) to 'lead it *in* a particular direction'. A new and more challenging population, bringing new issues and difficulties with them, 'could have submerged us', so that, from the perspective of senior managers, 'staff and managers have handled what has come at us well'. Relationships between staff and prisoners were made more difficult by 'the new demographics of the high security estate: taking out its VPs, who were individualised, and relatively easy to foster close relationships with', and replacing them with 'a population staff are wary of'. Managing prisoners was made harder by external scrutiny of, and opposition to, the concept of 'giving prisoners a lifestyle'. There was a feeling that Whitemoor 'has been in the eye of the storm' and that a relative lack of major incidents reflected well on the senior management team. There is no doubt that the leadership challenge at Whitemoor was significant.⁹⁶ The first Governing Governor in post as the research started departed at short notice, half way through the fieldwork, to be replaced two months later by another, with a very different style. This second Governor's impact on the prison was highly positive, and his analysis of its faith-related problems (and future direction) shrewd, but he was to depart within a year. The first Governor was preferred by most prisoners, the second by most staff, although the second had regular, constructive meetings with prisoners and defended his actions to them well.

The model senior managers worked to was 'not soft touch', it was 'hard-edged', meaning there was not much care on offer, and the basic priority was custodial and cautious ('I don't want my staff to *like* prisoners, I want them to manage them with appropriate scepticism'). There were exceptions (almost a 'split'): the DSPD Unit, parts of C Wing, the CSC Unit, and the Segregation Unit were areas where relationships were good and individual work with challenging prisoners went on. The high risk and challenging nature of some members of Whitemoor's population, its history of escapes, and the long sentences being served, impacted in an acute way on the overall approach taken to prisoners (e.g., 'he's not ready for downgrading yet, he's got far too long left to serve'). The purpose of the prison was close to containment:

I think Whitemoor's job is to look after the most difficult, dangerous prisoners out there basically, to contain them and to make sure that they don't escape, and then to do some work with them to try and reduce their risk levels, partly

staff or prisoners.

⁹⁵ Close to 'new liberals', in the Crewe and Liebling typology, 2011. See also Liebling and Crewe 2012a.

⁹⁶ Whitemoor has had nine Governors in 16 years, but 'the same union leader' for most of that time, making staff/union power 'seem authentic' to staff in the prison. Levels of sick leave were excessive at the start of the 'first' (in terms of the research; seventh in practice) Governor's period in post, and there was considerable 'hostility towards management'. The origins of this mood among staff largely pre-date the current research. These signs were not observed in the first study.

out of a sort of 'because that's the right thing to do' stuff but also, you know, the financial argument in the future. 'If you just, if someone's got a thirty year tariff and you just kind of lock them up and do nothing with them for thirty years' then at the end of that thirty years they're either still going to require Cat A conditions or not be fit for release. I just think it's about (a) containment of the extreme end of, you know, violence and difficult behaviour, and trying to reduce that risk (Senior Manager).

The prison had 'on the face of it, good performance', but was also 'a place that had quite a lot of challenges', including 'some distance between staff and managers' and 'not clear management structures' (Senior Manager). The SMT had a 'fairly directive approach', rather than 'building on the ... how do we move forward'. But each Governor took some time to form a judgement about the needs of the prison and their particular strategy for managing the prison.

The prison's strength seemed to lie in the careful and close management of extremely difficult individual prisoners, in small or special locations, where partnership working (e.g. with mental health staff and external services) was exceptional. Staff seemed to feel more certain of their purpose and skills in these areas.

The difficulties of managing Whitemoor should not be underestimated. The prison needed strong, operationally astute, effective, stable and coordinated leadership, clear procedures, and good relationships between its staff groups, but despite the presence of some highly impressive individuals who 'had staff on board', there were some problems in these areas at the time of the research.

As the research was completed, a third Governor took up post, some other new senior manager positions changed, levels of sickness absence improved, and the rate of assaults and use of force declined. The research team saw evidence of increased emphasis on constructive activities and the role of the Chaplaincy in the prison. A two-week unannounced Inspection in January 2011 found that, whilst levels of respect were unacceptably low, the prison was 'on the move'. The new SMT were making considerable efforts to engage staff in a more dynamic and relational model of work.

6.13 Summary

Officers at Whitemoor were working under difficult circumstances at the time of the research. It was a period of flux and transition. Staff described a lack of leadership, sustained and clearly communicated direction, or continuity of governorship. Many staff articulated a desire to work more closely with prisoners, wanted to see prisoners progress through the system, and expressed some empathy for their situation. However, the messages that filtered down to staff were not supportive of these aspects of their role, negated a clear sense of meaning and purpose and emphasised risk, danger, radicalisation, security and vulnerability to conditioning. The clearest purpose of the prison was 'settlement' or 'containment'. Staff were not 'close' to prisoners or management: there was a lack of trust in both directions. Officers described their working environment as 'too heavy for young staff'. Staff needed greater confidence and support, and a clearer identity of their own, if they were going to carry out their role more effectively. The senior management task at Whitemoor was complex and highly demanding. A new SMT were making noticeable efforts to address many of these issues as the report was completed.

Chapter 7 Relationships between staff and Muslim prisoners

I would say at the moment it [the Muslim issue] is the biggest disrupter of peace here, and between prison officers and inmates (Prisoner).

HMCIP come in and say they've 'got no relationship with the Muslim prisoners', but they are scary ... say something to one and you are surrounded (Officer).

These are the most helpful staff I have ever had,⁹⁷ but they are getting it wrong on the Muslim matter (Prisoner).

7.1 Background

Whilst the composition of officers at Whitemoor was overwhelmingly white and non-Muslim, studies have shown that social and ethnic origin is an unpredictable variable in staff-prisoner relationships (Cheliotis and Liebling 2004) and that minority staff can sometimes be more punitive in their attitudes towards prisoners 'in order to demonstrate their toughness and dependability to White fellow officers' (McEvoy 2001: 198; Jacobs and Kraft 1978). The 'distance' between staff and many Muslim prisoners described by HMCIP was real, and was a product of both staff and prisoner action and feeling. The 'gap' was concentrated on three of the four main wings, where high proportions of Muslim prisoners, some of whom were powerful leaders, were accommodated (particularly on some spurs). As we described in the preceding chapters, power relations had substantially altered in the prison, and staff seemed professionally insecure in this new aspect of their work. It has been noted that certain influential prisoners on the landings kept a distance from staff (as well as from the research team), and that it was harder to 'hang around' on the one's (the first landing) than it had been in the first study, because of perceptible feelings of (individual) prisoner resistance or apparent intimidation. The research team spent considerably longer in this study than in the first cautiously waiting for barriers to drop. Over time they did, and by the end of the fieldwork (one year on), an increasing number of prisoners approached members of the team, offering to be interviewed. Many interviewees, whilst generally forthcoming in private interviews, were reluctant to acknowledge members of team when passing on the corridors. The team shared some of the reserve and watchfulness observed and heard about among staff.⁹⁸

The perspectives of prison staff in relation to the management and care of Muslim prisoners have generally been neglected, although it is clear that prison officers have been in situations where they have had concerns regarding the management of new populations and their own personal security before (see for example McEvoy, 2001 with regard to IRA prisoners). Their needs in this area went beyond 'training'.⁹⁹ They needed line and senior management support, clear guidance, more information, and closer exposure to the world views of the majority of 'ordinary' Muslim prisoners.

⁹⁷ For example, facilitating mental health help for PTSD, spending time explaining, and talking.

⁹⁸ As three female non-Muslim interviewees, the researchers sometimes felt disadvantaged in this respect. The Principal Investigator's attempts to recruit a Yale-educated male Muslim ethnographer on to the team were confounded by 'security risks'.

⁹⁹ During the early stages of the research at Whitemoor the team were told of plans to implement a supplementary training week for new staff, in the first instance, which included training sessions on managing prisoners with challenging behaviour, and dealing with extremist prisoners. There were also awareness days and a Chaplaincy-led discussion group.

7.2 Staff perspectives on relationships

For some officers, relationships with Muslim prisoners were no different to their relationships with non-Muslim prisoners:

I: Is there a particular approach that staff can be encouraged to take [in their relationships with Muslim prisoners]? R: Yeah I think, project an image that you're confident and not afraid of people just because they happen to be Muslims. I mean, if you don't believe me I'm quite happy for you to watch me walk into a kitchen full of six, seven, eight Muslims, well what appear to be Muslim prisoners, and have a chat with them [inaudible], it doesn't faze me. I know most of the prisoners, so, not a problem (Officer).

There is some acknowledgment of discomfort in this quote above, reflecting a feeling expressed by staff and prisoners that prison officers were sometimes intimidated by or unsure of the ground rules around Muslim prisoners. Whilst many officers intended to treat Muslim prisoners equally this was sometimes hard to achieve due to feelings about the crimes carried out by 'extremist' prisoners or more general beliefs about the behaviour of Muslim prisoners in Whitemoor:

I try not to treat them [extremist prisoners] any differently. It is difficult, especially when, you know, if you do know, if you are aware of some of the crimes they've done and you're aware that they've ... they're a bit too close to home. The way you interact with them can be slightly impaired because we're only human and ... if you're particularly appalled by something they could or have done, then you're not going to be all, sort of, sunshine and daisies with them, but, yeah, it can come into, can affect the way you are with them at times (Officer).

I: So what are relationships like that you have with prisoners? Do you generally get on alright with prisoners, do you think? R: I hope to believe that I get on with ninety per cent of those prisoners on A Wing. It's the ten per cent that are of a different religion, i.e. Muslim, that, because I challenge, I feel that they, you know, they are the ones that cause the trouble and don't like me (Officer).

7.3 Problems of engagement

There were suggestions that Muslim prisoners responded differently to officers compared with non-Muslim prisoners. Specifically, staff found it difficult to engage in banter with Muslim prisoners and this hindered the development of relationships:

I: Do you feel that relationships with prisoners have changed since there's been more Muslims? R: Yeah, because they're trying to take over. We have got Lithuanian, I can have a scream with the Lithuanians on here, but you couldn't have a real laugh and a joke with a Muslim 'cause they'll take it the wrong way (Officer).

In general, staff described relationships between staff and Muslim prisoners as 'distant' and 'strained':

I: And how would you describe relationships between staff and prisoners? R: [Sighs] I would say between the Muslim side and staff it's quite distant,

between the staff and non-Muslims I would say it was quite good. Probably because they tend not to, not, I wouldn't say befriend, befriend's a bit of a strong word, but they won't, the Muslims won't, they won't want to talk to you (Officer).

Relationships between staff and non-Muslim prisoners were better:

I: What words would you use to describe staff-prisoner relationships at the moment? R: At times strained. If you take Muslims out of the equation you would almost say they were unified. Because you've got the Muslims, then you've got the rest, and then you've got us. But if you take the Muslims out you haven't really got a 'them-and-us' situation, and on our side is the other prisoners as well, so certain parts of the prisoner population and the staff have almost a common thing going. I: So relationships between staff and non-Muslim prisoners are better than between staff and Muslim prisoners? R: I think so, yeah (Officer).

Some female staff felt relationships with Muslim prisoners were particularly difficult to develop due to the assumed (sometimes manifest) attitudes a minority of Muslim prisoners held towards women:

I: So how do you deal with [Muslim prisoners]? Do you deal with them any differently? R: No I don't, no, I mean there's one or two and a very small minority I have to say that clearly don't like females, but the majority have been absolutely fine, and yeah I've had no problems, I treat them like I treat anyone else, polite, respectful, and they have been the same back, you know, they have been but, like I say, there's one or two that perhaps that don't like females and I don't know whether that would be the same if they were out in society or whether it's a prison thing, they don't like females in authority, maybe, telling them what to do, yeah, because we are second class in their society (Officer).

So our role's changed because also the Muslims, I mean, are very, not liking in particular women, you know, because of course we are lower than low, so it's very difficult, and when you're challenging Muslim prisoners in particular, it's much harder now because they have no respect for you. Years ago they would, you know, you had respect for the uniform, now we're almost a nuisance (Officer).

Staff relations with Muslim prisoners were also hindered by apparent reluctance on the part of some Muslim prisoners to engage with staff, and by officers' fears about violence threatened by particular Muslim prisoners.

7.4 Power shifts in the prison

Staff felt that power had shifted towards the Muslim population as a whole in the prison (a form of 'appeasement', as they – and some non-Muslim prisoners described it – and especially towards those prisoners considered to be radical or extremist. The normal difficulties in long-term prison work of boundary setting, the use of discretion, maintaining authority, and forging decent relationships were more complex in a world in which power was being wielded by prisoners in new ways. Staff named some of the 'key players' whom they thought were the most influential and described how they

noticed change when some of these central figures were transferred out of the prison; staff felt less threatened and morale increased, for example, once the threats to take an officer hostage carried less weight, as the prisoner concerned was moved. When talking about the balance of power in the prison, one officer said:

I think it's equally distributed between prisoners and officers. I think officers do have power and control but I think that that can be taken away quite quickly by certain prisoners. If, say, all the Muslims were to get together and they were to decide to kick off I think we would lose our power and control very quickly. So it's like an equilibrium thing because the prisoners have the power to disrupt the jail. We often say we rely so much on the good will and the good nature of prisoners, and the relationships that we have with them as a collective they've got a lot of power because the potential for them to cause us a lot of damage and harm is great. But we do have control as well because that doesn't happen, so it means we are managing as an officer group to keep the power and the control, like you say, balanced. I think I would want to have more [power], yeah, not to exert more, to come across as more authoritative, but just to know that actually 'whatever you guys do we'll be alright', but I don't feel like that, I think if they do kick off, God help us, you know, so yeah I do think they have power (Officer).

Officers were expressing fears about the balance of power, even though life went on most of the time without incident. Officers described the shift as impacting on other prisoners (for example, unwilling converts) as well as on staff:

It's just the power thing has gone to the prisoners, hasn't it? The Muslims are the ones that are beating staff up or trying to radicalise other prisoners and if they say no they're getting beat up, and it's a gang it's not a religion now, it's a gang thing, you know what I mean? I've been on two bed watches recently where I took prisoners that have been scalded for saying no, you know? So it's not just aimed at staff it's aimed at anybody that is negative towards, in any way, shape or form towards the Muslims, they are the biggest problem, they are the biggest threat we've got, because there's too many of them (Officer).

Muslim prisoners (or influential and numerous prisoners presenting themselves as Muslim) constituted a new and powerful gang:

We've got dozens and dozens that were Christians, or whatever they were, who have gone over and because it's the gangs and bullying, and there is a lot of that going on, but I think do we have any more Muslims? I think if you whittled it down to the real Muslims, probably not, it's just that everything's come to the fore because now they're a big gang aren't they? They're a big group, and they have the power then, the pendulum's swung in their favour, away from white people, I think, in this country if you want to bring it down to that, and certainly away from prison staff within the prison environment (Officer).

Officers brought their lay or public anxieties, fuelled by real events, into their work:

The ones that are carrying out these assaults and what have you are not the Muslim originals themselves, they are the converted ones who for them they get protection, they get extra food, they get looked after, if they're doing a long time in prison they want to make sure they're alright, then by joining the Muslims, they're kind of sorting themselves out for their time inside and they're also then used by the Muslim organisers to carry out their dirty work, yeah? So that's definitely how I see it on the inside, why their numbers are growing but in society I just wonder whether, I don't know, we're really frightened of them as well, aren't we? We're scared of what they're capable of doing. And I suppose you're hearing it on the outside and then seeing how it all happens on the inside, it kind of reinforces that fear, if you like, 'hang on, these are bad guys, you know, these guys can do a lot of damage and can cause a lot of destruction wherever they are (Officer).

Officers were aware of the potential some prisoners had for inflicting violence. They recognised that there were unresolved tensions between 'the decency agenda', which emphasised respect and good relationships, and the 'focus on the radicals', which prioritised intelligence-gathering and awareness of risk. They were also anxious about 'becoming a marked man' and felt exposed and unprotected:

It is the case at the minute, insult one and you insult them all, it is still there because when I first started we had, it was still the back end of some IRA prisoners and flashpoints, I remember back then you would upset sort of the one you were searching at that time and you did feel the walls closing in, well that most definitely happens again now with a Muslim prisoner (Officer).

Part of the concern expressed by staff at Whitemoor was to do with numbers. It seemed to be the case that they were catering for a disproportionate 'share' of those Muslim prisoners who were thought to present a risk to staff and other prisoners:

Prisoners seem to get more care than the officers. [We are] unsupported, and not protected, because we know what's going on, we're being told this is going to happen, this is going to happen, the Muslims are going to do this, they're going to do that, and we know they're all dangerous and they're all plotting, but they've got them all together. They don't move them, we have them all (Officer).

Staff concerns extended to claims that 'it will take the death of an officer' to demonstrate that 'it is all going in one direction' or that a serious collective incident might be likely in the near future:

R: *I think any sort of significant events, staff are always on tenterhooks because they're just waiting, will something happen, will something happen, it may never happen, but there's always that fear that it might. I: In terms of a clash between the Muslim prisoners and other prisoners? R: Yeah, or against the staff, I think there's this fear that we could lose the jail, you know, sort of on a grander scale, there is this fear. I: That they're gaining that much power? R: Yeah, that something major could happen. I: They could overturn the wing or whatever if they wanted to? R: Yeah, yeah because there's some very big players in the Muslim world in Whitemoor and I think, yeah, there's just this fear that things aren't being managed the*

right way or the right sort of action's not been taken and where will it all end? I think it just reflects staff feeling anxious about a very powerful prisoner group. I think there's this fear that it could get out of hand (Officer).

Officers were carrying high levels of fear, and the focus of their fear was the unfamiliar Muslim 'extremist'. Staff believed that senior management and the Prison Service were failing to support staff in relation to the serious threats made by Muslim prisoners:

***R:** It's support from the Prison Service as a whole, when you get a major incident the aftermath of that major incident you feel as though you need a little bit of comfort time so you need to feel as though you're being supported on the spurs, on the wings, and the Seg, because there were threats made afterwards as well, by Muslims and that wasn't treated very seriously. **I:** Threats made to? **R:** To staff, yeah, more of this beheading thing. Well the word with the extremist Muslims in prison, the word was they were going to behead a member of staff, this was quite a while ago, but it's been reiterated just after the incident by somebody that's, you know, that reiterated that threat so yeah, and it wasn't treated very seriously. The word was, from a Governor, was 'if we felt it was a serious threat we would have done something' but it just puts doubts in your mind. And sometimes you do need that comfort blanket, yeah it's quite important to feel as though you're supported and certainly from a few people it was, they were quite disgusted that there wasn't more visible support (Officer).*

Staff hypothesised that management were fearful of challenging Muslim prisoners in general; this 'standing back' stance filtered down to officer grades and lent some justification to officers 'letting things go' themselves:

I think one of the biggest problems is a lot of staff don't ... I think there's a little fear dealing with the Muslim prisoners because of the way the management think. Because if they come down on a Muslim prisoner to a certain degree, they don't want to be seen to be racist or anything like that, but the majority of the problem prisoners at the moment are those who are following the Muslim faith. So staff are more wary of that now, so they are a little bit more stand-offish (Officer).

Staff won't go to upper management with complaints about the Muslims because you look at things like, they will question things about the Chaplaincy for crying out loud, why is it that the Roman Catholic Service on a Thursday can be cancelled but they daren't cancel it on a Friday for Muslims? The Muslim Service on Christmas Day took priority over the Church of England; why? Because they're frightened. So if the Chapel's doing it, and the management, and the Government, and all the others are doing it, prison staff have got no chance really (Officer).

Management, they will tend to give too much back to prisoners. I think it erodes the authority with the officers, it erodes the morale of the officers, particularly when you know there's something you should be doing, or something that you're being told you're not doing so therefore you do it, you get on top of it and then when a prisoner complains and that complaint is upheld against you, then obviously it's going to erode staff morale. [What's

the reason for it?] Personally, I think its weak management. A lot of prisoners will litigate. They will say, you know, they will hide behind the Human Rights Act or whatever and they will litigate and they'll try and sue the Prison Service (Officer).

The balance of power at senior management level, and within the different faith denominations represented within NOMS nationally, had to be right. There were feelings expressed beyond Whitemoor, in discussions of emerging findings, that whilst British society (and therefore its institutions) had become more secular, as well as multi-cultural, only the Christian (or Church of England) faith groups had declined in prominence. Socio-cultural change, including the rise in fundamentalist variants of all the major religions, alongside a decline in some traditional forms of worship, interacted with changes in youth culture, class and racial composition in prison. The role of religion and religious identities as part of prison life and culture, of the sources of religious authority, and of the search by prisoners (including as young men outside) for an authentic and manageable life and identity, were important topics to explore 'neutrally' (see Bailey and Redden 2011). But this was difficult in a context of fear.

Staff recognised a relationship between social perceptions and media portrayals of Muslim prisoners and extremism outside prison, and conceptions and views of Muslim prisoners inside prison. They also linked the wider political agenda with prison policy:

***R:** If you watch the news you hear things about Muslim communities and people viewing them with suspicion, etcetera, so that I think it's not just at Whitemoor, is it? But a lot of the decisions that are made are from people who have never set foot inside a prison, you can't do that, especially in a High Security. **I:** So some of the fear that's in society about Muslims or terrorists infiltrates? **R:** Yes, because it will come down to the Home Office through Whitehall, the Home Office will make decisions through to NOMS, through the Prison Department, NOMS will then pass it on down to us, so it's like the ripple effect (Officer).*

Staff relationships with Muslim prisoners were affected by fears of disciplinary action as a result of 'getting it wrong' and being labelled a racist. One of the best staff members, according to prisoners, had been demoted from his rank due to a careless discriminatory remark. Prisoners of all origins and faith groups commented that his treatment was 'out of order'. These outcomes were registered by all, and had unintended consequences. Staff observed the 'harsh' treatment of their colleague and felt less inclined to take verbal risks. It was 'safer' to stick to familiar exchanges with non Muslim prisoners:

***I:** And do you think, given the prisoner population at Whitemoor and the disparity between the ethnic and religious mix of staff and prisoners, does that have an impact on staff-prisoner relationships? **R:** Yeah, I think it does because as soon as you challenge anybody other than white it's racist, you know? **I:** Do you think that staff get on better or have more of a rapport or more interaction with white prisoners or with non-Muslim prisoners than with Muslim prisoners? **R:** I would say, yes (Officer).*

***I:** Do you think that there's any reluctance from some staff to challenge those of the Muslim faith? **R:** Yeah because you've got to know, there's fear*

of reprisals because whether you're right or wrong, because if you're wrong and it comes back on you, you know, so that's the problem with the political correctness and that you've got to be very, very careful how you challenge people and make sure that you challenge them correctly, and that what is right is right, because if you challenge them when it's wrong you can get in trouble (Officer).

7.5 Prejudice, discrimination and distrust of prisoners

Prisoners thought some staff displayed prejudicial views towards Muslim prisoners; they felt they were all 'tarded with the same brush' and were victims of negative stereotypes and thus treated differently from non-Muslim prisoners. This was, according to prisoners, due to three factors: the ethnic homogeneity of the local area from which staff were drawn; the media portrayal of Muslims as modern 'folk devils' (see Chapter 8); and the military background of some officers and their associated beliefs about the war in Afghanistan:

I: What are relationships like between staff and prisoners at the moment?

R: Some [officers], most of them, not all of them, they got prejudice. They're very prejudice. This Muslim thing, like, the religion thing, yeah, and they just look at every Muslim as, like, a terrorist. He's up to no good, so automatically they're thinking a certain way. But they think they're putting everyone in the same box (Prisoner).

Muslim prisoners rated their quality of life, and their relationships with staff, significantly more negatively than did non-Muslim prisoners (See Table 3.28):

I: So you sense that there is quite a bit of inequality? R: There is, yeah. I: And is that inequality so [much] that Muslim prisoners feel discriminated against? R: Obviously a large majority of these prison officers live in the outside society, they watch the news, they see all this stuff about terrorism and all this propaganda that's within the media, and then they come into work and they're faced with the very terrorists that the media are talking about and things like that, obviously they have the preconceived notions and obviously biases that the majority of society have, and then they come into prisons and come face to face with these people and obviously a lot of it is them exercising their own feelings and biases out on Muslims as a whole. Obviously a lot of these officers are ignorant to Islam anyway, they're ignorant to what is actually going on in the world. Obviously there's a lot of bad things that are happening in relation to Islam, i.e. the terrorism thing and things like that, but there's a lot of other things that are happening they're ignorant to and obviously they take that out on Muslim prisoners (Prisoner).

Alongside feelings of discrimination, Muslim prisoners believed that there was significant distrust among staff towards Muslim prisoners. This was confounded by ethnicity:

I: And how do you think officers see you? R: I think, being an ethnic minority and a Muslim, I would get stereotyped into that group of not wanting to be British, not sharing British values, inherently untrustworthy and solemn (Prisoner).

Prisoners gave examples of officers displaying uniform or naïve views about Islam, or occasionally, of staff exhibiting racist behaviour. This could sometimes be subtle or sometimes quite overt:

There's one officer, he said to [a Muslim prisoner] "why you got that stupid thing on your head for?" He said "I'm a Muslim" and the officer said to him "Are you forgetting what colour you are?" You know what I mean? He said that to the inmate. This is where his ignorant thinking and all that where he's been brought up with racism (Prisoner).

Well, it's quite subtle. A lot of insults I think you'll find you can get away with quite easily. In most cases it's my word against an officer's. But for example, I mean, it could be something as simple as a group of officers standing round you. "Yeah, so, how's things?" "You OK?" "OK, yeah. Did you see the news?" "Yeah, d'you see what happened in Afghanistan?", or something, and then they'll have to say something. When these things happen, I think the Taliban attacked a British base or something like that, and these officers were talking. I was within earshot. And I think they quite clearly knew that I was standing there so they said "Yeah, well, you can see that [name] is a very peaceful individual" - very sarcastic, very aimed towards me as in, you know, it was very clear cut. Another incident: I was being searched by some officers and they were asking questions. "Is this your book? Is this your shirt?" "Yeah." "Is this your pillow?" "Yes." "Are you a Muslim dog?" And before I could, 'cause I was going yes, yes, yes, before I actually thought what I was going to say I said yes and I thought did he just say, did he just call you a Muslim dog? Did he say that? I was so intimidated I didn't, I didn't raise it, I just thought maybe I misheard it, but, whenever they can take an opportunity they'll slip it in. So for me, I'd say that the abuse that I received, not based on who I am, not based, I don't think, on my charges but more on my ethnicity and religion (Prisoner).

At times, staff discussed the 'Muslim issue' with prisoners and sought their opinion on the segregation of Muslim prisoners as a possible solution to some of the concerns and difficulties of managing this large group of prisoners within the prison:

Most of the prison officers say to me they are quite concerned about it, and they have conversations like "Well what do you think? Would it make any difference if we segregated them all?" but if you segregated them all how would you socialise and rehabilitate them? (Prisoner).

Officers talked about a rumoured deliberate strategy to increase the number of Muslim prisoners at Whitemoor (although the research team were informed by managers that this rumour, like many others, was untrue). One officer offered this explanation as to why some apparent appeasement of Muslim prisoners had crept in and why they received some concessions that were not granted to other prisoners:

There was a lot of speculation as to why we was getting so many Muslim prisoners into this establishment, and there was all kinds of conspiracy theories, if you like. My favourite one was the fact that [the previous Governor] was looking to try and build us into a super-max prison for extreme terrorists, which for me had a lot of weight behind it because that's

what he seemed to be doing, he was really pushing to have a specialist unit for extreme terrorists and things like that, which meant more funding. So it may sound silly but because of that the Muslim prisoners seemed to be getting away with a lot more, they just seemed to be given a lot more leeway ... with their faith. So things that never used to happen, they're just now being allowed to do (Officer).

7.6 The challenge of managing extremist prisoners

One problem seemed to be the inclusion within the population at Whitemoor of a small number of highly influential prisoners who had been convicted of extremist activities, and who were exerting influence via non-extremist but co-opted prisoners on the wings. The majority of Muslim prisoners wanted no part in 'in-prison violence', were frustrated and upset by the assumption that they were 'at risk of radicalisation', and expressed concerns about their circumstances, and the institutional clash, exploited by a number of prisoners, between 'the prison' and their faith related activities.

There was a clear need for 'bridge-building' work to go on between staff and prisoners in general, but between staff and Muslim prisoners in particular. Staff were being 'pushed back' by some prisoners, and felt reservations or a lack of confidence about approaching others. Distinctions needed to be drawn between 'religious bullying' (overt pressure on other prisoners to convert) and activities relating to extremism (which were different, and much less prominent in the prison). Managers needed to prioritise and support this new and complex area of prison staff work. They also needed to communicate clearly to staff their strategy and vision in this area.

It is striking that the dynamics described so far are reflected to some extent in a wide range of literature on religious conversion (Maruna et al 2006) and practices (Waldram 1997) in prison; on 'prison Islam' in the US (Hamm 2010); and on life in maximum security prison settings (Cohen and Taylor 1974; Johnson 2008; Rhodes 2004). For example, in his study of Aboriginal spirituality and symbolic healing in Canadian prisons, Waldram describes the over-representation of Aboriginal peoples in Canadian prisons, their struggles for recognition of the rights to practice their spirituality while in prison, and the conflict between their religious practices and the constraints and anxieties of the prison regime. Similar urges to 'control knowledge and information about oneself' are described.

Waldram describes how Aboriginal spirituality is 'more than religion': it is 'central to human cultural existence' and is, especially in a prison setting, 'a way of healing and a mode of therapy'. One way of 'sorting out identity conflicts' was to 'learn more about Aboriginal cultures and histories' and to 'demonstrate solidarity with the other Aboriginal "brothers" within the institution' (Waldram 1997: 79).¹⁰⁰ These things are poorly understood by those who organise and work in prisons, who see threats to security and 'resistance to reform' in prisoners' rejection of standard treatment programmes or in their assertion of the right to follow 'unfamiliar' religious practices. His detailed ethnography of the role and meaning of indigenous religious practices offers a sympathetic and informative reading of what otherwise becomes a deep clash

¹⁰⁰ 'The healing is not simply the product of the encounter between a healer and a patient. The group process as a whole becomes significant, as the "brothers" work together to negotiate and redefine their cultures and to support each other within the restrictive confines of prison. Effective healing requires abstinence from alcohol and drugs, resulting in a decrease in tension and stress; these are important cognitive, affective, and behavioural changes' (Waldram 1997: 80). The ideals represented in Aboriginal spirituality included 'generosity, caring, respect, and altruism' and could be 'contrasted with the insensitive, self-centred behaviour thought typical of many offenders' (Waldram 1997: 81).

between the needs of the prison and the needs of its increasingly alienated population. He shows how 'exposure to Aboriginal spirituality and culture can make a major contribution to rehabilitation' (Waldram 1997: 16) but also how a 'Euro-centric' and specifically Christian framework imposes 'rules of behaviour' that do not work for Native offenders.

Whilst the situation of Muslim prisoners is hardly comparable to Native Canadians in prison, some of the same issues of poor understanding, practical constraints, official suspicion, and the pull of cultural belonging as well as spiritual searching described in Waldram's account seemed very familiar, once the data were analysed. He describes the confusion that correctional officers show when trying to describe or identify Aboriginal offenders. If prisoners were suffering from 'identity confusion' (Waldram 1997: 33), official categorisations and understandings exacerbated rather than resolved this. As Waldram argues, 'Accuracy is necessary if these individuals are to be treated as cultural beings'. This is difficult when 'cultural and personal identities are immensely complex' (Waldram 1997: 41).

One of the important points Waldram's study illustrates is that Aboriginal prisoners had very different understandings of and relationships with their own cultural heritage, their traditional spiritual practices, and their ceremonial procedures. Spiritual and cultural education was necessary for all.

7.7 Summary

One of the major new problems for staff, senior managers and prisoners at Whitemoor was the management of new prisoner groups, including a large minority of Muslim prisoners (a majority on some spurs), a small number of whom held extremist views. Considerable awareness of the 'risks of radicalisation' dominated staff approaches to this population, with unintended negative effects on relationships between staff and prisoners in general.

What is not described in research to date is the particular and complex way in which religious practices and identities have become mingled with the power dynamics of long-term high security prisons. Such prisons have always been sociologically complex but they have become considerably more so. Strategies of survival, meaning-seeking, trade, influence, and resistance have mutated as the characteristics and conditions facing prisoners have evolved. Individual and collective action has moved further back stage, and the cultural reference points via which action can be interpreted or managed are largely out of reach. The power base of some prisoners was based on their religious identity. Others, meanwhile, were simply exploring aspects of Islam they found genuinely meaningful.

This study has gone some way towards unpicking these changing dynamics. The tensions between treating all prisoners, including faith and minority groups, decently and being vigilant about the risks of violence and radicalisation are serious, and will require considerable further reflection.

Chapter 8 Conclusions and summary of main findings

‘Explanations generated by ethnography, or the work of any social science, refer to mechanisms that may or may not be active at any point in time’ (Banfield 2004: 60).

This project has identified a number of new dynamics as well as difficulties in a high security prison. Whilst the team did not set out explicitly to explore either in-prison conversions to Islam, or the risks of radicalisation, both became important themes in the research because of their prominence in staff and prisoner experience. Other problems for all prisoners included the pursuit of meaning and personal development under new longer sentences, with restricted conditions.

The nature of staff-prisoner relationships had changed at Whitemoor, so that whilst good practices and relationships were found in education, the gym, the induction spur, some of the workshops, the DSPD Unit and the Segregation unit, and whilst staff on the landings did some outstanding work with difficult individuals, staff-prisoner relationships were generally distant. Prisoners appreciated some of the facilities on offer (gym, education and workshops) but they were frustrated and felt ‘stuck’ and invisible in the prison. Levels of trust between staff and prisoners (but also elsewhere) were low. This led to a poor information flow. Staff were less confident around prisoners than they had been in Study 1. They were least sure about how to build relationships and police boundaries with Muslim prisoners. Staff felt unsupported by managers in this aspect of their work. Prisoners repeatedly said that ‘the best interaction in this jail ... is with the teachers ... in education’, and they highly appreciated their professionalism and work attitude. They valued these relationships because teachers (like gym staff, and other instructors) were helping them to change and develop.

There were new problems faced by relatively young prisoners serving indeterminate sentences with long tariffs coming to terms with and finding a way of doing this kind of sentence. Prisoners experienced restrictions on the available ways through the ‘existential crisis’ brought on by the sentence. They brought more oppositional ‘street culture’ and frustration with them into prison due to changing social conditions and sentencing practices. They perceived their sentences, and the mechanisms for making progress out, as less than legitimate. Prisoners were looking for hope, recognition and meaning, in an environment in which trust and the future seemed out of reach. Once they adjusted — a process taking some years — some prisoners found the change of pace, surroundings and company brought about by a long sentence provided an opportunity to reflect on life, the past and the future. The process of identity change was a core aspiration for many, and a major theme in the interviews. This complex process was not adequately supported by a relatively limited number of work and education opportunities and cognitive behavioural programmes. The need to belong (to a ‘family’) and find meaning generated a search for collective identity.

The new population mix, including younger, more black and minority ethnic and mixed race, and high numbers of Muslim prisoners, was disrupting established hierarchies in the prison. Social relations among prisoners had become complex and less visible. Too much power flowed among some groups of prisoners, with some real risks of serious violence. There were high levels of fear in the prison. In particular, there were tensions and fears relating to ‘extremism’ and ‘radicalisation’.

More prominent, in practice, were pressures (and temptations) felt by some prisoners to convert to Islam. Conditions in the prison made participation in Islamic practices the most 'available' option for those looking for belonging, meaning, 'brotherhood', trust and friendship. Rates of conversion to Islam were high, and contributed to the high proportion of Muslim prisoners in the population. Twelve from a sample of 23 Muslim prisoners interviewed in the research were in-prison conversions. The other faith groups were less well provided for at the time of the research. Faith 'identities' were being adopted and used in many ways at Whitemoor, including for protection. The main motivations for turning to faith were: sense-making, searching for meaning, identity, and structure; dealing with the pains of long-term imprisonment; seeking 'brotherhood'¹⁰¹/family; or 'anchored relations'; seeking care and protection; gang membership; rebellion; and coercion.

There was considerable ignorance and confusion (even among recently converted prisoners) about the Islamic faith. Those with extremist views could fill a gap in knowledge with misinformation and misinterpretation or could point to illegitimate staff practices as a reason for upholding oppositional views. Support for moderate interpretations of Islam was 'muted' at the time of the research.

The new context: a high security prison with no vulnerable prisoner wings, post 9/11 and 7/7, containing several prisoners convicted of terrorist offences, with a younger prisoner population reflecting a fragmented religious and secular society, and attempting to fulfil an obligation to monitor and manage the 'risk of radicalisation', as well as the risk of violence, presented new challenges to staff, managers and prisoners at Whitemoor. High levels of fear and anxiety among staff and prisoners was having a negative impact on all aspects of prison life.

The lack of professional confidence among staff, particularly in relation to Muslim prisoners, meant that they kept a distance from some. Resorting to basic tasks led to less use of 'dynamic authority'. The atmosphere of distrust, together with increased monitoring and risk assessment, resulted in self-censorship among prisoners and a reduced information flow. The role of psychology in improving both the assessment and positive management of prisoners in partnership with staff (and prisoners) was inhibited by lack of trust.

Prisoners convicted of terrorist offences warranted increased monitoring, but the need to err on the side of caution meant that Muslim prisoners in general felt they were the 'victims of staff authority'. Both Muslim and non-Muslim prisoners felt discriminated against, and that the 'other' group had advantages (non-Muslim prisoners had better relationships with and treatment by staff, Muslim prisoners had better faith-based material provision). The balancing and encouragement of all faith practices was not weighted heavily enough against the requirement to monitor and reduce the risks of extremism among small numbers of prisoners. Sensitivities and lack of knowledge led to a risk of 'faith becoming the new no go area' in prison. Staff sometimes viewed any outward appearance of Islam as evidence of radicalisation, rather than a manifestation of faith, and these 'signs' were written up in security reports. Staff perceived Islam as a radical religion; they over-estimated extremism; this 'pushed prisoners together', reinforced their views and gave them more power.

¹⁰¹ The term 'brotherhood' here means belonging to the group. It has no broader meaning and was not linked in any interview to any specific organisation.

Keeping the high security prison 'relational', ensuring the safety of staff and prisoners as well as prisoners' psychological survival, and facilitating 'progress', meaningful personal development, and positive change, required new and better strategies. Some trust had to be 'placed intelligently' for the prison to work, and as an aid to risk management.

Prisoners and staff wanted Whitemoor to be a better and more constructive prison. There was considerable potential for 'more positive influences', and opportunities for change, to be pursued. The prison was undergoing considerable change at the time the research team left it.

8.1 Discussion

A study of 'Prisons and Terrorism: Radicalisation and De-radicalisation in 15 Countries' by The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (ICSPV, 2010: 1-13) found that prisons were 'places of vulnerability' to radicalisation and violent extremism but could also be places where 'peaceful change and transformation could grow'. The report argued that prisons produce 'identity seekers', 'protection seekers' and 'rebels' – ideal conditions 'in which radical, religiously framed ideologies can flourish'. The authors note:

Prisons are highly unsettling environments in which individuals are more likely than elsewhere to explore new beliefs and associations. Confronted with existential questions and deprived of their existing social networks, prisoners with no previous involvement in politically motivated violence are vulnerable to being radicalised and recruited into terrorism.

The first part of this statement is confirmed by this research. The second might be recast as follows:

Confronted with existential questions and deprived of their existing social networks, prisoners facing long sentences in conditions of maximum security need help and support in facing these existential questions and exploring ways forward in their lives. Possibilities exist for bringing about positive changes in identity and social functioning.

This statement avoids 'worst case scenario' thinking and is rather like the shift from attempts to predict suicide risk at an individual level to a more general effort to make the prison environment more survivable for all.¹⁰² The risks of alienation, loss of meaning, and violence, were more pressing than the (also real) risks of radicalisation (and in turn, terrorist action). Failure to address the former issues might in the end make the risks of radicalisation higher. A 'security-first' approach (the most common approach among 15 countries) resulted in 'missed opportunities to promote reform'. The authors argued:

Prison authorities should be more ambitious in pursuing both [security and reform] at the same time.

¹⁰² This shift in policy focus seems to have brought about a significant reduction in the number and rate of suicides in prison.

The newly distant staff-prisoner (and prisoner-prisoner) relationships and low levels of trust found in this study, on the whole, were a puzzle, as relationships had been good, staff practices highly professional, and prisoner evaluations reasonably positive given the context, twelve years earlier. There were new circumstances at the prison, including a different population profile. There were important exceptions – for example, on C Wing (on the Induction and older prisoners' spurs), on D Wing, and between some staff and prisoners. Almost all interviewees said the 'biggest issue in here' is 'the Muslim thing'. This meant a combination of conflicting practices (for example, use of the kitchens), feelings of power being located within a large minority group (who were not a minority on some spurs), attraction and conversion to Islam, or faith-related practices, pressure, and perceived discrimination all round. Generalised *fears* of conversion and radicalisation dominated staff and some non-Muslim prisoner accounts of life at Whitemoor, although the 'gang' and power dimension of prisoner behaviour seemed more prominent among prisoners' anxieties. Among prisoners, there was much concern with disadvantage on the basis of categorisation (Muslim, BME, non-Muslim, Category A, and so on) and among staff, there was much concern with risk. Individuals at Whitemoor no longer knew each other well, and so distant and recorded information about prisoners was replacing close and personal knowledge, with detrimental effects on both risk management and individual progress.

Long-term prisoners at early stages in their sentences were found to be struggling to survive psychologically, or find meaning in their environments. Sentences were newly long and complex, and prisoners needed personalised routes out of their own 'existential crisis'. IPP prisoners, and those serving sentences for the offence of Joint Enterprise comprised new types of 'long sentence prisoner'. Their tariffs were very long, and their routes out of prison uncertain. Many were within the first five years of long sentences, but others had worked their way 'backwards' into high security conditions via disruptive behaviour elsewhere. Younger than before, and more likely to be from black and minority or mixed race backgrounds, these prisoners were frustrated with and critical of an institution that felt meaningless and unsafe. Outstanding exceptions (such as the gym, education, certain workshops, special areas of wings, like the elderly prisoners unit and induction spur) were 'hard to reach' for most. Prisoners were often emotional and positive when they 'found' education, music, or meaningful work, about the hope these discoveries gave them for their future identity work. Undertaking Open University degrees, for example in sociology and psychology, led to a new perspective on their pasts and futures, and on a greater understanding of the social context in which their lives had so far taken shape. This developing social and political perspective motivated and energised them.

In the absence of alternatives, and for reasons of its intrinsic appeal and popularity, conversion to Islam had become a fairly frequent in-prison phenomenon. Often this involved a search for spiritual meaning, but conversion had also become, in a distorted guise, appealing to key players in prisoner society, offering a new form of power and protection, and effectively pushing staff back, because its requirements and boundaries were not clear. Pressure was exerted on some prisoners to convert, and acts of violence were constructed as (if not explained by) faith related conflict. Life for most prisoners became difficult, and many were preoccupied by these new dynamics, instead of finding ways of developing their own identities pro-socially.

Staff lacked confidence and direction in these new conditions, but were keen to be 'doing more, better'. They kept a distance from some prisoners for fear of 'getting it

wrong'. They needed more support than they were getting in handling their new population. Unaided, and provided with (emotively delivered) instructions to be vigilant about risk, they had retreated into the basic custodial aspects of their role. Managers were not present in the prison in ways that provided staff with encouragement or 'back-up'. Little 'positive purpose' was expressed. Staff who underwent 'transformations of purpose and approach' in special areas of the prison (or during the course of their involvement in special initiatives) were 'lone voices' instead of welcome ambassadors for the prison. Staff were at their best when they were assessing and building on prisoners' 'strengths'.

There was fear and uncertainty about how to handle the diverse and numerous populations of Muslim prisoners in particular, because of a perceived link between Islam and extremism. Some influential prisoners found it easy to exploit this uncertainty, and to intimidate staff. Others were frustrated and angry that their faith practices were regarded as 'risky' and worthy of such close monitoring. Non-Muslim prisoners felt disadvantaged in many material respects and outnumbered on some spurs.

Social relations among prisoners had become complex and less visible, as some TACT prisoners became a source of spiritual or scriptural guidance (and distortion) behind the scenes. Much of their power was intellectual, or in discourse. Meanwhile, front-stage, physically powerful Muslim 'players' used faith as a shield behind which they could carry out acts of violence and intimidation. These two key groups were not in a direct hierarchical relationship to each other, but reinforced each other's power, making life for other prisoners uncomfortable and risky. Adopting a public identity as a Muslim offered protection and generated fear. This usurping or performance of a 'faith identity' left other followers of the faith in an unhappy situation, the target of suspicion and scrutiny.

These difficulties had developed as the result of a constellation of a large number of factors: a period in the prison without stable leadership, an 'eye taken off the ball' (a focus on performance rather than on life on the wings), the build up of an unusually high concentration of Muslim prisoners, some of whom were powerful leaders (and their uneven allocation on wings/spurs), insufficient training being carried out with staff in facing these new challenges and circumstances, attention being paid to special areas of the prison (like the DSPD unit or the Seg), a 'weak' period within the Chaplaincy (and its reduced role in the prison's management), a highly publicised 'public acceptability test' failure, curtailing some creative types of external engagement in the prison, and an influx of a number of TACT prisoners without sufficient guidance to staff on what kinds of risks they were now handling, and how best to manage them. Some threats to the environment: serious incidents of violence, several gruelling inquests, and ongoing financial cuts, meant that it was difficult for staff to feel confident or comfortable. All prisoners represented 'risk', but there were some additional concerns about the 'new Muslim population', a high number of conversions to Islam, the boundaries of faith practice, conflict between prisoner groups, and high levels of attendance at Friday prayers.

These two problems – of a growing, complex and diverse Muslim population, and the struggle for meaning and identity among prisoners in general – interacted to produce various forms of conversion, some of which were positive. But there was also increased tension between prisoners, high levels of fear, and some conditions in the

prison (like distance, a sense of grievance, and some capitalising on that by prisoners espousing extremist views) which made future 'radicalisation' an understandable and possible phenomenon. There were grounds for anxiety. But the 'alarmist position' described by Hamm exaggerated these risks and was based on research that 'lacks any real depth of understanding about the nature of prisoner subcultures, the social processes of religious conversion and the vulnerability of individuals to recruitment by terrorist organizations' (Hamm 2009: 668). According to Hamm:

The criminological evidence indicates that there is no relationship between prisoner conversions to Islam and terrorism. If anything, just the opposite is true. Research shows that Islam has a moderating effect on prisoners that plays an important role in prison security and rehabilitation. Once on the path to restructuring their lives — down to the way they eat, dress, form support systems and divide their day into study, prayer and reflection — Muslim prisoners have begun the reformation process, making them *less* of a recruiting target for terrorists than other prisoners, and certainly less of a target than alienated street corner youths of the urban ghetto. In his review of the literature, religious historian Philip Jenkins (2003: 5) concludes that 'Islam is a major presence in American prisons, and many would say that this is a good thing because the Muslim influence can encourage people to get their lives together, to get off drink or drugs, to learn self discipline' (Hamm 2009: 669).

His research showed that certain prisons were more susceptible than others. This study has shown that under 'non-recognition' conditions, some long-term prisoners are vulnerable, and the need to 'create collective identities' (Hamm 2009: 673) is fuelled. Like Hamm, the research team found that 'the primary motivation for conversion is spiritual searching – seeking religious meaning to interpret and resolve discontent' rather than militant beliefs, but disaffection makes susceptibility to proselytising charismatic leaders more rather than less likely.

The categories of 'extremism', 'radicalisation' and 'Muslim' were confounded in day-to-day understanding and practice.

8.2 Risky and suspect communities

During the fieldwork for an ESRC-funded study, 'Negotiating Identities in prison', Phillips and Earle found a consistent view expressed by non-Muslims that Muslims acted as a collective homogenous (powerful) group, which could lead to cynicism about conversion and its motives (that it was for protection). Yet, the researchers found considerable diversity among the Muslim population in terms of religious observances, ethnicity, and so on. The researchers noted an air of ambivalence towards Muslim prisoners by non-Muslims: on the one hand, they exhibited a grudging form of respect for having the place 'wired' (i.e. the provision of food at Ramadan), but on the other hand viewed them as 'alien' and threatening.

Muslim prisoners are regarded as the new 'suspect community' both in prison and in the community, like the IRA before them (Hillyard 1993: 257-8). The problem of identifying and managing the new risks posed by extremism was having unintended

and potentially counterproductive consequences. It was certainly the resigned view of many Muslim prisoners that they carried, or constituted, 'risky identities'.¹⁰³

It is, of course, only to be expected that the state should seek to reduce threats to public security through the range of powers at its disposal, including proposing appropriate criminal justice legislation, conducting intelligence operations and engaging in legitimate policing. This point accepted, we would argue that in each of these areas, the British state has sanctioned and implemented disproportionate forms of regulation that have had grim ramifications for Muslim minority groups. In particular, the inequitable application of these modes of regulation have contributed to the wider process through which British Muslims are labelled as dangerous, risky 'others' that threaten the security of the nation (Mythen, Khan and Walklate 2009: 738).

In prison, faith and cultural practices have been confounded with risk. There are many reasons why religion or faith identity becomes attractive in a prison environment:

Strong religious convictions [serve to] insulate the true believer against the assaults of the total institution (Goffman 1963: 91).

Religious conversion [is] a particularly adaptive coping mechanism (Maruna *et al* 2006: 163).

Maruna *et al* suggest that as an 'extreme' environment, 'the prison provides a stark and vivid social context for exploring the conditions that allow for quantum personality change'. Most of the prisoners in our study were exploring new aspects of their identity: 'Marginal' and extreme situations, in which 'the basic parameters of life are altered ... constitute 'powerful agencies of re-socialisation in which individuals are rendered particularly open to new ways of perceiving themselves' (2006: 163). This could be a positive process, for them.

One of the research questions the team were asked to consider during this project was whether 'the prison' was doing anything to make the alienation of prisoners (and therefore risks of radicalisation) higher. Muslim prisoners talked about feeling alienated and targeted, and some non-Muslim prisoners regarded them as representing risk and a threat to a 'British-White-Christian-Secular' way of life. The high levels of suspicion and 'risk-thinking' found in the prison had eroded a low but significant and variegated level of trust found in the prison at an earlier point in its history, facilitated by good staff-prisoner relationships. This decline in relationships and trust led to a drying up of the 'information flow' necessary to distinguish trustworthiness from untrustworthiness. As Pantazis and Pemberton argued in relation to police-community relations:

The construction of the Irish as a suspect community through the PTA served to radicalise and alienate, and, ultimately prolong the Irish conflict.

¹⁰³ Post the 9/11 attacks, the number of Asian people stopped and searched under anti-terrorism laws in the United Kingdom rose by nearly 400 per cent, from 744 in 2001/02 to 2,989 in 2002/03 (Morris 2004). Following the 7/7 bombings, there was a seven-fold increase in the number of Asian people stopped and searched by British Transport Police (Dodd 2005). Civil rights and Muslim community groups have expressed grave concerns about the impacts of counter-terrorism legislation on minority groups and, in particular, young Muslims (see Liberty 2005, and 2008; Muslim Council of Great Britain 2008: 3; Mythen, Khan and Walklate 2009: 738).

The lessons of this conflict are largely not being heeded. As we noted, there have been recent attempts to 'tone down' the 'language' of the 'war on terror' by senior ministers and there are positive examples of 'community policing'. Arguably, these have been lost in the populism of authoritarian counter-terrorism responses and under the weight of the legislation it has championed. As we have demonstrated, the 'terror of prevention' continuum, which ranges from the day-to-day harassment of Muslims through stop and search to high-profile police raids, has had a corrosive effect on the relations between Muslim communities and the police. Within this context, the conditions for radicalisation are being fomented and the 'flow of information' necessary for effective counter-terrorism policing has been jeopardized. Thus, the very powers that are supposed to promote security are serving to undermine it, whilst Muslim communities continue to endure the spectre of state suspicion (Pantazis and Pemberton 2009: 661-2).

The problems in prison are distinctive. There are a number of high profile prisoners serving long sentences for terrorist offences, and the risk that some of these prisoners will influence others in the special conditions of a closed prison environment are real. The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence made the following observations in their 2010 ICSRVP paper on Prisons and Terrorism:

It is difficult to generalize based on anecdotal evidence alone, and neither governments nor researchers know exactly how much their respective prison systems are affected. Some of the problems in quantifying the phenomenon relate to different ideas about the concept as such and how it should be measured. A number of commentators and even government agencies, for example, confuse 'conversion' with 'radicalisation', implying that prisoners who take up purist strains of Islam – often described as Salafi – are all at risk of becoming terrorists. In reality, the two are not always connected. While prison conversions to Islam are frequent, and significant percentages of converts and 'born again Muslims' are attracted by the purity and rigour of the Salafist tradition, no serious researcher claims that this automatically translates into support for terrorism. More importantly, freedom of religious expression is not something that prison authorities can (or should) criminalise (ICSRPV, 2010: 27).

Equally, radicalised prisoners may not necessarily go on to become involved in extremism once they are released. This is particularly true for those who become part of a radical group – or prison gang – for the purpose of seeking protection. They are not always 'authentic' conversions, which are likely to be followed up or acted upon in the 'free world'. This is not to downplay, but – rather – to emphasise the particular conditions of the prison environment which increase the potential for radicalisation, but may also produce behaviours that are no longer relevant or appropriate when offenders have been released. (ICSRPV, 2010: 28)

According to research conducted in 2005, 20 per cent of prisoners interviewed remained 'active' participants in Islam outside the prison environment (Beckford, Joly and Khosrokhavar, 2005: 187).

One of the prisoners officially designated as TACT prisoner at Whitemoor was neither Muslim nor a political terrorist. He had given up his ideological affiliation and moved away from his former identity and friendship networks since coming into prison. Whilst he was able to talk at length about this shift, he was still defined by the prison 'at a distance' as a potential terrorist threat. He therefore 'counted in the figures' and he was severely restricted in his participation in activities. He underwent very frequent cell searches, and was explicitly philosophical about the difficulties of shaking off his label. There was a 'lack of fit' between the categories used to define him, the ways he was regarded and treated in prison, and his own self-concept (and probably the level of threat he now posed). He was a good example of a problem confounded by broad, static and at-a-distance definitions.

Signs of disenchantment with prior propensities to use violent methods among individuals on high risk lists were sometimes being missed by prison staff. Some individuals spoke at length in interviews or even informal conversation about their ideological trajectories, which included moves away from pre-prison identities that went unrecognised within the prison. More 'positive and outward-looking' approaches to disengagement and faith activities (and educational and vocational activities more generally), and prisoner-led Islamic Studies Programs (as described by Hamm 2009) seem to work better:

There should be a clear distinction drawn between 'legitimate expressions of faith' and 'extremist ideologies'.

Many of the problems relevant to countering radicalisation have more general analogies in the management of prisons in general. For example, 'preventing the maintenance or creation of operational command structures' characteristic of terrorist groups is consistent with the challenge of careful management of the flow of power in general. Prisoners do not want to be managed by other prisoners, nor should they have clear incentives for doing so. 'Failed' and 'violent' prisons are demonstrably more likely to produce disaffection (Hamm 2009). Hamm's informants were optimistic: 'As long as you can keep the environment right, you can avoid having radical Muslims' (p. 679).

8.3 The building of meaning, trust and relationships

The account developed here describes and explains the nature of staff-prisoner relationships at Whitemoor, the attractions of conversion to Islam, and some of the new risks in a long-term prison environment. These risks include creating grievances, under-policing the environment, over-policing it, mis-recognition and discrimination, and obstructing the development of creative alternatives to despair, stagnation and alienation. Despite its focus on Whitemoor in particular, and the limits to claims we might make about its formal internal generalisability (for example, the research team did not study the DSPD Unit in any depth), it is an account of relevance to other, similar situations.

Prisoners describe 'an intensification of enclosure' (Rhodes in press) relating to the length and nature of their sentences, the prominence of risk assessments, and the pressures they face in navigating and handling their circumstances in an environment at once still social and 'liberal' (in relation to each other), and yet also constraining, exclusionary, and potentially violent. Their relationships, with staff and other prisoners, are more distant, and the stakes feel high. Whilst the English high security prison is

not in any sense an imported 'supermax' prison (that is, a form of maximum security prison originating in the US and based on segregation, isolation, and intense surveillance), it has evolved and transformed in unexpected ways, some of which are recognisable in recent accounts of supermax custody (see, e.g. Rhodes 2004, 2005 and in press) and in accounts of long-term prisons in the US (Flanagan 1995). The maximum security prison has become a 'contradictory terrain' (Rhodes in press) in which meaning and hope are difficult to find, and yet 'progress' is expected. In the prohibition of creative and constructive activities that might permit psychological survival and growth (now known as 'pampering'), the concept of punishment is 'exploited' (Brown 2005) to the detriment of more civilised and humane forms of custody:

[The supermax prison is] 'productive of what the philosopher Giorgio Agamben calls *bare life*. This term highlights the process of "stripping down" – of constituting the prisoner as nothing but his "bare", biological, dangerous life' (p. 2).

Supermax prisons have their origins in the 1983 loss of order, assaults leading to the deaths of two officers and one prisoner, and subsequent lockdown, at Marion prison in the US. They emerged a decade later; they are based on concentration and are '*non-relational*' (Rhodes, in press). They are 'constituted by indifference'. 'Accountability' is 'their only value'. The Prison Service should be wary of any moves made in this policy direction. The changing form and nature of high security prisons represents a 'struggle over the nature of personhood' and the tension between "bare life" and "political life" (citizenship). There is a logic underlying contemporary penal practice at the deep end of the system which is neo-liberal, risk averse, exclusionary, racialised (and religiously divided), newly cost constrained and, in places, in contradiction to rehabilitation. A modern penal system should not turn a generation of prisoners, whatever the behavioural, attitudinal, and inter-group challenges they pose, into 'non-relational bodies'. Keeping the high security prison 'relational', ensuring the safety of staff and prisoners as well as prisoners' psychological survival, and facilitating 'progress' and positive change, will require new and better strategies. Some trust must flow for a prison to 'work'.

How might 'intelligent trust' be built, among prisoners, and between prisoners and staff at Whitemoor? How can long-term prisoners build a future if they have lost the right to be trusted, in any situation or at all times? The concepts of harm (which can be measured) as well as 'progress', and 'personal development' may be useful supplements to the concept of risk. As Onora O'Neill argued:

The central problem in thinking about trust is that it can be misplaced: the trustworthy may be mistrusted, and the untrustworthy may be trusted. Both sorts of mismatch lead to practical anxiety as well as intellectual complexity. When we refuse to trust the trustworthy we incur needless worry and cost in trying to check them out and hold them to account, while those who find their trustworthiness wrongly questioned may feel undermined, even insulted — and ultimately less inclined to be trustworthy.¹⁰⁴ And when we trust the untrustworthy we may find our trust betrayed, and lose whatever we staked, be it friendship, political aims or money ... So the central practical

¹⁰⁴ This is a classical theme in anthropological literature, often linked to claims that 'gift' relationships are undermined by cash incentives.

aim in placing and refusing trust is to do so well, that is to align the placing of trust with trustworthiness. However proofs of trustworthiness are not available. Trust is fundamentally a response to others under conditions of some uncertainty ... Proceeding without complete evidence is unavoidable, not irrational. The central practical question — which has many parallels with questions in epistemology — is how we can place trust intelligently, despite the inevitable incompleteness of evidence that others' words are true of the world, or that their acts will live up to their words (O'Neill 2009: 1).

This practical matter — of placing trust intelligently — is the central problem to be faced in a long-term penal strategy. Paradoxically, the lack of trust led to less safety in the prison as well as to lower prospects of positive change. Trust 'keeps costs down' — distrust is extremely expensive as well as counter-productive — so there are many instrumental as well as moral reasons for placing trust intelligently. The consequences of not attempting to do so, as prisoners articulated passionately, are to damage and dehumanise. Judgements discriminate, and so aim to be evidence based; attitudes generalise, and so can to some degree 'float free of evidence'. Misplaced trust and misplaced mistrust are both common (O'Neill 2009: 3). Examples of untrustworthiness get the limelight and attention, while trustworthy performance does not (O'Neill 2009: 3-4).¹⁰⁵ The question of when and under what circumstances trust should flow should be addressed, even in conditions of long-term high security prisons. As the project ended, one would like to think that affirming and developmental activities were no longer experienced as 'miracles'.

¹⁰⁵ "An empirical study of trustworthiness would be of far greater practical use in helping us to place and refuse trust intelligently" (O'Neill 2009: 4). Geoffrey Hosking has pointed out that histories of the collapse of trustworthiness and trust far outnumber histories of the emergence and growth of trustworthiness and trust. A study of the building and growth of trust in prison is needed.

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