



Prisoners'
Education
TRUST

The Open Academy: An Exploration of a Prison-Based Learning Culture

Morwenna Jane Bennallick

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Law

Royal Holloway, University of London

February 2019

Declaration of Authorship

I, Morwenna Bennallick, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others this is always clearly stated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MBennallick', written in a cursive style.

Morwenna Bennallick

30th August 2018

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the culmination of the generosity and intellectual (and emotional) work of *many* amazing people. The appreciation that I have for each of you cannot be expressed in full here. But I will give it a shot...

My sincere gratitude must first go to my supervisors. My first thank you goes to Professor Rosie Meek for your guidance, support and opportunities over these years. Thank you for helping me see that I can combine my passions for research, policy and practice and for developing me in each of these. Thank you too for providing a space for a frustrated tear or two (or three) over the years. And to Dr. Serena Wright. Your energy, enthusiasm, compassion and dedication (coupled with your dark sense of humour) have regularly invigorated me and my work within and beyond this PhD. Thank you both for helping me see the wood for the trees.

My time working towards this PhD has always been with more than one hat on and I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to work so closely with the incredible Prisoners' Education Trust. Thank you for having the unique vision and the commitment to research which made this studentship possible in the first place and for giving me so many opportunities over these past years. I am constantly inspired by each and every member of the team and the dedication with which you all approach the challenging tasks you face. Thank you *all* for your encouragement and friendship.

In particular, thank you to Rod Clark for giving me a very welcome space in the organisation. Thank you to Katy Oglethorpe, whose invaluable insights, critical eye and friendship have taken my work to new Heights. And to Robert Cremona, for the support and patience over these years and for being my one true convert to brain.fm. Rosie Reynolds, for being part of all my worlds and helping me remember what is important. And finally, a huge thank you to Nina Champion. The very definition of 'crusader' who I am fortunate to have as a mentor. Thank you for believing in me (especially when I wasn't able to do it myself).

Further gratitude goes to Dr. Katherine Auty, Clare Taylor and Jose Aguiar for your insights throughout the Rehabilitative Cultures days which have shaped this research immeasurably.

My time here would have looked very different were it not for my amazing PhD colleagues at Royal Holloway. Most heartfelt thanks go to Anita – for the wine, wisdom and that SPSS book that I promise to return, Chris – for catering (excellently) to my dietary whims and for the conversations that gave the mess some narrative – and Charlotte – in the words of our old friend Sinead; Nothing Compares to You. Further thanks to Christina for giving me the strength and the determination to survive this last push and reminding me to just keep digging deep. I'm very grateful to and proud of you all.

I also want to thank all my colleagues and students at the University of Westminster, particularly David Manlow, whose patience, flexibility, wisdom and friendship I couldn't do without.

A huge thank you to my team of proof-readers. Among others mentioned elsewhere, thank you to Rachel and Cassie. I owe you all a holiday.

Thank you too to all my friends for your patience throughout this entire process, the care packages that made it possible, and giving me the time and support I needed to complete this.

I literally couldn't have done this (or most other things) without the incredible support of my family. Thank you to Maria for your critical eye, never-ending patience and for always being on the other side of the phone (unless, of course, you're just cooking dinner). To Glynn for teaching me resilience (and, 'in the words of Churchill...'). And to Lucy and Jonathan for letting me get all 'middle child' about this for so long. I love you all.

And to Will. Thank you for letting this PhD be such a huge part of your life. From your newfound passion for formatting to your in-depth knowledge of carceral geography, you have certainly done this journey with me. Your patience and generosity astound me every day and I am immensely grateful for everything you do. I literally could not have done this without you.

Finally, and most importantly, thank you to all the residents and staff at HMP Swaleside who generously gave their time and energy to me. I have been constantly inspired by the resilience and tenacity that I saw every day that I was behind those walls. I just hope that this research can go some way to highlight, and help, the many brilliant people doing brilliant things under impossible circumstances. Thank you.

Abstract

This mixed-methods study is an exploration of both the structured *and* structuring aspects of ‘learning culture’ theory (Hodkinson et al., 2008; James and Biesta, 2007) as experienced within a unique prison-based educational environment. Attending to differing scales of focus, the thesis explores numerous interlocking personal, social and cultural features of cultures of learning within that site and the individuals operating within it. The research was conducted in HMP Swaleside, England, with a particular focus on the Open Academy; a unique prisoner-led, wing-based learning space tailored towards further and higher education mediated through distance learning.

In order to situate this site within the prison-wide cultural features, a quantitative and qualitative survey was conducted with prisoners and staff across the prison (prisoner n=296, staff n=59). Additionally, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 28 prison residents (including but not limited to Open Academy students and educational ‘peer mentors’) and two members of staff. Observational data were also collected through ethnographically-led methods. These data were coded and analysed thematically.

The overall results suggest that the practices operating *within* the learning culture of the Open Academy created a supportive and potentially transformative space for many at varying points in their educational trajectories, either as established distance learners or as emergent students. Within this site, many cultural features operated in synergy; they complemented and reinforced each other. However, outside of this space, the learning culture of the wider prison was dominated by conflict rather than convergence. Enduring hierarchies of power and control, institutional pressures, and fundamental tenets of the fields of ‘prison’ and ‘education’, led to challenging cultural divisions which ultimately threatened the initiative. The study has implications for the development, and measures of success, of educational innovations in prison.

Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction	12
1.2 Setting the scene: the crisis in the contemporary prison estate	13
1.3 The position of prison(er) education	16
1.4 The Open Academy: a site for prison-based higher education.....	20
1.5 The focus and approach of the study.....	21
1.6 A thesis chapter map	24

Chapter Two: Understanding prison(er) education; Understanding learning

2.1 Introduction	27
2.2 Perceptions on the purpose of education in prison.....	28
2.2.1 A portrait of educational need in prison.....	29
2.2.2 Education for 'Reducing Reoffending'	31
2.2.3 Beyond employability	37
2.3 Understanding learning and cultures of learning	43
2.3.1 Understanding Adult Learning.....	44
2.3.2 Transformative Learning.....	45
2.3.3 Learning through participation: situated learning approaches	50
2.4 Exploring learning cultures.....	52
2.5 Introducing the Rehabilitative Cultures Survey.....	56
2.6 Chapter summary	56

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction	60
3.2 The Research Site: the Open Academy within HMP Swaleside	61
3.2.1 Introducing the Open Academy.....	61
3.2.2 The Broader Research Site: HMP Swaleside	66
3.3 The Research Design	69
3.3.1 The need for a pragmatic, mixed-methods approach	70
3.3.2 Developing and administering the survey	72
<i>Survey design</i>	72

<i>Developing the dimensions of the Rehabilitative Cultures Survey</i>	73
<i>Sampling</i>	76
<i>Recruitment, administration and survey participants</i>	79
3.3.3 Developing and administering the interviews	87
<i>Interview schedule design</i>	88
<i>Sampling, recruitment and conducting the interviews</i>	89
3.3.4 Generating observational data	95
3.4 Analytical frameworks	96
3.4.1 Analysing the survey data	96
3.4.2 Analysing the interview data	97
3.5 Risks and Ethical Concerns	97
3.5.1 Procedural risks	97
3.5.2 Personal risks and ethical considerations	99
3.6 Limitations	102
3.7 Chapter summary	103

Chapter Four: The Prison-Wide Learning Culture

4.1 Introduction	104
4.2 An overview of the formal learning provision	105
4.3 Survey Results by Dimension	107
4.3.2 Revisiting the Dimensions, reporting mean scores and data limitations ..	110
4.3.3 Prisoner Variability by Demographic	114
<i>Age</i>	114
<i>Ethnicity</i>	114
<i>Wing location</i>	116
<i>Main Activity</i>	117
4.3.4 Highest Scoring and Lowest Scoring items	119
<i>Attitudes towards learning in prison (i): Prisoners' perceptions of prison staff</i>	122
<i>Attitudes towards learning in prison (ii): Prisoners' perceptions of the Skills Advisors</i>	128
<i>Attitudes towards learning in prison (iii): Classroom-based learning</i>	130
<i>Attitudes towards learning in prison (iv): Prisoners' perceptions of gym staff</i> .	132
4.4 Situating 'Education' in the prison: Prison-wide narratives of the Swaleside learning culture	134
4.4.1 The absence of 'learner voice' and demands for participation	134

4.4.2 Becoming Engaging and Relevant through vocational provision.....	139
4.4.3 Developing aspiration through progression	143
4.4.4. Access: Demonstrating Inclusivity	146
4.4.5 Safety: Physical, Emotional and Psychological	151
4.5 Chapter Summary	154

Chapter Five: The Open Academy: Exploring students' educational trajectories, study practices and motivations

5.1 Introduction: Revisiting the Open Academy	155
5.2 Introducing the Open Academy students	157
5.2.1 Experiences of education at school.....	158
<i>Interruption</i>	159
<i>Exclusion</i>	160
<i>(Unfulfilled) Potential</i>	162
5.2.2 Experiences of education in prison	164
<i>Interruption</i>	164
<i>(Self) Exclusion</i>	166
<i>A starting point and stepping stone</i>	168
5.3 The formal and informal study practices of the Open Academy	169
5.4 Joining the Open Academy: Motivational 'push' and 'pull' factors	175
5.4.1 Educational and aspirational 'push' factors.....	176
5.4.2 Social and aspirational 'push' factors.....	177
5.4.3 Institutional 'push' and 'pull' factors	181
5.5 Chapter Summary	182

Chapter Six: The Open Academy at its best: Creating an 'oasis' and supporting 'studenthood'

6.1 Introduction	184
6.2 Positioning the <i>space</i> of the Academy	185
6.2.1 Resources and environment	186
6.2.2 A space characterised by 'madness' (i): A Wing within the context of Swaleside	191
6.2.3 A space distinct from the 'madness' (ii): The 'oasis' of the Open Academy	197
6.3 Rehearsing and supporting 'studenthood' identities	201

6.3.1 The Academy as a space for rehearsing <i>autonomy</i>	202
6.3.2 Identity shifts: 'becoming' a student.....	204
6.4 The Academy as a space for developing learning communities	209
6.4.1 'Aura and camaraderie'	210
6.4.2 Finding inspiration	211
6.4.3 Expanding disciplinary horizons/cross-fertilisation.....	213
6.4.4 Setting the boundaries of the learning community.....	214
6.5 The Academy as a space for facilitating 'cultural bleed'	216
6.6 Chapter Summary	219

Chapter Seven: Understanding the 'Closed Academy'

7.1 Introduction	220
7.2 Becoming the 'Closed Academy'	221
7.2.1 Restricted access to space and resources	224
7.2.2 Losing legitimacy	227
7.2.3 Variant levels of staff support	231
<i>Tenacious Crusaders</i>	234
<i>Facilitating Allies</i>	236
<i>Apathetic & Active Inhibitors</i>	241
7.2.4 Institutional inertia	245
7.3 The implications of the 'Closed Academy'	251
7.4 Chapter Summary	253

Chapter Eight: Learning from the learning culture of the Open Academy and HMP Swaleside

8.1 Introduction	254
8.2 Understanding the interplay of key cultural features within the Open Academy	255
8.2.1 Autonomy, Inclusion and Exclusion	256
8.2.2 Synergy, Conflict and Status	257
8.2.3 Synergy and conflict in staff attitudes.....	259
8.2.4 Conflicting meanings of safety	259
8.3 Learning of practices & practices of learning	261

8.4 Lessons for prison-based educational innovations from a learning cultures viewpoint.....	264
8.4.1 Understand the <i>cultural educational infrastructure</i> of the prison	264
8.4.2 Be cautious of the perils of innovation, hope and broken promises	265
8.4.3 Recognise that rehearsing studenthood within prison brings its own rewards	266
8.4.2 Engaging with legitimate external bodies.....	268
8.5 Chapter Summary	268

Chapter Nine: Conclusions

9.1 Introduction	270
9.2 Revisiting the key findings of the thesis.....	270
9.3 Further implications and recommendations for practice.....	274
9.4 Future research directions	277
Bibliography.....	269
Appendices	286

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Chapter Three: Changes to items in the Safe dimension following a preliminary focus group with seven Skills Advisors	75
Table 3.2 Chapter Three: Demographic characteristics of prisoner survey respondents	82
Table 3.3 Chapter Three: Demographic characteristics of staff survey respondents	86
Table 3.4 Chapter Three: Demographic characteristics of prisoner interviewee sample	91
Table 4.1 Chapter Four: Reliability and dimension mean score	108
Table 4.2 Chapter Four: Highest and lowest scoring items (mean scores) from prisoner and staff surveys	121

List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Chapter Two: Indicative levels of cultural analysis	54
Figure 3.1 Chapter Three: Image of the Open Academy library	63
Figure 3.2 Chapter Three: The Open Academy library from the residential wing walkway	64
Figure 3.3 Chapter Three: The Open Academy wing during the riot (photo circulated across media outlets)	69
Figure 4.1 Chapter Four: Mean scores by dimension	111
Figure 4.2 Chapter Four: 'What score does this prison deserve for how well it promotes learning?'	112
Figure 4.3 Chapter Four: 'How would you rate the quality of your working life in this prison?'	113
Figure 4.4 Chapter Four: Mean Empowering by wing	116
Figure 4.5 Chapter Four: Mean Inclusive score by wing	116
Figure 4.6 Chapter Four: Mean Aspirational score by wing	116
Figure 4.7 Chapter Four: Mean Engaging/Relevant score by wing	116

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis presents the findings of a study into the cultural framing of a peer led prison-based learning space, the Open Academy at Her Majesty's Prison (HMP) Swaleside. Through the application of a 'learning cultures' framework (cf. Hodkinson and James, 2007; James and Biesta, 2007), the study seeks to continue the efforts of previous researchers (such as Hughes, 2012; Pike, 2014) in drawing together two largely disparate bodies of literature and fields of study; education and *prison(er)* education. Through this endeavour it considers the cultural features and their interrelationship which shaped the initiative, and the lessons that can be learnt in both the setting of education priorities in prison, and the cultural understanding of learning in prison.

Whilst the provision of education has been a feature of the penal estate of England and Wales for centuries, its purpose, form and prominence has fluctuated throughout this time (Forster and Forster, 1996: 101). The current dominant focus is largely on the provision of lower-level and vocational training (Coates, 2016), with further and higher education less centrally accessible. Such provision, however, is made available across the prison estate through distance learning. This is primarily funded by Prisoners' Education Trust, which has been providing grants for people in prison to study at these levels across a wide breadth of subjects since 1989, and course providers such as the Open University, which has been operating in this context since the 1970s. These practices provide the backdrop to the Open Academy – the educational initiative at the heart of this study – which builds upon the long history of distance learning in prison, and which created a space and related set of practices currently unique in the prison system in which it sits.

However, with significant exceptions (including, for example, Bayliss, 2003; Hughes, 2012; Pike, 2014; Reuss, 1997), we know less about how learning under such conditions operates on an individual and cultural *learning* level, given that the emphasis of much previous research has been more closely focused on the relationship between in-prison education provision and post-release criminological outcomes. The most appealing of these, at least for policy-makers, appear to be recidivism (e.g. Bozick et al., 2018; Davis et al., 2013; Ministry of Justice, 2013 and 2018) and employment (e.g. Duwe and Clarke, 2014; Ellison et al., 2017; Ministry of Justice, 2018). This emphasis on the criminological – as opposed to pedagogical or sociological – aspects of education in prisons means that we know far less of the ways in which the prison environment, residents, staff and culture interact with individual life history to shape experiences of prison education. Further, criminological outcome oriented studies tend to overlook the fact that such practices do not occur in a vacuum. As the prison is ‘in many ways, a microcosm of society’ (Schweber, 1984: 6), then spaces and practices of prison education combine the many social and cultural features of the carceral environment *as well as* those underpinning educational environments. Thus, any consideration of learning within prisons must be positioned within the broader context of the ‘penal crisis’ of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, particularly as this has played out across the estate in England and Wales, where the current study is situated. It is to this issue we now turn.

1.2 Setting the scene: the crisis in the contemporary prison estate

The prison population in England and Wales is the highest in Western Europe. At 148 prisoners per 100,000 of the general population, we imprison people at a rate 50 per cent higher than France and Germany (Walmsley, 2013). The population currently stands at approximately 83,000 (Howard League, 2018) following an increase of 41,800 between 1993 and 2012 (Ministry of Justice, 2013). The latest projections from the Ministry of Justice are that the population will grow again to reach 86,400 by March 2023 (Ministry of Justice and Office for National Statistics, 2018). Alongside this increase in prisoners, there has been a drastic reduction in prison staff, led by

centralised funding cuts, with 30 per cent fewer staff in 2015 than there were in 2010 (Ministry of Justice, 2018).

Unsurprisingly this picture of an increasingly overstretched system became the backdrop for a wide range of poor performance outcomes for prisons across the estate, which have significantly deteriorated throughout the period in which this research took place. In the last year alone, there have been numerous HM Inspectorate of Prisons' reports outlining institutions in poor states, with such findings now regularly featuring in the national press (e.g. 'Prisons inspector slates HMP Bedford as 'abject failure' over standards', Travis, 2016; 'Prisons inspector condemns 'appalling' suicide rate at Nottingham jail', Grierson, 2018; 'Liverpool jail 'worst inspectors have ever seen' after no improvements made since last watchdog report', Bulman, 2018). Earlier this year, the Ministry of Justice released data showing that nearly half (46 per cent) of all prisons across the estate were rated as having performance of 'concern' or 'serious concern', Ministry of Justice, 2018a). In January 2018, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons (HMCIIP) first made use of an urgent notification demanding the Government respond quickly to issues of 'grave concern' at HMP Nottingham (BBC, 2018), and in August 2018 it was reported that the current Justice Secretary, David Gauke, had ordered the termination of the G4S contract at HMP Birmingham, and that control of the jail be returned to the public sector with immediate effect ('Government steps in to take over 'appalling' Birmingham Prison', Walker, 2018). This was primarily a response to the Inspectorate's most recent report on the prison, which noted that two key areas required swift redress. The first was that the 'safety and stability of the prison was clearly being adversely affected by the high volume of illicit drugs', with the overwhelming availability of New Psychoactive Substances noted as a significant issue. The report noted that, as in so many prisons, the presence of these drugs was 'giving rise to high levels of violence, debt and bullying' (HMIP, 2017: 5). The second key area of concern – which is of particular relevance to this thesis – was that the take-up of education and training in the prison was identified as 'poor'; the report was clear that this was not due to prisoner disinterest, but rather because the conditions noted above, in addition to staff

shortages, meant that it was regularly the case that ‘not enough prisoners were *able* to take advantage of what was on offer’ (p. 6, emphasis added).

The Inspectorate’s annual report for 2017-18 made clear the bleak implication that HMP Birmingham was not an anomaly in this respect, observing that the current state of prisons in England and Wales were ‘some of the most disturbing prison conditions we have ever seen; conditions which have no place in an advanced nation in the 21st century’. ‘Prominent themes’ within the review of that period were noted as ‘violence, drugs, suicide and self-harm, squalor and poor access to education’ (HMCIP, 2018: 7). An indicator of this is reflected in the exponential increase in violence, in which ‘self-harm and assaults reached new highs’ (p. 7). Reported self-harm had increased from 40,161 incidents in 2016, to 44,651 in 2017 – an increase of 11 per cent – while violence perpetrated against others had ‘increased or remained high’ since the previous inspection across most adult male establishments inspected (p. 24). The report pointedly highlights that such stark deterioration has occurred since 2013, the point at which the aforementioned staffing reductions took effect (p. 7).

Many of the problems identified here can be directly linked to the overarching trajectory of prison population growth identified at the start of this section, resulting in grossly overcrowded prisons, which in turn impacts on aspects of imprisonment ranging across sanitation, safety, access to education and participation in other forms of ‘purposeful activity’ (HMCIP, 2015).

This, then, is the backdrop against which the current study was operating; a failing system, rife with violence, bullying and drugs, where fewer staff are expected to manage increasing numbers of prisoners, many of whom are serving sentences the length of which were ‘almost unheard of a generation ago’ (Hulley, Crewe & Wright, 2017: 769), and who present with a wide variety of complex needs, including educational needs, which are not being met.

1.3 The position of prison(er) education

Education has been a common element of prison regimes since Robert Peel's Parliamentary Gaol Act in 1823, albeit fluctuating in purpose, form and prominence (Forster and Forster, 1996: 101). Beginning with largely voluntary provision, both from prison service professionals and external bodies, the end of the First World War saw the Prison Commission creating its own education service. Working with the Department of Education and Employment, Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and the Central Council for Physical Recreation, a system was set up which allowed LEAs to draw down government funding to employ staff to work in prison. According to Forster and Forster (1996), this separation between central prison administration and education provision is an 'enduring' structure, which maintains its hold today. Difficulties in rolling this structure out included cultural challenges and low levels of staff to meet a great need. Alongside this, accommodation pressures, riots and vacillating top-down priorities tainted the environment of prison education provision in these early days (Forster and Forster, 1996).

Reflections can be drawn from this to support understanding of the current, yet rapidly changing, policy environment of prisoner education. The outsourcing of education contracts continued with the implementation of the Offender Learning and Skills Service (OLASS), the service contracted from the Skills Funding Agency in 2001 which has been responsible for the co-ordination of the development and delivery of prisoner education. These contracts worked alongside Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service (HMPPS – previously the National Offenders Management Service – NOMS), the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, Prison and Probation Services, the Youth Justice Board and the Learning and Skills Council and were competitively tendered for the delivery of education services. Those organisations that won the tender and thus held the 'OLASS contracts' became the education providers for the prisons within the particular geographical region. These contracts have been retendered on different terms four times since their introduction in 2011. This privatised model reflects the neo-liberal framework characteristic of public sector movements more widely, particularly that which reflects the 'new realities' of the

education system (Harvey, 2000). These structures, led by a philosophy favouring competitive tendering and performance outcomes in the drive for best results, have resulted in what Czerniawski (2015) refers to as a 'race-to-the-bottom' in prison education provision (p. 208).

Internationally, throughout the latter half of the 20th century, education provision was viewed increasingly as a significant element of a prison regime, and in 1989 the Council of Europe produced a series of recommendations based on the premise that 'the right to [prison] education is fundamental' (Council of Europe, 1989: 3). The European Prison Rules continue to promote a holistic approach to the purposes of prisoner education (with new additions added in early 2018). They state, for example: 'Every prison shall seek to provide all prisoners with access to educational programmes which are as comprehensive as possible and which meet their individual needs while taking into account their aspirations' (Council of Europe, 2006: 15). However, despite being signatories to these non-binding rules, the policy environment in England and Wales will be shown to operate on a far less holistic philosophy. Being framed and led by the policy direction of '*Reducing Reoffending Through Skills and Employment*' (2005), the focus of OLASS has instead been strongly centred on the accrual of *basic* skills; that is, literacy, numeracy and basic computing/information technology (ICT). This priority has been set within the structured logic that levels of 'employability' without these skills are far lower than when they have been developed. This priority has most recently been reaffirmed with the publication of the *Education and Employment Strategy* in May 2018 which reiterates the importance of 'the power of work to transform lives' (Ministry of Justice, 2018b: 3) with the provision of education framed as a route towards this intended outcome.

Educational aims are strongly influenced by the Education Funding Agency for those under 18, and the Skills Funding Agency for those aged 18 and over. Around 80 per cent of the government funding afforded to education in prison is applied against the strict funding priorities which reach up to (and include) adult learning Level 2 - the approximate equivalent to a GCSE standard (Prisoners' Education Trust 2018a: 3). This strongly limits the availability of funding for providing facilities for learning to progress

beyond this level or in subjects outside the OLASS priority areas of literacy and numeracy and vocational qualifications including ICT and employability skills.

It is important to note that alongside this centrally funded provision there exist many other forms of formal and informal educational opportunities within prison. Such providers range from small and local, providing ad hoc provision, to large and national, providing opportunities across the breadth of England and Wales. Particularly relevant to this research is the national charity Prisoners' Education Trust. Since they began in 1989, Prisoners' Education Trust have funded nearly 40,000 courses in prison, with nearly 3000 in 2016-17 (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2018). A wide range of subjects are available through different providers (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2018a), and courses up until university level can be funded. Alongside this, the organisation funds arts grants with no qualifications attached. Any person in prison can apply for a grant from the organisation and they are the main provider of Further Education courses outside of OLASS contracts across the prison estate.

Amongst many policy changes operating throughout the course of this research, 2016 saw the launch of the 'prison reform agenda'. This initiative was heralded by the Government as the 'largest reform programme since Victorian times' (Gov.uk, 2016). One key objective of this agenda – of particular relevance to the current study – included efforts to support a 'rehabilitative culture' by improving access to training and education in prison. However, as reported by HMCIP (2018), these outcomes have not improved, with a decline in the numbers of prisons graded 'good' or 'reasonably good' in the Inspectorate's Purposeful Activity test, from 51 per cent in 2016-17 to 43 per cent in 2017-18 (p. 7). Further, Ofsted – the education inspectorate which has been mandated with inspecting education, training and work in prison settings since 2014 – found only 39% of prisons and young offender institutions to be 'good' in 2017/18. This is 17 percentage points lower than the previous year. None were judged to be 'outstanding' (HMCI, 2018). Despite the related Prison Safety and Reform Bill (2016) promising much by way of reform – introduced when Michael Gove was the Secretary of State for Justice, a role he held for a mere 14 months – it was subsequently paused and replaced with a stripped back version led by his successor

Liz Truss, who held the role of Secretary of State for Justice for an even shorter 11 months. Gove and Truss were two of five individuals who held this role between 2015 and 2018.

Gove endeavoured to centralise the role that education should play in the prison system. Delivering his inaugural speech at a Prisoner Learning Alliance¹ event, he used it to launch the commission of a sector-wide review of prisoner education, with the intention to put 'education at the heart' of the prison (Gove, 2015). The resultant report, *Unlocking Potential: A review of education in prison* – henceforth referred to as the Coates Review after author Dame Sally Coates – was published in May 2016.

Coates' (2016) recommendations followed an extensive review of the state of the provision of education across the sector. Taking a wide-reaching, some argued 'holistic' (Webster, 2016), approach in her vision, Coates' report reflected a number of themes which arise throughout this thesis. She argued that educational provision needed to be 'aspirational' with meaningful routes for progression to higher levels above the 'glass ceiling' of Level 2 (p. 38). Learning needed to be made 'more bespoke' (p. ii) which, she contended, could be achieved through individualised and personal learning plans. Coates stated that the basic educational infrastructure was no longer fit for purpose and required an overhaul of attitudes and access to ICT to support learning and to prevent prisoners from becoming digitally illiterate (p. 45).

Alongside these recommendations, Coates proposed a new system of accountability and autonomy developed to circumvent the issues alluded to above with the restrictive funding structure of the OLASS contract provision. The proposals argued that it should in fact be governors who are ultimately responsible for the education provision in their prison in order to avoid the 'continued opportunity for buck-passing' (p. 12). It was this absence of a clear accountability structure, Coates argued, that had

¹ The Prisoner Learning Alliance is a body made up of 90 organisations and individuals working in different types of education across the prison estate. Prisoners' Education Trust formed the Alliance in 2012 and acts as the secretariat.

led to the sustained decline in prisons' education performance, as assessed by Ofsted, in recent years (p. 12).

The movements in taking forward this 'autonomy agenda' have developed a momentum that other Coates recommendations have yet to acquire (Champion, 2017), and a new structure has been developed, designed to give governors 'autonomy' over their education budgets. The new structure for prison education commissioning, which will launch in spring 2019 and in summer 2018 was out to tender, includes a 'Prison Education Framework', under which larger education providers are able to bid for core curriculum contracts, alongside a 'Dynamic Purchasing System' wherein smaller education providers are able to position themselves in order to deliver their services to governors (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2018b).

The policy environment surrounding prison education is thus currently in a state of flux with uncertainty around how the sector will look even within a year. When positioned within the deteriorating prison environment described above, the challenges facing the prison education sector – and the organisations and individuals working within it – are truly brought into light. Yet, in the face of such adversity, innovation can sometimes flourish. The following section introduces the Open Academy as one such example.

1.4 The Open Academy: a site for prison-based higher education

Earlier sections have demonstrated that the current environment across the prison estate is deeply challenged and challenging with funding pressures bleeding into the practices and outcomes of all areas of the system. The resultant push towards alternative modes of delivery which intend to alleviate some of these pressures is strong (cf. Devilly et al., 2005). Peer led models within prisons are increasingly prominent across a wide range of activities as they are often preferred by prisoners over formal modes of support, and are 'a more readily available' source of support

(Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons, 2016a: 4). The Open Academy at HMP Swaleside, which informally launched in early 2015 with a formal launch ceremony in September 2015, represents one such initiative.

The Open Academy is a unique wing-based initiative with a capacity of 84, although the numbers of learners officially registered on the initiative during the research period fluctuated between the 20 and 35. The model contains a number of central components, each developed to add to the change of culture of the wing, from one of violence and lack of direction, to one that facilitates higher-level learning, giving the wing a change in 'identity'.

The Open Academy provided a learning space set up to meet a number of needs of further and higher-level learners in Swaleside. It was designed to be a space where existing distance learners could study away from their cells and with other learners. Alongside the more structured learning offered through enrolment on a distance-learning course, students in the Open Academy were able to take up study through a Self-Study approach. This informalised programme allowed students to commit to a less formal, unaccredited course of self-directed study, overseen by those working in the Open Academy, and using the textbooks and other resources available in the Academy.

Forming the centrepiece of this research, the framework and practices of the Open Academy are discussed in greater detail in Chapters Three and Five.

1.5 The focus and approach of the study

In contrast to many studies of prison education (such as Bozick 2018; Davis et al., 2013; Ministry of Justice 2013; 2018), this research moved away from an interest in post-release educational and recidivism outcomes and, indeed, pre-release educational outcomes. Rather it builds on the body of work that explores *experiences* of education in prison (e.g. Bayliss, 2003; Braggins and Talbot, 2003, Hughes, 2012), *motivations* for

undertaking prison-based study (e.g. Brosens, 2018; Hughes, 2000; 2012; Nichols, 2016; 2017) and *communities* of prison-based learning (e.g. Armstrong and Ludlow, 2016; Pike, 2014). From this baseline, it applies an explicit and particular concept of learning cultures, in order to draw together the many situating features which framed the cultural shaping of the developing Open Academy (as an initiative inextricably positioned within HMP Swaleside).

It is important to note at this early juncture in the thesis that this study is *not*, and does not seek to be, an evaluation of the project of the Open Academy. Nor is it intended to provide a critique of the educational practices operating within the prison or the work of the Education Department. Rather it is seeking to provide a 'thick description' (Geertz, as cited in Patton, 2002: 173) of a unique initiative, largely grounded within the perspectives and experiences of the prisoner students and peer managers who spent their time and their energies working towards the goals of the initiative. Getting this description 'right', argues Liebling (2015) is 'our main moral purpose' as criminological researchers (p. 18); not 'policy change', which is often outside the direct remit of the researcher. This does not, however, exclude the development of recommendations, or lessons, from the presented narrative of the Open Academy. Yet it does draw attention to the point that the task of this study is to explore something which was, and is, *unique*. This is not simply because the Open Academy is the only one of its kind in the prison estate at the point of writing, but primarily because the amalgamation of individuals, relationships, structures, positions and dispositions which combined at that point in time are inherently unique. The fundamental task of this study is thus critical description, of what happened and why within the situated Open Academy.

However, there are ways in which the study sought to move beyond the deep description described above. By engaging with the learning cultures literature, the study draws upon a cultural *theory of learning* (cf. Hodkinson, 2005). This approach explores the ways in which the features of the culture of learning determine, through the ways in which they support some practices and suppress others, the very processes of learning that *can* take place within it.

The study thus aimed to explore and describe the cultural features and forces at play in the development of the unique initiative of the Open Academy. This exploration was led by the following research questions:

- What factors framed the experience of the learning culture of the Open Academy and that across the prison?
- Are experiences of a learning culture most closely bound to individuals, relationships, physical environment or other contributing factors?
- How fixed, or how permeable, are the boundaries of cultures of learning within and across this prison?
- What role can formal and informal higher-level and distance learners play in the development of a learning culture in prison?

In order to address these questions, a mixed methodology was employed which consisted of a survey instrument, the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* (Auty, Taylor, Bennallick and Champion, 2016), combining quantitative and qualitative elements, and semi-structured interviews with both individuals from the Open Academy and important educational stakeholders beyond the initiative. These were supplemented by observational fieldwork. Although the study centralised the experience of prisoner participants, it also drew on the experiences and perceptions of staff from across the prison, particularly through the staff *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey*. Not only does this go some way to address the largely missing voice of prison staff in research into prisons (cf. Liebling, Price & Schefer, 2010), but it responds to a recognition that both educational and non-teaching staff are crucial in the construction, development and experience of a learning culture (Gallacher et al., 2007). Secondary data, including prison Inspectorate reports and those from the institutional Independent Monitoring Board, were drawn upon to begin to further position the research site of the prison into the wider fields of cultural influence in which it sits (Bourdieu, 1992).

1.6 A thesis chapter map

This thesis is comprised of nine chapters. Following from this introductory chapter, **Chapter Two** plays a dual role, bringing together the two substantive bodies of literature within which the current study is situated. It first sets the scene through a description of the policy development of education in prison, and situates it in wider penological themes which frame the operation of prisons, experience of imprisonment and cultures of prison institutions. It provides a critical overview of studies exploring the function, impact and experience of prison(er) education. It draws on some problematic practical, philosophical and policy tensions with learning in prison and therefore begins to develop a rationale for exploring the processes and phenomena highlighted further.

The chapter then moves on to outline the understanding of learning adopted in this research, and introduce the concept of *learning cultures* (cf. Gallacher et al., 2007; Hodkinson et al., 2007; James and Biesta, 2007). Through this it will build a picture of the theoretical framework within which this study operates. This cultural approach to educational research has largely been focussed outside the environment of the prison, and so this chapter begins to apply this concept to existing studies which explore learning and communities of learning in prison. It goes on to address the potential for the application of this framework in understanding the characteristics of a prison-based culture of learning.

Chapter Three addresses the methodology and research design underpinning the study. This research adopts a mixed-methods approach to exploring cultural features which operate across the breadth of the prison as well as looking closely at the influence, impact and particular cultural framing within the Open Academy. The chapter provides a rationale for the combination of research tools – comprising a prison-wide survey, semi-structured interviews and observational fieldwork – and approaches adopted to address this. It introduces the research site as a cultural institution suitable for this study and concludes with a discussion of ethical considerations.

Discussion of the substantive findings begins in **Chapter Four**, with a snapshot of the prison-wide learning culture. Building from the prison-wide survey data, it explores the demographic factors which influence the experience of the learning culture when defined as an element of the 'rehabilitative culture' (Auty et al., 2016). Through an integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, it develops a picture of prison-wide attitudes towards learning built primarily on the relationships which support or hinder it. It goes on to unravel some of the prison-wide narratives of education, as presented by survey respondents, which frame perceptions of learning across the prison.

Following on from this, **Chapter Five** moves on to begin the focussed analysis of the cultural positioning of the Open Academy within the context of the learning culture and educational offer at HMP Swaleside. This chapter outlines the educational positions, histories and expectations of the Open Academy students. Through the application of a 'learning careers' understanding (Bloomer and Hodgkinson, 2000), the chapter begins the presentation of the positioning of the Open Academy within the trajectories of the students and peer managers who frame it.

In **Chapter Six**, the central focus is on the 'best of' the Open Academy. Through an 'appreciative' reporting of the initiative (Liebling, 2000), the chapter analyses the benefits, and potential benefits, that the Academy brings to the students and the wider institution. It explores the ways in which the environment supports and responds to the vulnerabilities and aspirations discussed in the previous chapter and the relationships which underpin the tentative development of a learning community. Critically it describes the ways in which the space of the Academy is experienced and explores the *cultural bleed* through which it begins to impact culturally on the wider spaces surrounding it.

Chapter Seven presents the other side of the split narrative characterising students' experiences of the Open Academy. It describes how, over the course of the research period, a number of mechanisms and processes led to the eventual framing of the initiative as the 'Closed Academy'. In providing an analysis of some of the cultural

features leading to this trajectory, the chapter reaches back out into the wider prison and explores some of the cultural features relevant to the shaping of the 'Closed Academy'. With a particular focus on the roles that staff working across an institution can play in supporting education in prison – from the experiential narratives of prisoner interviewees – the chapter demonstrates the ways in which these features can work to support or suppress education innovation. It concludes with a look at the implications for the relationships, communities and identities, as described in Chapter Six, when the Closed Academy subsumed the Open version that went before it.

Chapter Eight draws together the lessons learned from the research and relates these to developing academic discourses of education and learning in carceral settings. It provides an explicit application of the learning cultures theoretical framework in order to demonstrate the findings which have developed through the use of this cultural approach to understand learning in HMP Swaleside and the Open Academy in particular. It develops these insights in order to outline the potential implications for practice and policy. **Chapter Nine** concludes the thesis whilst also making recommendations for practice and future research trajectories.

Chapter Two

Understanding prison(er) education; Understanding learning

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an analysis of key themes arising from the different bodies of literature within which this study sits. It begins by providing a critical perspective on the perceived purpose of education in prison. This discussion begins with a portrait of the educational needs and aspirations of those residing in prison as understood from existing literature. As has been described in the previous chapter, the perceptions of employability, with a view to the reduction in reoffending, reverberate through policy directions. This chapter assesses the data exploring the complex picture as to how these relationships intertwine. It then goes on to address some key themes in the exploration of wider impact and what *matters* in the consideration of prisoner education. Finally, it provides a critical overview of the educational theoretical concepts which frame this study, in particular the approach to ‘learning cultures’ that has been utilised and a rationale for the adoption of this perspective.

Throughout the chapter, the focus of the thesis – which remains on the person rather than the system or the resultant change following actions done *to* a person whilst in prison - will be introduced. It is in this vein that the decision to refer to the processes of prison(er) education, rather than prison education, has been alluded to from the chapter title and throughout. Emanating from the work of Reuss (1997; 1999; 2000) this practice seeks to embody the individualised transformative potential inherent in processes of learning and education from an empowerment model, resisting the reductive narratives of *deficit* inherent many discourses relating to prison education. These distinct approaches are critically discussed below but it is important to make clear from the outset that to centralise the person within the processes of education remains fundamental to the theoretical and philosophical approach of the current research.

2.2 Perceptions on the purpose of education in prison²

Despite being a key element of the prison regime, the purpose of providing in-prison education is unclear and intertwined with vacillating policy directives (Czerniawski, 2015; Forster and Forster, 1996). The Prison Service's *Statement of Purpose* states: 'Her Majesty's Prison Service serves the public by keeping in custody those committed by the courts. Our duty is to look after them with humanity and help them lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and after release' (HM Prison Service, 2014). The implications of this broad purpose on the rationale behind education provision are important yet fluctuate widely. Therefore, there is a need to explore further the values which drive policy development in this area, which tend to focus on: i) prison as a means for addressing the 'unmet needs' of a poorly educated population; and b) education as a vehicle for rehabilitation and reform, and as a means of (tangentially, at least) reducing future recidivism. Finally, this section looks beyond these agendas, and explores the wider impact of education in prison.

This section provides a critical discussion of the various purposes afforded to the provision of education in prison over time. Incorporating policy perspectives, alongside those developed through academic fields, this section portrays the complexity of establishing measures of success when overarching purposes remain disparate and ambivalent. In line with other government priorities for 'lifelong learning', the current OLASS priorities (which, as outlined previously, will be coming to a close in April 2019), demand an emphasis on three elements; English, maths and English as a second language (ESOL), vocational qualifications including ICT, and Employability Skills (Skills Funding Agency, 2012). The following section seeks to critically address the justifications behind this approach to centralised provision. It begins by developing a picture of the environment of prisoner learners and potential learners. Through this depiction a conflicting set of perspectives are drawn out; the

² It is important to note at the outset that this review focuses primarily on work from England and Wales – the jurisdiction within which the current research was conducted – with some additional work from the United States. The provisions, nature and purpose of educational programmes in prisons varies widely across the globe, and this study is not in a place to comment on such phenomena outside of the parameters noted above.

deficit approach and the aspirational approach to understanding the purpose of education in prison.

2.2.1 A portrait of educational needs in prison

A significant predicate of education provision in prison is the level of unmet educational needs (Gaes, 2008). However, the data concerning such needs within the prisoner population are 'complex and varying' (Ellison et al., 2017). Research has demonstrated that people in prison *generally* have lower levels of educational attainment than the wider population. A short overview is here provided of key studies. Representing the most comprehensive attempt to establish a picture of the factors impacting on social exclusion at the time, the central source of statistics in this area arose from the Social Exclusion Unit's (SEU) 2002 report which found that 52 per cent of male prisoners and 71 per cent of female prisoners had no qualifications at all. The report found that '80 per cent have the writing skills, 65 per cent have the numeracy skills and 50 per cent have the reading skills at, or below, the level expected of an 11-year-old child', which refers to the adult learning Level 1 or below (SEU, 2002: 6). There was no direct comparison for the writing skills of the general population but 23 per cent were at or below Level 1 in numeracy and 21-23 per cent of the general population were at that level of reading ability. These findings are situated within a wider picture of the deep social marginalisation of prisoners, as demonstrated by the comparatively low scores on an extensive breadth of indicators ranging from a much higher rate of growing up in care (27 per cent compared to 2 per cent of the general population) to a high rate of two or more mental illnesses (72 per cent of male sentenced prisoners compared to 5 per cent of men in the general population). The impact of this report on the management of the prison system was great, leading to the formation of the National Offender Management Service (NOMS, as noted in the previous chapter this has now been disbanded and become HMPPS). This report has been adopted as the central source of information on prisoner ability for many years, despite some methodological issues and the fact that it is now over 15 years old. A key reason for this has been the limited data collected centrally with regards to prisoners' educational needs.

However, the most recent and most comprehensive addition to the understanding of the educational attainment of people entering prison used new data sets to assess their educational skill levels. Creese (2016) uses data collected through mandatory educational assessments delivered by the education providers in prisons (rather than Ministry of Justice data). These were brought in across the sector in 2013/14. Comparing these data with the Skills for Life national survey (conducted by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills in 2012), Creese presented findings which in some ways corroborate the common understanding underpinned by the SEU data above, but in other ways challenged this research. In terms of literacy, the data showed that 85 per cent of the general population have literacy skills at Level 1 or Level 2, compared to 50 per cent of prisoners. However, with regards to maths, prisoners were found to *outperform* the general population at some levels. 79.4 per cent of prisoners had numeracy skills at Entry Level 3 or above, compared to 76.4 per cent of the general population. However, this relationship disappeared as skill levels increased; only 9 per cent of prisoners were recorded as having achieved Level 2 numeracy in comparison to 21.8 per cent of the general population (Creese, 2016).

Despite Creese's (2016) findings on the 'relatively robust' level of maths skills in prisoners – a 'major surprise' that challenged 'most policymakers' assumptions' (p. 27) – these studies do demonstrate a higher level of educational need in other areas, including literacy and learning difficulties and disabilities, in prison than in the general population. Creese recommends that prisons should adopt a 'thorough and personalised one-to-one assessment' to establish whether the comparatively low skills are due to learning difficulties or other mental health problems (p. 27).

The above data are based on entry to the prison, or participation in education in the prison as is the case with the mandatory assessment, which raises a number of issues. Firstly, as has been described above, there are an increasing number of prisoners serving longer sentences (MoJ 2018). This population will be underrepresented, and their proportionate learning needs distorted, in a sample which focuses on entrants to the system. The samples in the studies outlined above are therefore likely to include

more prisoners on short term sentences. These are often ‘revolving door’ prisoners and are more likely to be characterised by a number of distinct learning and wider social needs, different from the longer term sentenced prisoner (Anderson and Cairns, 2010).

A wider heterogeneity may therefore be clouded through these figures, as seeking to explore only literacy and numeracy can reduce the concept of ‘educational needs’ to these basic skills. A stringent focus on these skills risks policies which emphasise these deficits as being the central cause of crime, or that see meeting these basic standards as sufficient for central outcomes, such as reducing reoffending. A prescriptive conception of ‘educational needs’ and a restricted approach to intended outcomes of providing education in prison can lead to a void in the availability of a wider range of programmes. As Wilson (2001) observes, from this perspective ‘art, drama and vocational classes start to disappear and it becomes even harder to work towards higher educational achievement’ (p. 18). Further, with a policy targeted solely at addressing these lower level or entry level needs, focus is moved away from the educational needs and aspirations of the long-term prisoner (Taylor, 2014). This is of particular interest in the current study as it is conducted in a long-stay prison, HMP Swaleside.

2.2.2 Education for ‘Reducing Reoffending’

Later sections in this chapter go on to challenge the centrality of an approach to education in prison that appears to be first focussed on the *prison* outcomes, in particular those related to the reduction of reoffending, before wider *educational* outcomes. However, as it continues to remain a central justification of the provision, the evidence exploring the relationship between education and reducing reoffending, particularly asking questions of the role of employment in the process, will be reviewed here. As Reuss (1999) points out, ‘what changes’ are seen, and can be measured, in prisoners is ‘the question most asked of educational practitioners’ working in the penal system: ‘the question of ‘what changes?’ suggests that people expect and hope that if an offender attends a particular course, or courses in prison,

then those courses will stop any future offending behaviour' (p. 114). Thus, before this argument is unpacked further, the following section explores the evidence around this particular relationship.

Many studies, particularly from the United States (Aos et al., 2006; Davis et al., 2013; Wilson et al., 2000) but also some important studies from England and Wales (Hopkins, 2014; MoJ, 2013; 2018), have shown that participation in education whilst in prison reduces the likelihood of those prisoners reoffending once they have been released from custody. However, the relationship between these factors is far from clear-cut. The Ministry of Justice have assessed that the relationship is 'mixed/promising' (MoJ, 2013). Nonetheless, the primary focus on policymaking for education in prison centres on its rehabilitative potential. Recidivism studies have therefore grown to become a strong political tool in the justification of policy (Hughes, 2007). Clear evidence of this can be found in the 2005 Green Paper, '*Reducing Reoffending Through Skills and Employment*', which positioned the reduction of reoffending as a central driving factor for education provision in prisons. As is apparent, even through the title of this influential Green Paper, employment is the assumed mechanism inherent in the relationship between education and the reduction in reoffending. According to this logic, the improvement of skills leads to an increased likelihood of employment on release and it is *this* which ultimately leads to the reduction of reoffending. The following section discusses the evidence that prisoner education reduces reoffending, and the relationship that this holds to gaining employment on release.

In order to demonstrate the best understanding of the 'mixed' picture of the relationship between education and post-release outcomes, the following section provides findings from systematic reviews and meta-analyses from across the UK and USA. As Hughes (2007) notes, a large number of the quantitative studies exploring the impact of prisoner education are made up of analyses of individual educational initiatives (e.g. Caulfield et al., 2009). Although these can be very useful in providing in-depth perspectives on what may be possible through a particular educational initiative, systematic reviews and meta-analyses can give a wider picture on the

overall impact and relationships between such phenomena. Therefore, the following section uses these wider reaching quantitative studies as a starting point for addressing this relationship.

MacKenzie (2006) conducted a meta-analysis exploring the impact of both academic and vocational programmes on recidivism. She found that, for academic programmes, participants were 16 per cent less likely to reoffend than non-participants. This went up to 24 per cent when participants were involved in vocational programmes. Hurry et al. (2006) conducted a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) on courses promoting employment for people in prison. This included 44 studies from the US and 9 from the UK. However, they concluded that the number of studies that met their criteria provided an evidence base that was too small to make conclusions on the relationship between these complex variables. In contrast, the study conducted by Davis et al. (2013), wherein they undertook a systematic review and meta-analysis of studies from between 1980 and 2011 (published and unpublished), produced interesting results. They found 58 studies that fit their inclusion criteria, mostly originating from across the US. They discovered that prisoners who participated in education programmes were 43 per cent less likely to reoffend than those who did not. Further, they found that those who had engaged in vocational training whilst incarcerated were 13 per cent more likely to gain employment post release. This compared with an 8 per cent increase in the likelihood of employment for those involved in academic education courses. Finally, Ellison et al.'s (2017) meta-analysis of 28 studies found that those who participated in education whilst in prison are approximately one-third less likely to recidivate than those who did not. Further, they are 24 per cent more likely to find employment than those who did not. What can be concluded from these wide ranging findings are, to repeat the words of the Ministry of Justice (2013), 'mixed/promising.' Although these findings vary in the extent of the impact that they show, they all demonstrate a positive influence on both the likelihood of reoffending and the likelihood of gaining employment. However, they also show great diversity in the operationalizing of the term 'education' and, as most starkly seen in Hurry et al. (2006), a lack of high quality consistent studies to support this claim (particularly in England and Wales).

Many meta-analysis authors report issues with the lack of consistency in the research methods and the rigorous nature of the studies which they have analysed (Davies et al, 2013; Ellison et al, 2017; Mackenzie, 2006). Thus, the 'mixed/promising' conclusions found by these analyses are likely to be cautiously representing the consistently positive, albeit often small and sometimes very small, findings due to methodological issues. As Ellison et al. (2017) state, 'we do not know if it is the skills gained, the qualifications acquired or intangible benefits of education ... that have most effect' (pp. 124-125).

Seeking to address the question of the relationship between prison-based initiatives and post-release employment, the Ministry of Justice recently released a report on the results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR). This was a longitudinal study of 2,171 adult prisoners sentenced to between 18 months and four years (Brunton-Smith and Hopkins, 2014). The analysis uses a multivariate logistic regression model to determine which factors predicted prisoners being in employment in the months after release. On this analysis, education courses were not significantly associated with employment on release whereas vocational courses were. It is important to note, however, that there is no agreed criteria on how courses fit within each of these criteria. However, these authors have considered that the fact that the prisoners undertook largely low level courses could be related to this finding. 40 per cent of prisoners reported that they attended basic literacy, numeracy and ESOL courses compared to 2.5 per cent reporting to have studied higher academic qualifications (Hopkins, 2014). However, earlier reports from this longitudinal study have demonstrated that those with any qualification are 15 per cent less likely to be reconvicted within a year post release (Hopkins, 2012)

This brings an important point into play in the consideration of the logic of *employability* that has been adopted throughout prison education policy. The provision of low level courses and a 'narrow' concept of employability (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2013) is unlikely to be enough to address the many barriers to

successful employment for somebody whose literacy and numeracy skills are at Entry Level, who will have recently left custody and may have a number of other social factors – such as housing or addiction issues or learning disabilities (cf. Brunton – Smith and Hopkins, 2014; SEU, 2002) – which may also work to impede employment. The forms of ‘employability’ training that can become a central part of the educational offer through this narrow perspective include courses such as CV writing or provision closely related to one form of occupational skill such as painting and decorating, which on their own are unlikely to address barriers to employment (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2013: 6).

Although many of the above studies differentiate between academic and vocational courses, very few have distinguished between the levels of courses that are being undertaken. A notable exception in this regard is the Ministry of Justice DataLab analysis of Prisoners’ Education Trust data between 2014 and 2018. As the two sets of analysis completed in this project are of particular significance to the current study, they will be presented in detail here.

The Ministry of Justice has produced a data analysis system available to third sector organisations in order to evaluate their impact on the reduction of reoffending. The data used was that on the Police National Computer (PNC) and a Propensity Score Matching methodology which matched individuals on a range of characteristics grouped under ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, index offence, length of sentence, criminal history and employment and benefit history. A statistical analysis of the two groups was then conducted to assess if it can be claimed that the intervention impacted on known reoffending rates. It is important to note that this PNC data did not include information on educational history.

Prisoners’ Education Trust (PET) submitted a large dataset of 17,727 grant recipients to this scheme in 2015, of which 5,859 were included in the statistical analysis (Ministry of Justice Datalab, 2015). This dataset consisted of those who had been funded by PET to begin a course – they may not necessarily have completed it. The

control group may have been engaged in other forms of education in prison that was not funded by the Trust. The large attrition rate is attributable to a range of factors, including the fact that those on life sentences and those with current or previous sex offences were not included in the analysis. Further, those who were on longer sentences and had not been released were not eligible for the study. These factors impacted greatly on the attrition rate for this dataset as such characteristics are found in a higher proportion of grant recipients than the average prisoner or prison sentence. However, with the matched data, the PET grant recipients (of any funded course, be it Level 2 counselling or Level 4 Access to Social Science) were 5-8 percentage points less likely to reoffend than those who did not receive a grant. The data were also split to compare the variety of types of courses; academic, vocational, courses accredited by the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, Open University Access courses and arts/hobby materials. For all the groups except arts and hobby materials, the one year proven reoffending rates were between 15 and 18 per cent, compared to between 21 and 25 per cent for the matched control groups. For the arts and hobby materials, the reoffending rate was 30 per cent compared to 35 per cent for the matched control group. In summary, this study showed that those funded by PET were 25 per cent less likely to reoffend a year after release.

In July 2018, the Ministry of Justice published further analysis which helps to address the question of the relationship between education and employment and reoffending rates. By drawing on data provided by the Department for Work and Pensions, which was able to demonstrate who was in P45 employment, and matching it with the sample of distance learners provided by PET, they found that 39 per cent of those who had been funded by the charity to conduct distance learning whilst in prison were employed within their first year after release, in comparison to 31 per cent of the matched control group (Ministry of Justice, 2018).

Harvey's (2000) interpretation of the 'New Realities' of the Higher Education institution creates an interesting lens through which we can view a broader concept of employability in prisoner education. Through an increasing pressure on the establishment to contribute directly to the economic environment, a shift has taken

place emphasising skills beyond the purely academic. However, unlike in the prison estate this has occurred without 'reducing' education to training. Rather, it acknowledges that:

'The primary role of higher education is increasingly to *transform* students by enhancing their knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities while simultaneously *empowering* them as lifelong critical, reflective learners.' (p. 2, italics in original.)

The concepts of transformation and empowerment are closely associated with the language of the desistance literature, demonstrating the applicability in a prison context. Moreover, it suggests a close bond required between understandings of the role of education at large and that provided within prison walls, which is perhaps too often missed.

2.2.3 Beyond employability

Despite the types of impact that have been demonstrated above, related to rehabilitative or post-release outcomes, there are many authors who have argued that to focus too closely on these indicators, to shape the purpose of provision and education around these points, is reductionist in its appreciation of the benefits of education. The logic of this approach leads to the conceptualisation of prison-based education as an intervention, which gets instrumentalised into a mechanism to fulfil the rehabilitative intentions of the prison service. Further, positioning employability at the heart of the policy purpose of education can be exclusionary. The Prisoner Learning Alliance (2013) asserts that framing outcomes around such an objective excludes groups of the prisoner population. These include primary carers, older prisoners, prisoners with learning difficulties or disabilities, those on very long sentences and prisoners with addictions or mental health problems (p. 12).

Many authors have looked beyond these criminal justice-oriented outcomes to explore the breadth of impact the provision of education can have on the individuals involved in them (cf. Bhatti, 2014; Hughes, 2012; Pike, 2014; Reuss, 1997). A theme which resonates throughout the prison(er) learning literature is the potential it holds for shaping identity and self-perception. Hughes (2012) demonstrated the increase in self-confidence as the most common outcome reported by the distance learning students in her extensive study. Situating their narratives within the numerous forms of underachievement experienced by many students throughout their previous educational history, she argues that the value of academic success 'should not be underestimated, especially within the confines of a prison environment more typically associated with failure than achievement' (p. 94). Reuss (2000) argues instead that we should be working towards an 'education for empowerment' model. This aspirational baseline as the purpose of education mirrors the approach proposed by the Prisoner Learning Alliance report *Smart Rehabilitation* (2013), which constructed a three-tier model of the explicit mission of prison education as one that that promotes 'resilience', 'desistance' and 'positive contribution' (p. 12).

Another element of prisoner education to be explored further below is the significance of 'situated learning theory' (Lave and Wenger 1991). This perspective acknowledges the significance of the social contextual elements of learning that are largely ignored. It is too narrow to conceive of education as the mere acquisition of knowledge, without an effort to understand the environment in which it takes place. For example, the lived experience of a prison environment can create a distorted perception of space and time, with learning inside referred to as 'learning in bubbles' (Pike and Adams, 2012: 4). Crewe et al.'s (2014) analysis of the 'emotional geography' of prison life suggests that the Education Department can form a transitional environment – a 'third space' (Wilson, 2005) which allows for some of the characteristics of the 'deeper' prison experience to be alleviated (Crewe et al., 2014). Alongside the traditional classroom-based model, this research is interested in the role that distance learning can take in situating learning within and across prisons (Hughes, 2012). This perspective can allow for the development of understanding of the 'emotional geography' constructed through distance learning in a prison-based environment.

Significant understandings of the social and experiential world of the prison have been developed through largely ethnographic studies. Sykes' now historical (1958) account stemming from his research in New Jersey prison developed important insights into the 'pains of imprisonment' which continue to frame understandings of experiences of modern imprisonment. Alongside the deprivation of liberty, goods and services and heterosexual relationships, the pain of the deprivation of autonomy and security form his seminal analysis of prison experience. Despite the 'new' pains of imprisonment shifting and expanding in 'depth', 'weight' and 'tightness' (Crewe, 2011), the negotiation of removed or reduced autonomy remain central to narratives of prison experience. Further, the navigation of the absence of security reverberates through accounts of prison life. As has been reflected upon previously, the current prison environment is one defined largely by violence (see, MoJ 2019), yet the constant threat of violence has been recognised for many years as 'arguably the overriding feature of life in most institutions' (Jewkes, 2005: 46).

Goffman's (1961) concept of 'total institutions' provides a long-standing framework to perceive the mortification of the self often experienced by those moving from the free world into the institution; 'he begins a series of abasements, degradations, humiliations and profanations of self' (p.23). Goffman's dramaturgical analysis, arguing that prisoners negotiate their social world through the construction of 'masks' to create 'frontstage' and 'backstage' presentations of the self, presents an understanding of the association between the individual and the spaces of confinement. Crewe et al's (2014) articulation of the 'emotional geography' of prison life provides an important development of this analysis. They argue that rather than the dichotomous construction of 'frontstage' and 'backstage' spaces, a prison is made up of distinct 'emotional zones' wherein 'certain kinds of feelings and emotional displays are more or less possible to experience and exhibit' (p.57). This analysis positions the education department as an important part of this more nuanced understanding of carceral space, providing places where '[w]armth and emotion blossomed temporarily' (p.68). They argue that through educational activities, 'removal activities' in Goffman's (1961: 67) terms, such zones can be created which form an 'island of respite' amongst other harsher prison environments.

Crewe et al's (2014) work forms part of a wider literature of 'carceral geography'. This emerging body of literature encompasses recent attempts to reconceptualise the construction of spaces in prison and the relationship that they hold to the individuals residing within and moving through them. Building on significant insights into the role of architecture to prison experience (such as, Hancock and Jewkes, 2011 and Moran and Jewkes, 2015,) this work also deconstructs the role of boundaries in concepts of imprisonment – both beyond the walls (Baer and Ravneberg, 2008) and within the carceral institution itself (Turner, 2016). Drawing on the discipline of geography, though, for example, the application of TimeSpace to prison experience (Moran, 2012), carceral geographers have also addressed the embodied nature of time spent in prison (such as Wahidin, 2002). These concepts provide important underpinnings to the application of a 'situated' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) understanding of practices of learning in prison which is endeavoured throughout this research.

A significant effort to bring together the existing research on education in prison was achieved through the publication of *Prison(er) Education: Stories of change and transformation*, edited by David Wilson and Anne Reuss in 2000. These contributions to the field come together to shed some light into this previously dark environment by fitting around the two models of 'Education for Empowerment' and the 'What Works' discourse, ultimately asking the question 'who is prison education for?' (Wilson, 2000: 9). In this volume, Anne Reuss (2000: 24-47) discusses her experience of researching within the prison walls as grounded within her experience as an in-prison teacher of a degree level course in sociology. Observing first-hand the 'transformation' in the prison classroom, her research was premised on the belief that education in prison *may* be rehabilitative but wanted to explore *how* a potential change may occur (p. 25). Reuss's earlier (1997) thesis outlined this particular process, which she describes as a 'weaving theory of learning' with the group interactions and discussions of sociological concepts as part of the course leading to a place of potential empowerment for the students.

By capturing the learning processes of the students in her class, Reuss takes the position of both teacher and researcher. Despite the methodological difficulties in

navigating these apparently disparate identities, it is clear that the benefits to doing so are wide reaching. Significantly, Reuss was able to address a prevalent problem in perceptions of prison education. Through an in-depth understanding of each of the participants (her students) and their learning processes, her research challenges the concept of prison learners as a homogenous group with predetermined educational needs, aspirations and journeys of transformation. As she demonstrates, their 'commonality lies *only* in their incarceration' (*ibid*: 45). This provides an important grounding for justifying distance learning as a means of providing the breadth and depth of educational opportunity to people whilst incarcerated, which would otherwise be unavailable.

Stephen Duguid's work in the field of prison education continues to be central to our understanding of the impact of higher education in prison. He taught, evaluated and analysed the demise of the highly regarded Simon Fraser programme, which delivered post-secondary liberal arts education in prisons in Canada (Duguid, 1997). His contribution to the 2000 edition discusses the relationship between theory and practice in education in prison (2000: 49-62). As a justification for its existence, framing it in 'practice' and as a precursor to how it stands up to evaluations, theory underlines any programme in prison. However, as Duguid discusses in relation to the uptake of the Cognitive Skills programme in Canada, theory and evidence do not necessarily come together to create the most logical outcome. This chapter emphasises the embedded nature of wide-reaching theories, both explicit and implicit, whilst asserting the relationship between political responses to crime and educational opportunity in prisons.

Discussing an element of her qualitative research into the experiences of distance learners in England and Wales, Emma Hughes discusses the analysis of letters to the Prisoners' Education Trust (2000). Hughes's choice of methodology brings some important considerations into play. Firstly, it is a way of promoting the voice of the participant and prisoner learner, a theme which underpins the approach of the current research. Secondly, she raises the perceived critique of the 'elite' sample. This is a significant consideration when researching the distance learning population, which at

approximately 5 per cent of the general prison population, are a self-selected sample of prisoners with higher-than-average educational attainment. In addition, the process of application means that this self-selection is narrowed further still through the PET selection process. However, as Hughes states, this does not remove the value of the content of the letters. Although the sample of distance learners may not be 'representative' of the wider prison population, the oft-forgotten heterogeneity of this group of people requires consideration. Demonstrating the wide range of skills, needs and aspirations within the prison population needs a focus on those at both ends of the spectrum. Further, as Hughes (2007; 2012) reflects, there are a number of distance learners who have conducted large parts of their formal education journey whilst in prison. Thus there are those who entered the carceral system unable to read or write who progress to higher education levels through their involvement with prison education.

This chapter began by introducing some elements of the current prison population that interplay with the processes of learning that may occur in prison. Next it discusses some of the important policy restrictions and restraints on the learning opportunities available, with a particular focus on higher level and distance learning. The following section will expand upon this discussion to address understanding of the process of learning. Through this discussion, the concept of learning cultures will be explored as a potentially useful lens through which the prison could be viewed.

2.3 Understanding learning and cultures of learning

All of us learn, all of the time.

(Hodkinson et al., 2008: 17)

This research seeks to explore the cultures of learning across a prison. In doing so, it draws upon conceptions of adult learning (such as Hodkinson et al., 2007; Knowles, 1984; Mezirow, 1991), learning activities and relationships (Mayes et al. 2001). The above quotation from Hodkinson et al. has been selected to draw attention to the understanding that a learning culture is not inherently a normative concept. Rather, it describes the relationships between individuals, their environment, their wider social positioning and their activities. Necessarily grounded within concepts of both learning and culture, debates on the definition and meanings of 'learning cultures' stretch across many sociological themes. Throughout this chapter, a conception of learning culture/s will be outlined as a response to such wide-reaching sociological dualisms as the agency and structure debate, the situated and cognitive learning debate (Anderson et al., 1996, 1997; Cobb and Bowers, 1999; Greeno, 1997; Lave and Wenger, 1991) and the relationship between mind and body (and context) in understanding learning processes.

The following discussion begins by outlining the concepts of learning that are mobilised throughout this research. Drawing on theoretical debates, as well as empirical evidence from within and outside the prison walls, it goes on to suggest the potential applicability of the learning culture concept in the exploration of a prison-wide culture of learning. This research draws heavily on the conceptual approach to learning cultures as proposed by Hodkinson, James, Biesta and colleagues at the conclusion of a largescale study, 'Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education' (2003; 2007; 2007a; 2008). The following section will situate this approach within understandings of adult learning before outlining the central tenets of the framework adopted in the present study. It will then go on to apply this framework to existing research relating to in-prison cultures of learning.

2.3.1 Understanding Adult Learning

It is important from the outset to note Merriam et al.'s (2007: 89) observation that 'there is no single theory of adult learning'. Instead, they argue, there exists 'a number of frameworks, or models, each of which contributes something to our understanding of adults as learner' (p. 89). This section therefore adopts a broad, multi-perspective reflection on how and why adults learn. However, much of this theory and evidence has been constructed *outside* of the unique context of the carceral, an important point to which we shall later return.

Theories of adult learning have developed significantly over the past four decades. Adult learning is now widely recognised as a phenomenon distinct from the learning of children. A fundamental thinker in embedding this distinction was Malcolm Knowles who, throughout the 1980s, set out his theory of 'andragogy', initially as opposed to 'pedagogy', the then-dominant framework for conceptualising learning. He highlighted six assumptions of adults as learners; they are independent, autonomous beings who can self-direct their own learning; their life experience provides a significant learning resource; they are goal-oriented; they are relevancy-oriented; they highlight practicality and adult learning should encourage collaboration (Knowles, 1984). These principles continue to influence a range of learning theories and form the fundamental assumptions in this current research. Using these assumptions as a baseline, this section will address the approaches of learning and the development of learning cultures that will be mobilised throughout this study.

Despite continuing to be one of the most influential approaches to adult learning (Merriam et al., 2007), Knowles's andragogy theory has been criticised for being more of a set of principles for good teaching than a theoretical approach (Brookfield, 1986). He later adapted his theory to position it as more of a spectrum, with pedagogy on one side and andragogy on the other, rather than explicating them as distinct approaches to learning. The following section will now outline the concept of 'transformative' learning as a potentially aspirational process that may be a suitable

lens through which the role of different learners in a prison environment can be perceived.

2.3.2 Transformative Learning

Since its conception in the 1970s (Mezirow 1975; 1978), transformative learning theory has developed to become a central pillar in the understanding of adult learning (Merriam, 2001). From this approach, 'learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one's experience in order to guide future action' (Mezirow 1991, p. 162). Mezirow argued that transformative learning could be achieved when one revises an existing 'meaning perspective' (Mezirow, 1978; 1991) or 'culturally defined frame of reference' (Taylor, 1998: 13) that acts as a filter to the meaning given to experiences. Mezirow was influenced by Habermas's notion of 'communicative action' and thus separates learning into instrumental (task-oriented and problem solving for improved performance) and dialogic (or communicative). This latter idea emphasises the significance of dialogic 'argumentation' in learning, and it is through this form of learning that perspective transformation may occur.

Mezirow originally highlighted ten phases of 'perspective transformation', which evolved from his study of 83 women returning to college as adults in the USA. He found that his participants underwent a perspective transformation, which usually followed the processes of:

- 1) A disorienting dilemma
- 2) Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
- 3) A critical assessment of assumptions
- 4) Recognition that one's discontent and process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change
- 5) Exploration of options for new roles, relationships and actions
- 6) Planning a course of action

- 7) Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing these plans
- 8) Provisionally trying out new roles
- 9) Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
- 10) Reintegration into one's life on the basis of one's new perspective

(Mezirow, 1995: 50)

It is particularly salient that – similar to the current research – Mezirow's initial sample *also* reflected the experiences of a marginalised group of learners; in this case, women returning to work within the particular socio-political restraints of 1970s America. This is a theme which has continued throughout the empirical assessment of 'transformative learning' (Taylor, 1998; Taylor, 2000). However, despite the ongoing relevance of this notion, explicit applications of frameworks of 'transformative learning' in a prison environment remain limited to a small handful of studies, as will be discussed further below.

Mezirow's theory has been criticised for claiming that a 'high' level of cognitive sophistication was necessary to achieve perspective transformation, with Merriam (2004) questioning the relationship between the assumption of maturity and socio-economic class in Mezirow's concept. Indeed, Mezirow (2000) agrees that full transformative learning may require a higher cognitive functioning, but adult education should be aiming to develop this in learners. Further, he states that the 'hungry, homeless, desperate, threatened, sick or frightened are less likely to participate effectively in discourse' (*Ibid*: 15). The implications of this may have socio-economic dimensions, and may further impact marginalised groups. Also, although a prison sentence may be the 'disorienting dilemma' that could be a catalyst for a transformative shift in meaning perspective (Pike, 2014), it may also work to direct attentions away from learning.

Mezirow's work has also been critiqued on the grounds that the three themes identified as central to transformative learning – i.e. 'experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse' (Taylor, 2007: 15) – do not necessarily hold up to empirical

scrutiny. Taylor's (1998) review in particular argued that these themes led to too strong a focus on 'the self' in the theory, to the detriment of 'recognition of the role of emotions and relational knowing' (p. 45). Taylor argues that this was problematic because relationships had been consistently shown to hold an essential role in a range of 'transformative' experiences. Others have suggested that 'transformative learning' was just *one* element of the experience; a partial description of the later stages of a long developmental process (cf. Belenky & Stanton, 2000).

More recently, Pike (2014) has questioned the applicability of the concept to the carceral environment, arguing that transformative learning is a phenomenon that can only meaningfully be applied to higher-level learners. As 'higher-level' learners represent only a minority of prisoner learners, and a yet smaller minority within the wider prison population, Pike raises the question of whether a different semantic framework is required for making sense of higher-level learning in prison. The relevance of 'transformative' experiences to prison learning and learning cultures therefore continues to represent an unknown quantity, and an important area for exploration in the current study.

In expanding the language of transformative learning, radical Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire (1972) has also influenced the field of understanding here through the concept of 'emancipatory transformation'. Similarly to Mezirow, Freire also centralises critical reflection, yet for Freire, the transformation is necessarily a *social* (rather than individual/self) experience, and one that allows the more critically aware learner to rediscover their power (cf. Taylor, 1998), both individually and together. Freire's preoccupation with power, oppression and education as fundamentally linked to emancipatory freedom, certainly provides an important context to the position of the in-prison learner, and again can be linked to recent developments in the field of higher education in prison given the centrality of Freire's mantra to the development of new initiatives in prisoner learning, such as the development of the recent prison-university partnership network 'Learning Together' (Ludlow and Armstrong, 2016).

A further element of Freire's attention to power relationships in education is the promotion of horizontal relationships between student and teacher, where dialogue is based on 'mutual trust' (1970: 80). This can be significant in creating a space of safety for learning; an issue of particular relevance to the experience of learning in prison in England and Wales, where in recent years prisoners have reported feeling increasingly *unsafe* and at risk of violence, as discussed in the previous chapter (HMCIP 2015; HMCIP 2018). Safety is a crucial element of a learning environment due to the vulnerability one experiences when travelling through the processes towards 'perspective transformation' (Mezirow, 1978). Individuals can be left extremely vulnerable and Taylor (2000, cit. in Pike 2014) criticised Mezirow for ignoring such costs of transformation. The notion of 'safe' learning spaces can be particularly significant in a prison environment; a place experienced by many as both physically and emotionally unsafe. For example, in a case study combining ethnographic reflections of a particular education class in prison from the perspective of a learner, a teacher and a researcher, Crewe et al. (2014) described how small gestures such as bringing in biscuits and sharing some personal information was a conscious effort on the part of the inclusive educators in a prison to cultivate a 'less prison-like' intermediate zone within an institution. Through this, staff were aspiring to create horizontal relationships, 'binding prisoners into a contract of mutual candour and humanity' (p. 14). The authors also describe occasions where prisoners have been left to 'run' the class, and that through these processes, staff were able to model 'legitimate authority' and engage in significant and powerful 'emotion work' with the prisoners they built relationships with (Crewe et al., 2014). This has important implications for the consideration of the interactions between spaces, relationships and education focussed upon within the current study.

Gallacher et al. (2007) also considered the role of relational power in adult learning when conducting their study into the learning cultures at two community learning centres (CLCs) attached to Further Education (FE) colleges in Scotland. They found that the 'horizontality' of the relationships between staff and learners (both teaching and non-teaching staff), alongside their complex roles which balanced formality and informality (a theme reflected in Crewe et al.'s discussion), were central factors in

creating a positive learning environment in these spaces. Significantly for the current research, the learners in these CLCs had largely experienced high levels of social and academic marginalisation, experiences not dissimilar to many within the prison system.

Horizontal relationships are a defining characteristic of peer relationships. Such relationships are significant in promoting 'perspective transformation'. Eisen (2001, cit. in Taylor, 2007) identified a 'peer dynamic' in her study of professional development for college teachers. Seven relational qualities were included within this dynamic: trust, non-evaluative feedback, non-hierarchical status, voluntary participation and partner selection, shared goals and authenticity. Such relationships increasingly form part of the structure of semi-formal education provision in prison (Devilley et al., 2005; HMCIP 2016a). As Taylor notes, the 'equalization of power between teaching partners' was particularly important in Eisen's peer dynamic findings (p. 179).

An important example of structured peer initiatives which can be found across the prison estate in England and Wales is the Shannon Trust 'Turning Pages' programme (formerly known as 'Toe by Toe'). This reading plan is an initiative whereby prisoner mentors who can read are taught to teach prisoners who cannot. A recent report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons found that these schemes were operating 'effectively' in the majority of prisons across the estate and cites prisons where there are up to 50 prisoner mentors teaching others to read (HMIP, 2016a). The benefits are wide-reaching for learners, mentors and the prison institution, with one mentor respondent stating, 'my job as a mentor helps me to feel less inhuman, as I can help others' (p. 16). Targeting learning at a much lower cognitive level than may be required for a Mezirow-style transformation, this programme resonates well with Friere's accessible literacy programme written for the marginalised, poverty-stricken people of Brazil, and his concept of emancipatory transformation. This form of structured peer led initiative is increasing in prisons and a new Prison Service Instruction was introduced in 2015 to regulate the institutional mobilisation of prisoner peers. Although there are risks inherent in this approach, including questions

of confidentiality, issues of training and wider concerns of the reach of the dangers of responsabilisation in the particular structures of the prison (cf. Eser, 2014), this form of learning moves away from the Education Department and becomes the domain of wings and individual cells. This is a central concern to be explored throughout this research as the interplay between boundaries of learning culture, relationships between individuals (and all that they bring with them) and spatial and physical distinctions within the prison are explored.

The processes of transformative learning have been demonstrated in studies of prisoner learners, all of which have explored *higher-level* learners. Reuss's (1997) thesis outlines her 'weaving' theory of learning, which describes the 'profound' potential impact that the 'Leeds Course' – a university level sociology course taught in prison through communicative teaching methods – had for the learners. She highlights the many contexts that can influence the learning process, including the past experience of the learner and the prisoner environment. The transformations she observed in her students were not immediate, but rather 'a subtle set of processes... triggered by what can be described as 'context dependent interaction' (*ibid*, 99). The intricate, subtle, developmental shifts in meaning perspective that Reuss observes led her to argue; 'that they surely *process* through their course as opposed to *progress* is of crucial significance to anyone interested in learning outcomes' (Reuss, 1997: 101, italics in original). This challenges the approach reflected across current prison education policy which favour easily measurable 'outputs' over more complex to capture 'outcomes' (Champion, 2015). The relationships between the individuals and their surrounding contexts, and how that contrasts to the increasingly target-oriented structures for the majority of education provision available in prisons, is a significant learning from Reuss's approach.

2.3.3 Learning through participation: situated learning approaches

Throughout the development of theories of learning, a division arose between two evolving schools of thought - the traditional cognitive perspective and the 'situated' learning approach. Advocates of the cognitive learning school believe fundamentally

that learning is an internal process of personal development. In contrast, situated learning theorists understand learning to be deeply connected to the context in which the learning happens (Brown et al., 1989; Greeno, 1997; Lave and Wenger, 1991). Thus, knowledge is understood through this approach to exist as part of participation in cultural practices, and not simply to exist in a world of its own or in the minds of individuals (Paavola et al., 2004: 557). Under this conception of learning, the traditional 'acquisition' or 'transfer' metaphors are replaced by a metaphor of 'participation' (Sfard, 1998). Rather than acquiring knowledge, developing concepts or other deeply embedded conceptions of learning, learning becomes understood as an interactive network of learning relationships (Gallacher et al., 2007; Mayes et al., 2001; Sfard, 1998), participatory practices (Billet, 2002) and identity processes of 'becoming' a student (Lave and Wenger, 1991). This conception of learning, as being a deeply intertwined relationship between concept, activity and context and inseparable from the context in which it is based (Brown et al., 1989), underlines the current approach to the mechanisms involved in adult learning. Although both traditional cognitive approaches and more situated understandings could be helpful in developing our view of different forms of learning for different individuals in different contexts – and may not be fundamentally opposed approaches (Anderson et al., 1996; Greeno, 1997; Sfard, 1998) – distinguishing between the two schools of thought is beneficial to creating a conception of a learning culture.

Lave and Wenger's seminal (1991) study began this concept and moved understanding of situated learning away from being simply 'situated in practice – as if it were some independently reifiable process that just happened to be located somewhere', and instead conceptualised learning as 'an integral part of generative social practice in the lived-in world' (p. 35). Their research highlighted the importance of identity construction as a socio-cultural phenomenon, which moved beyond the immediate social background and emphasised the significance of considering 'how shared cultural systems of meaning and political-economic structuring are interrelated with learning practice in general and as they help to co-constitute learning in communities of practice' (p. 54). As Contu and Willmott (2003) describe, it is through this invitation to understand how an individual becomes a member of a 'socio-cultural community',

that this form of 'situatedness' becomes closely associated to the work of Bourdieu (and his conceptual tools of habitus and field) (p. 7). The following section will demonstrate how these concepts of situated and socio-cultural learning have underpinned the theoretical framing of a learning cultures approach and demonstrate the significance of the Bourdieusian tools of understanding and centralising culture in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

2.4 Exploring learning cultures

To talk about a learning culture is nothing more than focussing our gaze on cultural practices with learning at the centre of our concerns.

(Hodkinson et al., 2007a: 420)

Having positioned the understanding of learning in this study, attention will now be paid to the second central concept, which is arguably one of the most complicated words in the English language: 'culture' (Williams, 1983, as cited in Peim and Hodkinson, 2007: 387). The significance of the 'cultural' perspective has been growing in understandings of education for some time and, due to the development of learning theory as discussed above, it is now of central concern to studies of education. Peim and Hodkinson (2007: 389) state that this approach requires focus on 'the interplay between the larger context of 'the world', and the local context of practice'. This dialectical understanding of both knowledge (or learning) and culture as being dependent on a relational approach between the individual and the social, the wider structures and the immediate practice, is fundamental to the current discussion. As Hodkinson et al. (2007a) state, 'we see culture as being constituted – that is, produced and reproduced – by human activity, often but not exclusively, collective activity' (p. 419). This highlights the role of both the individual and the collective in the creation, maintenance and development of culture. This shift towards a more culture-centric understanding of learning was based on Hodkinson et al.'s large-scale study of learners, tutors and non-academic staff at 17 Further Education learning sites across England and Wales. Grounded within an interpretivist approach, the study used a combination of mixed methods, including interviews, reflective journals for students

and tutors within a learning site, observation and student questionnaires (James and Biesta, 2007: 167). They conducted semi-structured interviews with students and tutors within each site and followed up with at least two (small) cohorts of learners. This work – a longitudinal, four-year project – sought to address the authors' perceived shortcomings in situated learning theory, whilst remaining firmly grounded within a participatory approach (Hodkinson et al., 2007a). This significant study in the development of a 'cultural theory of learning' was rooted in Hodkinson et al.'s (2007a) acknowledgment of a number of problematic issues with the 'situated learning' literature as it had developed. In particular, they brought attention to recurring issues of:

- Individual learning and individual differences lost in light of social interactions and activities;
- Too strong a focus on the immediate learning site, forgetting the wider contextual forces;
- A tendency to downplay issues of inequality and power relations within and beyond the site (this is of particular significance in the current study and its application to the prison context, which is inevitably enveloped in hierarchical structures and complexities in power relations);
- A tendency to separate agency and structure – a focus on one or the other, not both;
- A tendency to not see learning as practical and embodied – rather to retain focus on cognition.

(adapted from Hodkinson et al., 2007a: 417)

Further, they emphasised the need to build a concept of learning which was holistic and addressed 'the problem of scale'. The problem of scale suggests that, depending on the scale of focus, the conception of the learning process alters. Thus, different theorists may reflect upon the same phenomenon yet draw different conclusions depending on whether they view it from a perspective far away or much closer. Therefore, different scales can offer different (and necessarily partial) perspectives of

what learning is (Hodkinson et al., 2007a: 418). The significance of this comes when defining, and situating, the concept of a 'learning site'. Within the current research study, the widest conception of a learning site may be the full prison, situated within the many social, physical and environmental influences on it. However, this research seeks to explore the defining boundaries of distinct learning cultures across and within this wide 'site'. In order to do so, the research explores the overlapping and interlocking levels of 'zoom' (Biesta, 2011: 203). Fig 2.1 provides a pictorial representation of how these different levels are referred to throughout the remainder of the thesis.

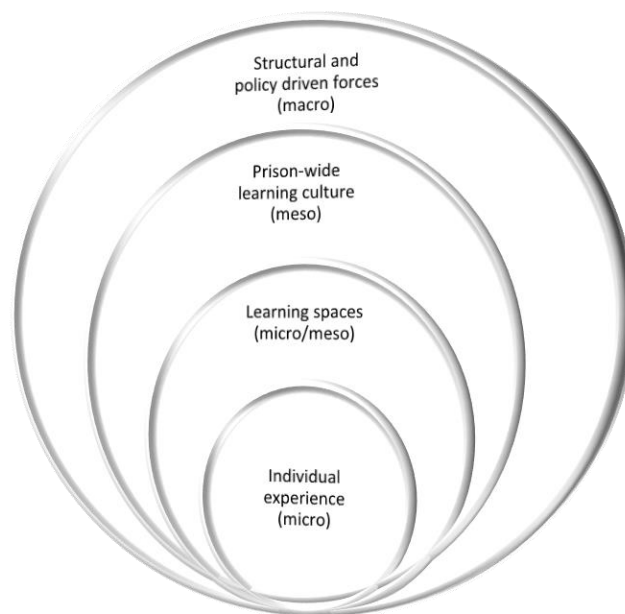


Fig 2.1. Indicative levels of cultural analysis

Hodkinson and colleagues argued that the tendency to focus on cognitive aspects across the earlier years of theoretical work on 'learning', and the consistent tendency to overlook the spatial, social and emotional aspects of that experience, meant that such frameworks would remain forever 'partial' (at least until these shortcomings were addressed). In their terms, what was instead required was a holistic theory. That is, one that addressed the problematic dichotomies of 'the mind-body dualism, the division between the individual and the social, and the split between structure and

agency' (Hodkinson et al., 2007a: 417) which had plagued prior conceptualisations of 'learning'. They argued that without sufficiently addressing the fully 'embodied' nature of the social beings that are learners, we cannot accurately describe a 'situated learner', because 'participation entails *doing* and *feeling, as well as thinking*' (Hodkinson et al., 2007a: 417, emphasis added). A learner can therefore not be separated from their social dispositions; this includes characteristics such as gender, social class, and ethnicity on the one hand, and their relationship to a particular learning community on the other.

Taking the perspective that 'while learning sites can have relatively clearly defined boundaries, the factors that constitute the learning culture of any particular site do not' (cf. Hodkinson et al., 2007a: 421), this study therefore seeks to situate and explore the relationship between specific sites of learning – in this case, the carceral – and wider influences. Such wider influences include the political framework in which it is operating, structural issues of the positioning of the prison in society and the conflict between seeking to develop a positive, value driven learning culture in a prison which, through its fundamental purpose, offends some of the central tenets of an andragogical assumption of a self-directed adult learner. These concepts are fundamental to the approach adopted in this research – maintaining the situated, relational perspective of the individual learner in a prison environment and exploring the wider forces that impact upon that.

Hodkinson et al (2007,2008) and James and Biesta (2007) thus adopt an approach which combines the sociocultural approach to understanding learning (as discussed above) with a Bourdieusian approach to thinking about culture, namely the tools of field – a social space, whereby those operating within it are 'struggling to maximise their potential (Maton 2005: 689) – and habitus – the mental structures through which [people] apprehend the social world' (Bourdieu 1989: 18) – and position themselves within a field. Their resultant conceptualisation of 'learning cultures' as a fundamental process of learning formed part of a wider movement away from the individual and the internal cognitive processes within education theory. Indeed, Kilpatrick et al (2003)

argued that the twentieth century formed the ‘century of the learner’ which has been superseded by socio-cultural concepts of community and culture as fundamental concerns in the understanding of processes of learning.

This framing of ‘learning cultures’ has continued to influence a number of areas within education, particularly those associated more closely with a conception of vocation. It has played a significant role in the developing understanding of the learning processes involved in work-based learning (Ecclestone, 2007; Thompson, 2011) alongside what is valued in vocational qualifications (Bathmaker, 2013). Bourdieusian analyses of the relationship between culture and learning continue to dominate the field of education (cf. Reay, 2004) with learning cultures contributing to the analysis of a range of learning sites, including higher education (Clark et al, 2013; Williams, 2012) and physical education (Quennerstedt, et al, 2014; Barker et al, 2015; Ward et al, 2015).

Other areas of application include spaces of learning with a particular framing cultural significance such as music conservatoires. Perkins (2011; 2013) drew upon this framework for her study of the influences of learning culture in the shaping of learning in a music conservatoire. She found four central intertwining features of the conservatoire’s learning culture; performance, social networking, musical hierarchies and vocational position taking (Perkins, 2013: 203). This has been developed further by Stabell (2018) who followed the trajectories of students through a conservatoire’s learning culture and elaborated on the cultural significance of ‘dedication’ and ‘talent’ (vi). These studies demonstrate that it is through these cultural processes that learning takes place within these culturally defined spaces. The application of concepts of learning culture in distinct learning environments thus continues to be a worthwhile endeavour. The carceral space is one such environment.

2.5 Introducing the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey*

Prior to the current study, a conceptualisation of prison-based ‘learning culture’, which did not follow the theoretical framework of Hodkinson et al (2007) was Auty et

al's (2016) study of *Rehabilitative Culture*. As shall be further articulated in Chapter 3, this study formed an important precursor to this research and the survey tool which was developed through this research was utilised as part of this study.

The definition of 'learning culture' that was constructed in the 2016 *Rehabilitative Cultures* study proposed a normative description of what a *positive* learning culture in prison may look like. The study was grounded in both the literature exploring the development of positive cultures in prison through peer led learning initiatives (such as, Champion and Aguiar, 2013; Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2013) as well as developed learnings from the Measuring Quality of Prison Life research agenda (such as Liebling and Arnold, 2004; Liebling et al., 2012). The instrument was developed to have five dimensions which were entitled *Empowering, Inclusive, Aspirational, Engaging/Relevant* and *Safe* (these dimensions are discussed in detail in section 3.3.2). An additional dimension of *Changing Lives* was developed for the prisoner respondents. These together shaped the hypothesised positive prison-based learning culture (Auty et al., 2016). Through a study that compared pre and post results of the survey within and across eight different prisons, the internal consistency of the instrument was shown to be good.

The *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* tool therefore continued to be utilised here in an exploratory way; it was previously used to measure culture *change* over time and has thus never before been used to assess variations across a single site. However, as the only existing tool designed specifically to capture elements of positive learning environments in a prison context, it continues to be the most appropriate for this study. Further, through this expanded understanding of the experience of, and meaning given to, the cultures of learning across the site from the perspective of the prisoners and staff as the 'privileged knowers' (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2010), this research intends to continue the dialogue between the qualitative understanding and the quantitative measurement of the phenomena. This iterative process reflects the development of the MQPL tool, which uses this process to 'draw together the sociologically imaginative and rich with the empirically precise, and end up with a

quantitative measure that had strong qualitative foundations' (Liebling et al., 2012: 361).

Early iterations of prison environment measurements were designed around 'therapeutic effectiveness' and were thus employed with post-release outcomes in mind (Liebling et al., 2012; Wright, 1985). Discussing Moos's (1975) 90-item scale, the 'Correctional Institutions Environment Scale', Liebling et al. (2012) outline the dimensional approach to measuring an institutional environment, which intended to measure the 'social climate' of a prison. However, because Moos's conceptual dimensions developed within this scale, and many other environmental scales of the period, were designed to evaluate the effectiveness of particular interventions of 'treatment' on 'behaviour modification', there were significant dimensions of prison life that were not measured (Liebling, 2012). Central limitations of previous attempts to measure the quality of prison life included the failure to address the term 'humanity', as found in the Prison Service statement of purpose, and the concepts of 'respect' and 'safety' which appear throughout the policy literature of both NOMS and the Ministry of Justice (p. 359). In the development of the MQPL and SQL surveys, a sequential mixed-method design was used in order to develop the empirical tool from an inductive, qualitative process of establishing what matters to prisoners and staff. Through this extended exercise, they constructed the conceptual dimensions which frame the measurement tool. This approach to measuring the environment of the prison moves from 'what works' to 'what matters' (Liebling and Arnold, 2004: 73). This study will form part of a larger research initiative, wherein it seeks to feed into a similar sequential mixed-method design, continuously developing the strength of the *Rehabilitative Cultures* tool.

A significant finding from Liebling et al.'s research was that 'the prison environment was multi-dimensional and primarily *relational*' (Liebling et al., 2012: 360, italics in original), which is central to the epistemological approach underpinning the present study. The resulting MQPL dimensions against which the quality of prison life was measured were: respect, humanity, staff-prisoner relationships, support, trust, fairness, order, safety, well-being, personal development, family contact, power,

meaning and decency. A more deductive approach was then taken in order to create a series of questions to operationalise each dimension and create a survey with responses on a 5 point Likert Scale from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree'. The MQPL and SQL are now nationally recognised surveys, which are regularly administered in prisons across England and Wales, by both the Prisons Research Team from the University of Cambridge and the NOMS auditing department, and have recently been adapted to include detention centres (Bosworth and Kellezi, 2013).

This research, particularly the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey*, is further discussed in Chapter 3.

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined some key tensions in the positioning of the provision and experience of education in prison. Underpinning these are conflicts at the fundamental level in the conceptualisation of the very purpose of prison(er) education. Ranging from a functionalist perspective, fitting within the reducing reoffending agenda, to the 'empowerment model' (Reuss, 2000), each perspective shapes the intended outcomes and likely experiences of educational practices. This chapter then went on to provide an overview of, and a rationale for, the theoretical framework adopted in this study as well as introducing earlier iterations of studies exploring learning cultures in a prison setting. Drawing closely on the learning cultures research described above, this study perceived learning to be situated, relational and have the potential to be transformative.

Chapter Three

Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have sought to develop a picture of the purpose of education in prison and challenged some wider discourses in prison education policy. It developed an understanding of learning as distinct from education and outlined Hodkinson et al.'s contributions to theories of learning culture as forming a useful framework to explore such phenomena in a prison setting (Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2007; Hodkinson, Biesta, & James, 2008; James & Biesta, 2007). The aim of taking an explicitly cultural analysis in the understanding of the higher-level learning site of the Open Academy arose as a unique and pertinent way of understanding the processes, practices and experiences within it. The following research questions have emerged to guide this exploration:

- What factors framed the experience of the learning culture of the Open Academy and across the prison?
- Are experiences of a learning culture most closely bound to individuals, relationships, physical environment or other contributing factors?
- How fixed, or how permeable, are the boundaries of cultures of learning within and across this prison?
- What role can formal and informal higher-level and distance learners play in the development of a learning culture in prison?

The remainder of this chapter provides a rationale for the approach adopted in this study. In doing so, it first outlines the selected site for study and begins to explore some of the particular factors in this environment. It then addresses the epistemology

which underpins this work. It goes on to explain the selection of both the qualitative and quantitative methods and their complimentary nature. The chosen methods for data collection are then addressed followed by the rationale for the selected data analysis approach. Finally, risks and ethical issues are discussed.

3.2 The Research Site: The Open Academy within HMP Swaleside

In seeking to establish the features which influence the defining learning culture of the Open Academy, the current study will be reaching out far beyond the geographical boundaries of the initiative. The Open Academy frames the learning site of this research. However, as noted by Biesta et al. (2007), 'while learning sites can have relatively clearly defined boundaries, the factors that constitute the learning culture of any particular site do not' (p. 421). It is therefore paramount to understand the Academy as a situated site within the wider research site of the prison.

3.2.1 Introducing the Open Academy

In 2014, movements began in HMP Swaleside to introduce a new learning space to the prison. This became known as the 'Open Academy' when it was informally launched in early 2015 (with a formalised launch ceremony taking place in September 2015). The Academy is a wing-based initiative with a capacity of 84 students, although the numbers of those officially registered on the initiative during the research period fluctuated between the 20 and 35. The model contains a number of central components, each incorporated by the organising team in order to add to a change of culture of the wing, from one of violence and lack of direction, to one that facilitates higher-level learning, giving the wing a change in 'identity'. The central organising team of the initiative comprised of a member of staff from the senior management of the prison, two supervising officers from the wing and a prisoner from the wing.

Contact with the prison was initially made when the Head of Learning and Skills³ attended an event being held to disseminate findings from a previous research project exploring Rehabilitative Cultures (see Auty et al, 2016), which will be outlined below as it is an important precursor to the current study. This event was small and targeted at people who worked in prison and were looking to embed ‘learner voice’ programmes – initiatives which centralise the values, opinions, beliefs and perspectives of learners and potential learners – within their prison. The Open Academy had begun to take hold at this point, which led to interest from HMP Swaleside in the former study and facilitated the relationship which led to involvement in the current study.

As described in Chapter One, the Open Academy is a wing-based learning space set up to meet a number of needs of further and higher-level learners in Swaleside. It was designed to be a space where existing distance learners could study away from their cells and with other learners. It drew together structured learning through distance-learning and informal studying through a Self-Study approach. The physical foundation of the Academy is formed within three rooms at the entrance to the residential wing; a library (stocked with further and higher-level learning resources including tables for communal study), an IT room (with new computers connected to the Open University-hosted Virtual Campus intranet – see Chapter Six for a more detailed discussion of this) and a study room with large circular tables for communal study. These rooms were painted a light blue, distinct from the muted yellow of the rest of the wing and decorated with logos of external supporting organisations. Plants, cushioned chairs and tables designed and made within the prison wood workshop further seek to distinguish this space from the traditional prison environment on the other side of the door. The initial resources for the initiative were donated by the Open University after a chance meeting between the Head of Learning and Skills from the prison and a representative of the prison learning team from the Open University. This encounter followed a discussion within the prison which outlined the wish of the

³The Head of Learning and Skills in a non-operational management role within HMPPS and is the strategic lead for the provision of education and training for the institution. The role is responsible for the coordination of both the external contracts and internal provision of education, training and skills.

Governing Governor of the time to use learning and progression differently within the prison and to move education away from the confines of the Education Department (Fieldnotes April, 2016). The Open University, Novus (the education provider for the prison) and the prison each invested financially in the initial set up of the project.



Fig. 3.1. Image of the Open Academy library

The intentions of the organising team were to make the wing ‘a centre of excellence’ and ultimately ‘Swaleside College’. This was discussed in terms of providing the wing with an educational or learning ‘identity’ (Fieldnotes, April 2016). Within the prison, many wings are structured around a particular activity, need or population. For example, one wing is dedicated to drug rehabilitation, another houses men who work in a particular trusted role (one which fulfils external contracts) and another wing is recognised as an ‘enabling environment’ where staff work to create a positive environment for prisoners with personality disorders. The Open Academy was embedded within wider changes in the management of learning and skills within the prison. The wider management team sought to promote engagement with, and progression through, sentence plans by developing the ‘growing culture of distance learning’ within the prison through the ‘slightly enforced’ nature of structural

incentives (Fieldnotes, April 2016). This included an intention to create a tiered pay system which incentivised self-development and did not prioritise low-skilled jobs over education.⁴ One member of the Academy organising team stated that this restructure was required as existing processes left departments and activities ‘fighting over the same people’ and that ‘no communication’ between departments thwarted the existing process (Fieldnotes, March 2016).



Fig. 3.2 The Open Academy library from the residential wing walkway

The Open Academy was developed to meet some of the needs of the long-term prisoner. Wider prison policy and funding structures have increasingly channelled resources to the ‘resettlement’ of prisoners and initiatives taking place in the last three months of their sentence, particularly following a restructure of the prison estate in 2014. As such, the needs of the longer-term prisoner are often circumvented (Taylor, 2014). In order for learners to be accepted onto the Academy, they had to demonstrate that they were at, or above, Level 2 in maths and English, the core offer provided by the prison. This rule was incorporated part way through the research period; prior to this any prisoner with an interest in the Open Academy could apply.

⁴ This restructuring had not gone ahead by the conclusion of the fieldwork.

Use of the Academy and its resources was restricted to those who resided on the wing. The reasoning behind this decision was stated by the organising team as being both practical and risk-oriented (minimising the resource implications of moving people around the prison, reducing the risk of contraband transfer, for example), and conceptually grounded (increasing the concentration of learners into one space to increase the cultural impact of the initiative). Prisoners residing on different wings therefore needed to request to transfer to this wing if they were to be accepted onto the Open Academy. The resources within the Open Academy were also available to members of staff from across the prison. However, during the course of the study, no staff members took up this opportunity. Discussions with officers positioned around the prison suggest that although there was an interest in making use of the resources, they were not interested in staying at the prison following the conclusion of their shift.

The Open Academy was managed day-to-day largely by prisoner-held roles including the Academy Manager and the Learning Support Manager, as well as additional peer support roles.⁵ All of these roles were held by the same individuals from the beginning of the research period until the end who have been central in the development of the Academy. They were supported in their roles by a network of 'Skills Advisors', multi-skilled prisoner education mentors who were trained in a number of mentoring positions, such as the peer led introduction to reading course 'Turning Pages' and accredited mentoring training within the prison. These mentors were tasked with education 'outreach' roles around the prison and were developed to act as important conduits in the cultural relationship between the Open Academy, the Education Department and the wider prison. The Skills Advisors were important to this research, both in terms of supporting the research administration processes and as interviewees, which are both discussed below.

In summary, the Open Academy was set up to provide a supportive environment to develop a community of distance learners within the prison. The organising team also

⁵ In order to protect the anonymity of the individuals within these roles, they will be referred to as 'peer managers' throughout the remainder of the thesis.

sought to encourage emergent learners through the development of the semi-structured and peer led 'Self-Study' programme. The intention was that the development of a distance learning community and a focus on aspirational higher-level learning would positively influence the culture of the wider wing.

3.2.2 The Broader Research Site: HMP Swaleside

The Open Academy is a unique initiative within the prison estate of England and Wales and so the research took place in a single prison site, HMP Swaleside. The prison is a large Category B training prison on the Isle of Sheppey in Kent. HMP Swaleside was previously one of three institutions forming the 'Sheppey Cluster', alongside HMPs Elmley and Standford Hill. In 2012 the cluster was officially disbanded leaving each prison as largely self-governed institutions (Independent Monitoring Board, 2012). However, they continued to share some central resources and a number of both prison and subcontracted staff continued to work across the three sites at the time of this research fieldwork. HMP Swaleside had a capacity of 1,112 as both certified normal accommodation and operational capacity and at the time of the commencement of this fieldwork phase,⁶ the population stood at 1,107. The prison is a relatively modern prison which opened in 1988 and has grown from the initial four residential wings to a current total of eight, with additional segregation and healthcare units. Each wing detains between 120 and 178 individuals in single cells.

The OLASS education contract is held by Novus, the prison education arm of the large further education provider, The Manchester College. Novus regularly deliver lower level courses, up to Level 2, in English, maths, IT, business studies, art and debt management. Throughout the research period, and immediately prior, the Education Department experienced changes in the management structure and roles with different individuals shifting the departmental priorities. The department is reasonably well resourced. However, some of these resources were not, at the time of writing, being used to their full potential. One example is the fully stocked kitchen,

⁶ The period termed the research period or the fieldwork phase throughout this thesis was between March 2016 and January 2017.

designed to support studies in hospitality and food technology. Despite significant investment in these resources, they were not used for this purpose due to a combination of contract restraints, recruitment challenges and take-up within the prison.

Swaleside detains prisoners on long-term sentences of over four years and those with a minimum of 18 months left to serve. Despite being 55 miles away from central London and with a travel time of between 2.5 and 3 hours via public transport, the vast majority of the population serving time in Swaleside have been received from London, whilst the geographical reach of the prison stretches further still, across the South East, South West and as far as Wales. The prison detains a large number of individuals serving life sentences; it is a main centre prison for those in the early stages of a life sentence and has additional space for those who are later in a life sentence. In total, it has 460 spaces for lifers (Justice.gov.uk, 2017).

A shift in the demographic make-up of the prison occurred at the very beginning of the research period, which saw a push to relocate the majority of the Category C prisoners residing in Swaleside to other prisons. The implications of this demographic change were highlighted in a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP), which noted that this shift left the prison with a high proportion of young men who are early in their sentences and are often still 'pushing boundaries' (HMCIP, 2016: 5). This is one of many factors influencing the wider climate of the prison and shaping the conclusions laid bare in the explicitly 'poor inspection report' (p. 5) conducted during the early stages of the fieldwork, which underpins this study.

The damning 2016 HMIP report found that Swaleside was performing at a level of either 'poor' or 'not sufficiently good' in relation to every aspect of the Healthy Prisons test employed by the Inspectorate. The safety dimension was of particular concern, falling from 'not sufficiently good' to 'poor' between the 2014 to the 2016 unannounced inspections. 69 per cent of the prisoners surveyed said they had felt unsafe at some point and nearly half (46 per cent) stated they felt unsafe at the time of the inspection. Further, regarding the purposeful activity dimension, HMIP reported

a shortfall of nearly 200 activity places and a higher level of unemployment than is acceptable. The inspectorate found over 40 per cent of prisoners locked up during the working day and deemed the majority of the work on offer to be 'mundane and undemanding' (HMCIP, 2016: 15).

The challenges facing Swaleside are numerous but not wholly unique. In the introduction to a 2014 report by the Inspectorate, the Chief Inspector at the time framed some of the enduring struggles in the prison within a national staff shortage for frontline staff, one which hit prisons in the South East particularly hard (HMCIP, 2014: 5). The implications of a disenfranchised workforce, often temporarily relocated to the prison from other sites, are further demonstrated in the 2016 HMCIP report of Swaleside as it reports a reduction in the positivity of staff-prisoner relationships.

However, the 2016 Inspectorate report drew attention to innovations and good practice within the prison, a number of which reflect positively on the work of the Learning and Skills team. Particular attention is paid to the 'excellent' use of mentors and the 'innovative' Open Academy, the two initiatives which are of central concern in the current study.

However, it is important not to understate the enduring challenges which are not only facing the wider prison system more generally (HMCIP, 2016b) but hit this prison and indeed this wing specifically during the research period. In late December 2016, on the eve of the final day of the planned fieldwork phase, one of the three landings which make up the wing housing the Open Academy became embroiled in a riot. Officers lost control of the landing for approximately 7 hours as some prisoners set fires. This incident followed similar occurrences across the country in the preceding months, with particularly high profile incidents taking place in HMP Birmingham, HMP Bedford and HMP Lewes (BBC, 2016). It is important to outline this at the outset to offer a glimpse of the multiplicity of challenges facing the successful embedding of the Open Academy.



Fig. 3.3 The Open Academy Wing during the riot (photo circulated across media outlets)

3.3 The Research Design

This study sought to explore and describe the learning culture produced and reproduced by those residing and working within and across the learning site. In order to establish an in-depth understanding of the situated experience of the Open Academy, the study required a close understanding through listening to the experiences of students, residents and staff, and an opportunity to explore perceptions and experiences across the breadth of the institution. The former approach speaks directly to a qualitative, in-depth analysis. This follows in the important tradition of qualitative studies exploring the motivations, experiences and impact of prison(er) education more widely (see, for example, Braggins and Talbot, 2003; Hughes, 2000; 2012; Ludlow and Armstrong, 2016; Nichols, 2016; 2017; Pike, 2014; Reuss, 1999). However, the current study also builds upon methodological developments in the exploration of the prison climate (Liebling and Arnold, 2004; Liebling et al., 2012; Ross et al., 2008) and learning environments (Hodkinson et al.,

2007b). Growing from a qualitative conceptual grounding, such tools seek to quantitatively articulate and measure experiences and 'difficult to measure' constructs (Liebling and Arnold, 2004: 52). The utility of such measures includes the ability to compare experiences over time and to compare from one site to another. Thus, this study also draws upon and seeks to feed into the development of quantitative measures which have developed through an iterative relationship to their qualitative underpinnings. The study is therefore built upon a mixed-methods approach, making use of quantitative and qualitative survey instruments, semi-structured qualitative interviews and the generation of observational data. Each of these approaches, and discussions of their appropriateness, follow in more detail further below.

At the heart of the approach of this study, and a motivating element of my undertaking prisons research more generally, was an endeavour to centralise and amplify the voices and experiences of the prisoners within the learning site, and the wider research site of the carceral institution. Despite the growing body of literature which recognises the voice of the prisoner student as expert in their own experiences (see above and also Darke and Aresti, 2016 for a discussion on expanding the role of the prisoner student to 'convict criminologist'), this remains largely separate from the quantitative approach which often feeds more closely into policy agendas.

The remainder of this section discusses the range of tools and approaches that were utilised in the study, providing a justification for each, whilst positioning the study within a pragmatic epistemology.

3.3.1 The need for a pragmatic, mixed-methods approach

As an exploration of learning culture, this research is grounded within a socio-cultural perspective of human learning and interaction. Peim and Hodkinson (2007) state that this approach requires a focus on 'the interplay between the larger context of the world, and the local context of practice' (389). This dialectical understanding of both knowledge (or learning) and culture as being dependent on a relational approach

between the individual and the social, the wider structures and the immediate practice, is fundamental to the current discussion. As Hodkinson et al. state (2007a), 'we see culture as being constituted – that is, produced and reproduced – by human activity, often but not exclusively, collective activity' (p.33). As discussed in the previous chapter in relation to the situated understanding of learning, this approach embeds a learner within the social context in which they are 'participating' (Sfard, 1998), problematising the relationship between structure and agency in a way that is often ignored in other approaches of understanding learning (Biesta et al., 2007). This taps into a distinctly Bourdieusian tradition of sociological empiricism, which is concerned with adopting a 'pluralistic' (i.e. multi-perspectival) and 'descriptive strategy towards actions, actors and things' (Bénatouïl, 1999: 379). There are clear parallels between such methodologies and the cultural mode of study described above, indicating the fit between these two schools of thought, and their relevance to the current study.

Social research has traditionally been characterised by a distinct approach to quantitative and qualitative methods and the closely related 'paradigm war' between the positivist and the interpretivist researcher (Feilzer, 2010). In recent decades, criminologists have increasingly stressed that there are many ways that these methodological approaches can complement each other (Johnson et al., 2007; Liebling, 1999; Maruna, 2010). Indeed, as Maruna (2010) states, the distinctions between quantitative and qualitative methods are often 'more apparent than real', yet the use of mixed methods still remains under-utilised in criminological research (p. 123).

Unlike the traditional paradigms of quantitative positivism, which sees 'truth' to define a fixed reality, and qualitative constructivism, which seeks to uncover a series of 'multiple truths' as they mean to each participant, the driving paradigm behind mixed methods research remains contested (Johnson et al., 2007). Although differing epistemological frameworks can underpin mixed methodology, leading to some authors arguing it is time it is recognised as a distinct paradigm (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004), the underlying philosophy of this study is that of pragmatism

(Feilzer, 2010; Maruna, 2010). Explaining how this approach can break free from the constraints of more traditional paradigms, Feilzer states that:

Pragmatism [...] sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality, accepts, philosophically, that there are singular and multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry and orients itself toward solving practical problems in the 'real world' (Feilzer, 2010: 8)

Thus, by centralising the research problems at hand, rather than the underpinning ideology, employing a mixed methodology allows for increased flexibility to 'consider multiple viewpoints, perspectives, positions and standpoints' (Johnson et al., 2007: 113). It is for this reason that this study was positioned within the pragmatist epistemology and mode of enquiry. In the current study, semi-structured interviews, surveys and observational data generation formed the methods of capturing these multiple perspectives. Each of these are now explored in detail below.

3.3.2 Developing and administering the survey

Survey design

Surveys are important tools to establish the extent of beliefs or experiences across a population (Deakin and Spencer, 2011). As they can be administered systematically across a prison, the sample can strive to be representative of the wider prison population. In order to develop a measure of the learning culture of a prison, this research uses the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* (Auty, Taylor, Bennallick and Champion, 2016; appendices I and II). The instruments making up the dual survey tools, which consist of one tailored towards the prisoner experience and one for members of staff across the prison, denote the first iteration of a quantitative instrument to explore the key features of a prison-based, institution-wide learning culture (Auty et al., 2016). In structure and developmental approach, the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* draws upon the frameworks of the Measuring Quality

of Prison Life (MQPL) and the Staff Quality of Life (SQL) surveys (see Liebling et al., 2012, for details of these tools and their application to the prison world).

Developing the dimensions of the Rehabilitative Cultures Survey

Despite the growth and breadth of the MQPL and SQL surveys, there is not currently a dimension that specifically addresses learning in prisons and its relationship to the wider social climate. Therefore, in the process of developing the Rehabilitative Cultures surveys, the conceptual dimensions underpinning *Smart Rehabilitation* (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2013) were applied to adapt the questions that comprise the MQPL and SQL surveys. These dimensions were: *Empowering*, *Inclusive*, *Aspirational*, *Engaging/Relevant* and *Safe*. An additional dimension of *Changing Lives* was developed for the prisoner questionnaire. These dimensions were established as the characteristics of a positive learning culture (Auty et al., 2016). The full prisoner and staff surveys can be found in Appendices I and II and the dimension item list is in Appendix III.

The *Empowering* dimension was designed to measure an environment where prisoners are encouraged to have a say in their learning development in the prison. The *Inclusive* dimension aimed to capture the extent to which staff encouraged prisoners to engage in some form of learning and celebrated their achievements when they did so. This encompassed the perceptions of learner reps within the prison. The third survey dimension was entitled *Aspirational*. This investigated the extent to which the prison, through staff, prisoners and learner representatives (or reps)⁷, fostered a culture that encouraged prisoners to imagine a positive future for them. The *Engaging/Relevant* dimension attempted to measure the extent to which prisoners were made aware of the learning opportunities in the prison while the *Safe* dimension intended to measure the extent to which the prison created physically and

⁷ The term 'learner representative' broadly relates to a number of prisoner-held roles which promote and/or support education within a prison. This can include representatives who have been elected by the prisoner body or those who have been allocated the role by a member of staff.

emotionally 'safe spaces' for learning to take place. Finally, the prisoner survey included further questions about the role that staff have played in their rehabilitation under the additional category of *Changing Lives* (Auty et al., 2016).

Auty et al. (2016) found that the prisoner survey demonstrated strong internal consistency across the eight prisons where the study was conducted, for all-but-one of the five dimensions of learning culture that the survey measured.⁸ Its findings from the tool also corresponded closely with the qualitative observations which were triangulated as part of that study. However, the *Safe* dimension did not reach the required reliability coefficient in any of the eight sites in which the research took place.

In response to the *Safe* dimension, found to be problematic by Auty et al. (2016), a focus group was held with Skills Advisors as part of the current study. This focus group sought to explore why the items making up the scale for the *Safe* dimension were not holding together as closely as the other four dimensions of learning culture measured in the *Rehabilitative Cultures* tool. This was developed through a discussion of perceived *meaning* which focus group participants ascribed to the concept of safety and how the existing questions relate to such perceptions. All eight of the Skills Advisors were invited to take part in this preliminary focus group due to their prison-wide educational stakeholder status; they were in a position to reflect on their own perceptions and experiences whilst also being informed of the experiences of other prisoner learners with whom they worked. Seven Skills Advisors took part as one was ill on the day. As a result of this discussion, three out of the five questions making up the *Safe* dimension were edited.

⁸ The Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient ranged between 0.715-0.904 for the Empowering, Inclusive, Aspirational and Engaging/Relevant dimensions.

Table 3.1 Changes to items in the *Safe* dimension following a preliminary focus group with seven Skills Advisors

<i>Safe</i> items removed	<i>Safe</i> items included
I have become more tolerant of other prisoners in this prison	In this prison, learning mostly happens in the Education Department
When in a learning environment with others, I feel recognised as the person I really am	The learning spaces in this prison are made to be comfortable
When I am learning something new I feel comfortable and am able to be myself	I know what to expect when I am in a learning space in this prison

Focus group participants agreed that *emotional* and *psychological* safety were important in the development of a positive learning culture, not simply *physical* safety, and it was this that the earlier iteration of the *Safe* dimension related to. However, they also agreed that *comfort* was significant in feeling emotionally safe. These points were reflected through the questions ‘*The learning spaces in this prison are made to be comfortable*’ and ‘*I know what to expect when I am in learning space in this prison*’. A further element which arose through this discussion was the geographical positioning of learning practices within the prison. As is also reflected in the literature underpinning the development of the wider survey tool, such as Prisoner Learning Alliance (2013), a concept of a safe learning environment in a prison is the breadth of spaces across the prison wherein prisoners feel comfortable to learn. As such, a question was included relating to this asking, ‘*in this prison, learning mostly happens in the Education Department*’. This question was negatively coded meaning that a high score on this question demonstrated a negative point of the emotional safety of the learning culture of the prison.

Auty et al. (2016) reported that it was difficult to assess the validity of the staff questionnaire as their study suffered from a relatively poor response rate from the staff. This was not surprising as this is a phenomenon that has been acknowledged in

the literature exploring the experiences of prison staff (Liebling et al., 2012; Patenaude, 2004).

The surveys collected demographic data on the ethnicity, age, sentence length and learning history of the prisoner respondents, and focussed on the role that the staff member has in the institution. The surveys also contained qualitative, open-ended questions. This is an opportunity to ensure that the meanings of the questions are interpreted in a way that relates to the intended purpose, which can be drawn out through corroboration of qualitative and quantitative data (Rowe, 2014).

Sampling

Prisoner survey sampling strategy

The situated, relational and 'real world' approach informed through a pragmatic epistemology, as described above, has echoes of the alternative epistemological standpoint and approach to research, Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR is an epistemology that assumes that 'knowledge is rooted in social relations and is most powerful when produced collaboratively through action' (Fine et al., 2004). This approach was particularly interesting to me in the earlier stages of developing the research design. With an interest in the relationship between research, action and empowerment (led in part by an engagement with the emancipatory transformative approaches to education inspired by Friere's (1972) pedagogy), I was interested in building a participatory approach into the current study. However, with a growing recognition of the hurdles and gatekeepers of the National Research Council approval board, which took an extended period to approve the current study, a research approach which fundamentally challenged the power structures of the carceral institution was considered too big a procedural risk. Therefore, this approach was not adopted fully as an underpinning epistemology of the study.

However, I considered an attempt at including *some level* of a participatory approach to be both possible and suitable in the administration of the prisoner survey. In its

purest form, PAR is the process of producing new knowledge by 'systematic inquiry, with the collaboration of those affected by the issue being studied, for the purposes of education and taking action or effecting social change' (Green et al., 1994, cit. in Macaulay, Commanda, Freeman, et al., 1999: 774). Core to this are the concepts of 'collaboration', 'mutual education' and 'effecting change' (i.e. 'acting on results developed from research questions that are relevant to the community') (Macaulay et al., 1999: 774-5). While the current study makes no claim to have embraced PAR in its purest capacity, collaboration with members of the prison community – specifically peer (i.e. prisoner) education support workers known as 'Skills Advisors' – was critical in carrying out this phase of the research. Therefore, in an effort to ameliorate to some degree the 'researcher-object' power dynamic – that is, in treating participants as 'more than simply research objects' and 'valuing all perspectives in research' (Cheek, 2003: 64), and make some movements towards a shared power in the knowledge construction of research, I was keen to consult those who were often subjected to a barrage of surveys on their preferences for research engagement. This too formed a key topic in the focus group described above with seven of the Skills Advisors. There was strong agreement that the impersonal approach, whereby researchers more frequently slotted a survey under the locked door of a prison resident, was both disempowering and unlikely to lead to a high response rate. Through the guided discussion, it was agreed that the Skills Advisors were well placed to support this role (as prisoners with relatively free movement across the prison and as I had been building relationships, trust and rapport with the team for some months prior to the beginning of the research period). Framed within an understanding of the power of horizontal relationships and by seeking to work with existing relationships within the prison, a sampling strategy was drawn up with the Skills Advisors.

It was agreed with the team that each Skills Advisor would be responsible for administering and collecting surveys to the men that reside on their wing, as each acted as the representative for their wing. In preparation for this administration, a small informal 'training session' was organised with the Skills Advisor team supporting the research administration (see Appendix IV). The central aim of the training, alongside stressing the strategies for administration and collection, was to ensure key

ethical considerations were clearly grasped and strategies for adhering to an ethical research protocol were recognised and rehearsed. All the Skills Advisor team were well practiced in administering surveys as part of their work and many had been involved in leading peer research as part of the prison's recent educational needs analysis. Therefore, the key points of discussion in the informal training centred on the correct wording of the research, ensuring 'informed' consent, supporting those with limited literacy and maintaining the particular strategy for administration and collection (see Appendix IV).

The Skills Advisors were allocated 50 prisoner surveys each to administer across their wing. The strategy was informed through seeking a randomised sample, with the intention for representatives to ask men residing in every other cell or in every third cell. However, with an understanding of the unpredictable realities of prison fieldwork and the need to remain flexible (Patenaude, 2004), the strategy also included giving a survey to anybody who asked to be involved so as not to deny anybody the opportunity to provide their experiences as part of the research. The 50 surveys were intended as a starting point with a follow up meeting arranged for two days after this first wave of administration in order to respond to the experiences of the Skills Advisors.

Each survey was provided with a self-sealing envelope with stickers attached marked as confidential and clearly denoting the intended recipient of the envelope, either myself as the lead researcher or any member of the Skills Advisory team. The Skills Advisors had a permanent base in a room in the Education Department wherein a lockable filing cabinet was used to store the survey responses.

Staff survey sampling strategy

The sampling strategy for staff members was necessarily more ad-hoc. The issue of the 'culture of mistrust' has been consistently identified across decades of prisons sociology (Crewe et al., 2014: 57), and while Crewe, Liebling and Hulley (2011) draw on previous work to challenge the view that 'officer culture' is 'invariably cynical,

authoritarian, distrustful of prisoners and resistant to change' (p. 95), the decision was made heading into this study to err on the side of caution and work hard to effectively build positive relationships with officers wherever possible. When visiting the wings, places of work and education, I would speak to as many staff as possible and engage them in the research. The survey administration and collection process for prisoners and staff took place over three months. This was to allow time for building trust and rapport with both prisoners and staff as I developed a visible presence. It also allowed for staff in particular to complete the survey when they had time – rather than according to my own schedule – and for the collection process to be as responsive as possible, acknowledging that they too were not simply 'research objects' but members of a working community with well-documented limits on staffing and time.

Recruitment, administration and survey participants

Prisoner Survey

Some limitations to the prisoner sampling strategy approach became clear at the first follow up meeting with Skills Advisors. Each of these research supporters interpreted their role differently and some later informed me that when they had not received as many responses as they hoped they asked their 'mates' on the wing to complete it 'as a favour' (Fieldnotes, April 2016). This may have led to bias in the representation of respondents. Further, some of the team did not accurately record the amount that they had allocated and another put the remainder in the bin. One member of the team unfortunately became very ill and was hospitalised very soon after receiving the surveys and before they could be distributed. The surveys were locked in his room during this time so it was impossible to establish an accurate response rate. Despite these problems, the visibility of the Skills Advisors, and the clear route for where the surveys were due to go once complete, minimized potential issues with respondents not being able to return their completed surveys.

In response to these issues in the administering process, I conducted a further 'wave' of prisoner survey administration. I visited areas across the prison, including the

Education Department, the workshops, the Psychology Department, places of employment and all of the wings (excluding the segregation unit and healthcare where it was deemed inappropriate to administer surveys) and spoke to as many men as possible. Further, I visited the prison over the weekend, when half of the prison was on lock down – where men remain locked in their cells – at any point. By visiting the wings which were closed, particularly those where the first wave produced a low response rate, I was able to speak directly to men about the research. Although speaking to participants through their locked doors felt counterintuitive, and went directly against the discussions and recommendations from the Skills Advisor focus group, I received a very positive response with a 100 per cent response rate on one particular weekend day (where 30 surveys were administered across two wings). This may be partially due to boredom when there is no functional regime, however, a Skills Advisor who escorted me throughout these research periods stated that when initially suggesting an alternative approach to survey sampling, he ‘didn’t expect [me] to be so polite’ (Fieldnotes, April 2016). This comment appeared to be an insight into the way that residents of the prison may experience the research process and survey administration in particular. It is worth, however, briefly noting that other positional elements which may have impacted upon the participants’ apparent eagerness to be engaged in the research project. As a young female entering a male dominated space, it is pertinent to recognise the gendered dynamic which is likely to have contributed to the research relationship (see, for example, Phillips and Earle, 2010 for further discussion). Nonetheless, this interaction highlights the importance, and perceived absence, of respectful research practices in prison.

As noted above, an accurate response rate became impossible to calculate. Nonetheless, 297 prisoners responded to the survey. After sifting for void responses, 287 were included in the analysis, approximately 24 per cent of the population of the prison at the time (which was around 1187 during the time of the survey administration). The survey sampling achieved a reasonable coverage of the prison with responses from each of the six residential wings. The largest ethnic group was white, which made up 65 per cent of the sample. The second largest was black, which made up 12 per cent of the sample. This compares to the prison data, as reported in

the HMCIP (2016) survey, which reported 57.5 per cent of the prison as white and 25.6 per cent black (p. 80). The full demographic data for prisoner respondents is presented in table 3.2 below.

Nearly 42 per cent of the 264 prisoner respondents who answered the question regarding their educational history left full-time education before the age of 16 (n=110) and 75 per cent had left full-time education before the age of 18 (n=199). A third reported having no qualifications before coming to prison (33 per cent, n=96), over a quarter held GCSEs (28 per cent; n=79), 11 per cent (n=31) had a BTEC or a diploma and 6.6 per cent held professional qualifications (n=19). 4 per cent of respondents held a degree (n=11) and two individuals held postgraduate qualifications.

The primary reported daytime activity for prisoner respondents was 'work only', which was reported by 45 per cent of respondents (n=130). 23 per cent engaged in both education and work (n=66) whilst education alone occupied the time of only 5 per cent (n=15). A further 2 per cent were involved with the Open Academy, an educational initiative available only to those residing on A Wing (n=5 from a total of 28 respondents living on A Wing).

107 respondents (37 per cent) reported beginning a formal course in education since being at HMP Swaleside. A further 38 (13 per cent) had begun a distance learning course, including those delivered by the Open University. 32 respondents (11 per cent) had begun a vocational course and 18 (6 per cent) had begun a peer mentoring course. A quarter of respondents (n=70) reported not starting any of these learning activities since being at HMP Swaleside.

Table 3.2 Demographic characteristics of prisoner survey respondents

		n	%
Age (years)	MEAN	37.4	
	18 - 24	33	12
	25 - 34	101	35
	35 - 44	52	18
	45 - 54	48	17
	55 - 64	27	9
	65 - 74	5	2
	Total	266	93
Ethnicity	White	187	65
	Mixed (white)	26	9
	Asian	27	9
	Black	35	12
	Other	7	2
	Total	282	98
Residing Wing	A	28	10
	B	15	5
	C	32	11
	D	37	13
	E	38	13
	F	52	18
	G	38	13
	H	38	13
	Total	278	97
Age left full time education	MEAN	16.4	
	12 years or younger	14	5
	13 - 15 years	96	36
	16 - 18 years	118	45
	Older than 18	36	14
	Total	264	93

Qualification before prison	None	96	34
	GCSE/s	79	28
	A Level/s	23	8
	HNC/Diploma/BTEC/NVQ3	31	11
	Degree	11	4
	Postgraduate	2	1
	Professional Qualifications	19	7
	Other	18	6
	Total	279	97
Main daytime activity in HMP Swaleside	Education only	15	5
	Education and work	66	23
	Work only	130	45
	Induction course	3	1
	Drug rehabilitation course	4	1
	Sick (no work)	3	1
	Unemployed	31	11
	Retired	4	1
	Offending behaviour course	6	2
	Open Academy	5	2
	Other	10	4
	Total	277	97
	Learning started or completed whilst in HMP Swaleside⁹	Formal courses in education	107
Vocational courses		32	11
Distance learning		38	13
Peer mentoring course		18	6
Informal course		5	2

⁹ Some participants selected more than one option in response to this question. Where more than one activity had been selected, the academically highest rated activity would be recorded.

	I have had a peer mentor	3	1
	Helped to teach others (e.g. Turning Pages, classroom assistant)	3	1
	Other	6	2
	Total	212	74

Staff Survey respondents

59 staff respondents were included in the analysis. The majority of staff respondents worked in 'operational' roles within the prison; that is that they took frontline roles in the daily operational running of the prison. 42 per cent (n=25) of these respondents were prison officers, with a further 15 per cent in a senior officer position (n=9). 5 per cent worked within the prison gym as physical education instructors (PEIs) (n=3). One respondent was at a governor grade. The remainder of the respondents were 'non-discipline' staff. Therefore, although they worked within the prison, they were not engaged in the frontline discipline and security roles. Some non-discipline staff were employed by an employer other than the central Prison Service, such as a university, or the National Health Service. Seven per cent of respondents (n=4) worked within the Education Department, while a further seven per cent (n=4) worked as workshop instructors. A small number of respondents were also drawn from the Prison Chaplaincy Service (n=2) and the Psychology Department (n=2). The remaining nine respondents described their role at Swaleside as 'other', and included facilitators (n=4) and managerial staff (n=1) within the Offending Behaviour Programmes team; specialist practitioners working in mental health (n=1) and resettlement (n=1); an external doctoral student; and one instructional officer from the prison industries.

The majority of staff respondents were aged 40 years and above (mean age = 41.2 years; median age = 44 years), although the age range varied widely from those in their early twenties (20) to those in their late sixties (69).

In terms of race and ethnicity, this was not a diverse group of respondents. 90 per cent of survey respondents were white, which included all operational staff; officers, senior officers and governors (n=35). There were two non-white staff respondents, both of whom were in non-operational roles; one worked within the Prison Chaplaincy and another within the Psychology Department.

A large proportion of respondents reported that they had worked in the prison for less than two years (34 per cent, n=20). However, other staff respondents had worked in the prison for twenty years or more (11 per cent, n=6). The mean length of service to the prison was 7.3 years (SD= 6.99) yet this varied greatly between roles held; the mean service length for PEI respondents was 15.7 years (s=7.09, n=3) compared to less than one year for psychology staff (s= .92, n=2). Education staff had worked at the prison for a mean of 6.6 years (s= 5.31, n=4). Prison officer and senior officer respondents had worked at the prison for a mean of 8.3 years (officers, s=7.61, n=25) and 9 years (senior officers, s=7.49, n=9).

In summary, although some diversity existed, the majority of staff survey respondents were early-middle age white males in operational/frontline roles, with over a third holding less than two years' experience of working within HMP Swaleside.

Table 3.3 Demographic characteristics of staff survey respondents

		n	%
Current Role	Prison Officer	25	42
	Senior Officer	9	15
	PEI	3	5
	Governor grade	1	2
	Chaplaincy	2	3
	Psychology staff	2	3
	Education staff	4	7
	Workshop instructor	4	7
	Other	9	15
	Total	59	100
Age (years)	MEAN	41.2	
	18 - 24	3	5
	25 - 34	17	28
	35 - 44	11	19
	45 - 54	18	32
	55 - 64	6	11
	54 - 74	1	3
	Total	57	100
Ethnicity	White	53	90
	Mixed (white)	4	7
	Asian	2	3
	Black	0	0
	Other	0	0
	Total	59	100
Length of time working for the prison service (years)	MEAN	12	
	< 2	7	12
	2 - 4	4	7
	5 - 9	17	29
	10 - 14	12	21

	15 - 19	7	12
	20 - 24	7	12
	25 - 30	5	9
	Total	59	100
Length of time working for this prison (years)	MEAN	7.3	
	< 2	20	34
	2 - 4	9	15
	5 - 9	11	18
	10 - 14	11	18
	15 - 19	2	3
	20 - 24	5	12
	25 - 30	1	2
	Total	59	100

3.3.3 Developing and administering the interviews

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were a central element of the data collection for this study. Qualitative interviews can be a source of rich data, allowing the space for deep probing and the flexibility to explore new fields of interest (Davies, 2011; Fielding and Thomas, 2008). This form of interviewing can illuminate the meanings that participants give to their experiences, which can provide a deep, rich insight in an exploratory field. Allowing the space within the interview for the phenomenon to be expressed in their own terms, it becomes possible to see the context in which these meanings are constructed (Byrne, 2004). Interviews were used as a tool to gather data from a range of research participants and thus were adapted accordingly. An indicative interview schedule for an Open Academy student can be found in appendix V.

Interview schedule design

The substantive literature determined that a range of features are likely to feed into an experience of a learning culture; particularly so when positioned within a prison. As such, the themes which were explored through the structure of the questioning of prisoner participants included past educational history, relationship of educational experiences within the prison environment to the consideration of future trajectories, but also wider relationships between staff and prisoners and how these can influence experiences of learning and education. Discussion of favoured learning environments was also a central consideration. However, these often formed starting points for far more discursive discussions. Digression from these indicative themes was encouraged within the interview process; as an exploratory study seeking to establish what *matters* in the experience and framing of a learning culture, this had to be largely guided by the interviewees. The interview schedule included questions at the end which asked participants whether there was anything they wanted to discuss or say that had not already been covered. This was included as an important mechanism whereby participants may feel they have some input into the interview schedule (Condry 2007; Harvey 2008). Discussions following on from these questions often led into new territory, which offered invaluable insight into the cultural framing, frustrations, motivations and the experiences of interviewees. The development of schedules continued inductively throughout the research period in response to emerging themes and a growing understanding of key issues in the framing of the environment. The period within which interviews were held stretched from August 2016 to January 2017, a decision that allowed for the time to promote reflective development of the interview schedules.

Individual interview schedules were developed for ad hoc interviewees with staff members depending on the role held by the interviewee.

Sampling, recruitment and conducting the interviews

Interviews with prisoners

The interviews that were held with prisoner participants happened in loosely determined 'waves', each of which targeted a different population. This was structured accordingly to allow general themes from each population to feed into the interview schedule development for the next. However, these waves were not rigidly determined through the research period and there was temporal crossover between them.

The first wave of interviews were held with Skills Advisors (n=6). As described above, by this stage I had been working with the team for many weeks and we had built up a strong rapport and trustful relationships. The purpose of these interviews was to establish perceptions and experiences of features and forces shaping the *prison-wide* learning culture. Every Skills Advisor agreed to be interviewed; however one fell seriously ill during the research period and another member of the team was re-categorised and moved to another prison before we were able to conduct an interview. It should be noted that results from the *Rehabilitative Cultures* survey were not shared with the Skills Advisors.

The second wave of interviews were those conducted with Open Academy students (n=15). These began after I had been present in the Academy for a few months, visiting the site between one and three days a week. The sampling here followed a purposeful strategy; throughout my time on the wing, I was able to ask Academy students if they were interested in being interviewed as part of the study. No potential interviewees from this cohort refused to participate in the research, however, there were a number of occasions where scheduled interviews did not occur, most often due to disruption in the regime (most frequently staff shortages and prisoners being on unanticipated 'lock-down').

The final wave of interviews were those with residents of A Wing who were not members of the Open Academy (n=5). The purpose of these interviews was to explore the perception and potential impact of the Academy initiative. Recruitment for these interviewees consisted of me establishing who was on the wing at the time that I had a slot available for an interview. I would then select a door at random and request an interview. This strategy led to a number of requested interviews being turned down. In these instances, I moved onto the next door. Yet, the majority agreed and if they preferred to rearrange for a different time, we could do so. Pseudonyms have been used throughout in the reporting of interview data. These names were generated and assigned randomly.

The decision to separate the interview cohorts into loosely designated waves was taken for both practical and empirical purposes. Different perspectives were seen to be more significant at different points of the study, such as the Skills Advisors – with their application of understanding from around the prison – when exploring the wider ‘zoom’ (Biesta, 2011) and the non-students on A Wing when exploring the impact that the initiative may have had on the wider prison. This sampling strategy permitted the time for the Open Academy initiative to become further embedded before the questions of wider impact were explicitly addressed. However, the shifting context within which interviews were taking place and the changes that occurred within the institution and the Open Academy throughout the research period means that this decision may have impacted on the data which was collected. As such, interviews held later in the research process may be reflecting on a cultural space led by a number of additional cultural changes alongside those driven by the Open Academy.

Table 3.4, below and overleaf, provides the demographic data for the prisoner interviewees who participated in this study.

Table 3.4 Demographic characteristics of prisoner interviewee sample

Interviewee	Title	Study Status	Age	Ethnicity
Lewis	Skills Advisor	OU Student	25 - 34	White
Leo	Skills Advisor	Nothing currently	25 - 34	Black
Ryan	Skills Advisor and Open Academy student	Nothing currently	18 - 24	White
Max	Skills Advisor	Completed OU	25 - 34	White
Isaac	Skills Advisor	OU studies (interrupted)	35 - 44	Indian
Michael	Skills Advisor	Applied for distance learning	35 - 44	White
Mosi	Open Academy Student	OU Student	25 - 34	Black
Dan	Open Academy Student	Self-Study Student	18 - 24	Black
Aaron	Open Academy Student	Self-Study Student	55 - 64	White
Joey	Open Academy Student	Distance learner – Level 3	35 - 44	White
Mackenzie	Open Academy Student	Distance Learning and Self-Study Student	18 - 24	Black
Nathan	Open Academy Student	Distance learner – Level 3	25 - 35	Black
Moses	Open Academy Student	Distance learning – Level 3	n/k	n/k

Zackariya	Open Academy Student	Distance learning and Self-Study Student	35-44	Black
Elliot	Open Academy Student	Self-Study Student	n/k	n/k
Alex	Open Academy Student	Self-Study Student	n/k	Indian
Ozzie	Open Academy Student	Distance learner – Level 3	45-54	Black
Carl	Open Academy Student	Applied for distance learning	18-24	Black
Darren	Open Academy Student	Distance learning and Self-Study Student	18-24	Black
Dewayne	Open Academy Student	Self-Study and Open University Student	45-54	Black
Jimmie	A Wing non-student	Nothing currently	18-24	n/k
Nelson	A Wing non-student	Nothing currently	25-34	n/k
Christopher	Open Academy Student	Distance learning and Self-Study student	25-34	n/k
Tyler	A Wing non-student	Nothing currently	25-34	White
Francis	A Wing non-student	Recently applied for distance learning	18-24	White
Kayden	A Wing non-student	Nothing currently	n/k	n/k

Interviews took place in different rooms around the prison outside of earshot of other prisoners or staff. The majority of the Skills Advisor interviews took place in an empty classroom whereas those taking place on A Wing were mostly held in the computer room of the Open Academy (a point to be discussed further later in the thesis). Most interviews were between 45 minutes and an hour long. Skills Advisor interviews were mostly longer, with an average of over an hour, whilst A Wing non-student interviews were mostly shorter. The shortest interview was half an hour long.

All interviews, bar two, were recorded with a digital voice recorder. This was done with the explicit permission of interviewees. Two interviews were not recorded; one through the request of the interviewee and another through a malfunctioning of the recorder. In each of these situations, I took extensive notes in place of the recording.

There were a total of twenty six interviews with prisoner participants; six of these were Skills Advisors, sixteen of these were Open Academy students¹⁰ and five resided on A Wing but were not students with the Open Academy.

Interviews with staff

Early in the research period, interviews with staff were deemed important in order to maintain the multiple perspectives intention of the research. The research sought to capture the perspectives of staff from within the Education Department, prison officers and other staff members around the prison who may not have a specific interest in education outcomes. These staff members have been demonstrated to have a large impact on the experiences of prison learners more widely (Braggins and Talbot, 2005; Hughes, 2012; Braggins and Talbot, 2003) and non-teaching staff have been demonstrated to have significant and complex roles in the development and maintenance of the culture of learning in the Further Education sector (Gallacher et al., 2007).

¹⁰ One interviewee was both a Skills Advisor and a student with the Open Academy.

However, interviews with members of staff proved challenging to secure. The most challenging perspectives to acquire were those from staff working within the Education Department. The research received a mixed response from such staff members but some of the strongest voices here expressed mistrust of the study (and, it seemed, myself). As such, a strategic methodological decision was made to operate on the margins of the department, positioning myself informally with the members of the education team who were accommodating if not to the study than at least to my presence, and not seeking to engage others who were not, which included significant members of the management team. My reflections on the tensions leading to these challenging relationships were informative not only in understanding the institutional dynamics of this particular site but also in guiding and developing my own approach to prison research. It was evident that tensions between management of the prison and those working under the education contract fed into this as I was perceived by some as being affiliated with a different (and at times opposing) 'side'. This was increasingly clear to me to be an important feature of the culture within which wider educational initiatives were operating across the prison and as such was a significant cultural indicator (see chapter 7 for a discussion on the tensions between departments within the prison).

Further, officers who worked on the wing wherein the Open Academy was situated had come to know me over time. Although one interview was secured with an officer of the wing, this was after many months of trying to find the right time for the discussion and was interrupted part way through due to disruption on the wing that the officer needed to attend to. Rather than continue to follow this arduous route, I found that informal discussion in the wing office was more informative than the single formal interview in shaping my understanding of the staff perspective. A further interview was held with one of the two National Careers Service staff who worked across the prison. This was important in gaining an understanding of this vital role in the support of distance learning across the prison. In order to protect the anonymity of these interviewees, as there were only two interviews with members of staff, their demographic data is not reported.

3.3.4 Generating observational data

A further source of data, supplementing that of the survey and the interviews described above, was collected through the ethnographic tradition of observation as a methodological tool. Such methods hold particular value within the carceral realm, with Wacquant (2002) arguing that the core project of prisons research should be focused on the 'virtually extinct' methods of 'getting inside and around penal facilities to carry out intensive, close-up observation of the myriad relations they contain and support' (p. 371). Such an approach also ties into the multi-layer focus on experiences of learning *cultures* embedded within this thesis, given the ability of ethnographically-inspired prisons research to make sense of 'the carceral universe [...] both as a microcosm endowed with its own material and symbolic tropism and as vector of social forces, political nexi, and cultural processes that traverse its walls' (p. 371). Over the course of the research period, I therefore aimed to be on site approximately one to three days a week. There were, however, some times when I was unable to visit for a couple of weeks at a time. Time spent in the prison when not conducting interviews or administering surveys would be utilised to engage with the geographical and social landscape of the prison and its surroundings through conversations with prisoners and staff across the prison. I found the vast majority of staff and prisoners to be receptive to conversation and I learnt a lot about the underlying tensions and pressures operating across the institution through these conversations (such issues feature intermittently across the substantive chapters). I spent an increasing amount of time on the wing of the Open Academy and a number of sessions within the study rooms themselves. The observational data was collected through jotting down thoughts, experiences and interactions in numerous notebooks throughout the research period. Although unstructured, and secondary to the central modes of data collection reported above, these Fieldnotes were hugely informative in shaping the conceptual environment to position the interview and survey data.

3.4 Analytical frameworks

When framing a mixed-methods study, it is important to consider at which stage the methods, data, interpretation and/or analysis are to be integrated, or triangulated (Bazeley, 2009: 86). In this research, the points of convergence were iterative throughout the data collection and analysis stages. For example, the themes of the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* formed an initial deductive framework for the analysis of the qualitative elements of the survey. Developing a wider understanding of the *meaning* attributed to these dimensions in turn supported the development of the qualitative interview schedules. However, integration was restricted to this, at least until the latter stages of the research, requiring further conceptual reflection. Below, the analytical frameworks for each research element are briefly outlined, along with some practical elements and decisions made throughout the analysis process.

3.4.1 Analysing the survey data

As the surveys were conducted within a prison, with extremely limited access to meaningful communication technology particularly for prisoners, the opportunities for format were restricted to paper. Therefore, the collected data needed to first be transferred from paper to software capable of conducting the required analysis. The survey produced two forms of data; quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative responses to each item in the questionnaire were coded (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree or Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). Mean scores for each dimension were then produced, with a higher score indicating an overall more positive result for that dimension. A threshold of 3.00 was adopted, so that scores over this were generally viewed as a positive score. Analytical tests seeking relationships between the variables were then conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 23. The qualitative data was then transferred to NVivo 11 where a mixed inductive and deductive (led by the overarching dimensions of the quantitative dimensions) thematic analysis was conducted.

3.4.2 Analysing the interview data

In order for the data to be prepared for analysis, it required transferring from audio to written word. Transcription, a lengthy and time-consuming process, was carried out as soon as possible after each interview (although a backlog of a matter of months quickly built up). It was conducted using a naturalist technique, whereby details – such as pauses and stutters – were captured as much as possible (Oliver et al., 2005). The analysis of this data followed a thematic exploration. Driven by the processes articulated by Braun and Clarke (1998; 2006) this inductive analysis sought to provide a ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973, cit. in Patton 2002, p. 438) of the cultural world, experiences and perceptions of the Open Academy.

The coding process sought to identify ‘themes’, that is patterns found in the transcripts which ‘at the minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon’ (Patton 2002, p. vii). In the process of isolating, developing and redeveloping codes and themes, I moved between the two analytical platforms of NVivo 11 (qualitative analysis software) and paper, pen, scissors and highlighter. I found a preference for the initial processes to be conducted ‘by hand’ before moving the analysis to the database for speed and ease of exploring relationships. Although this process was inevitably more drawn out than taking an either/or approach, I found the flexibility to move between gave me both a deep immersion with the data and an ability to interrogate it, and my emerging themes, thoroughly.

3.5 Risks and Ethical Concerns

3.5.1 Procedural risks

Perhaps the largest procedural risk in conducting a prison-based study such as this is being prohibited access to the research site itself. As one of the most closed institutions in the criminal justice system, the prison has historically worked as hard

at keeping people (including researchers) out as it has keeping prisoners in (Reiter, 2014). Following a restructure of the original proposed research design, approval for this study was eventually acquired from NOMS, in line with their policies on permitting in-prison research (see appendix VIII). As a single prison site study, the research must be approved by the Regional Psychologist associated with NOMS. The restrictive criteria against which research is assessed includes a close connection required to the business priorities of NOMS and assurance that it may benefit their work whilst using minimal resources. This can be problematic in its restrictions on the breadth of research permitted in prison, academic freedom and can prevent dissenting views or critiques of practice from being brought to light. Further, a governmental agenda which supports some forms of inquiry (such as favouring quantitative over qualitative research) can be furthered through restricting research (see Cohen and Taylor, 1972 for example).

Written permission from the Governing Governor of the site was secured following a long process of building relationships with a number of senior members of staff and prisoners from the site. This investment in time, being present at the prison as much as possible to observe developments in the Open Academy, support the team on the ground and build relationships with prisoners and wing staff, proved to be significant in building rapport as well as securing (and constantly renegotiating) access.

This alludes to the difficult decision facing any prison researcher of whether to 'hold keys'. As Earle (2014) describes, this decision can be a particular 'ethical and methodological dilemma' as it can align the researcher to a position of authority and starkly demonstrate the constraints of the prisoner position. However, it also allows the freedom for an ethnographic researcher to not find themselves subject to the 'carceral tours', which purposely do not illuminate the full picture of the prison (Jewkes, 2012). The balance between this ethical and symbolic positioning with the methodological benefits comfortably landed on the side of carrying keys for the establishment. Not only did this allow for the freedom of movement to explore different areas of the prison, it also reduced the resources required for the prison to

support the research, thus increasing the likelihood of system-level support for the project.

However, my experience did not marry up to the narrative that ‘carrying keys’ would challenge the rapport that I had been developing with prisoners but gain some with members of staff. In fact, I experienced very little change in my ability to build rapport with many prisoners yet I found that without the additional status of my escort, I had to work harder to demonstrate and maintain my legitimacy in some spaces of the prison, most notably the Education Department. In response to this I found strategies which permitted my access to the areas and people that I needed but decided not to push too far in other areas. Central to this was shifting my title, my professional identity, between that of a student, a researcher, a practitioner with Prisoners’ Education Trust, or an employee of the University. This constant management of my own identity (even my own *visibility*) within the institution, became an important tool in my researcher skillset.

3.5.2 Personal risks and ethical considerations

‘Personal risks’ here refers to the potential for harm to occur to both the researcher and the participants. Such harm could be either physical or psychological. Prior to conducting this research, ethical approval was acquired from the ethics committee of Royal Holloway, University of London.

Informed consent was sought from each research participant. Interviewees were required to read an information sheet (see appendix VI) and sign the attached consent form (see appendix VII) which was also delivered verbally at the start of each interview. Due to the levels of literacy in prison being lower than in the wider community, the consent form was read to each participant (Tamariz et al., 2013). Participants were reminded of the voluntary nature of their participation prior to each interview, in order for them to be aware that they may pull out without negative consequences. The questionnaires were administered with an information sheet and

consent form attached, which was removed and stored separately from the questionnaire during the data inputting phase to maintain anonymity of responses.

Confidentiality and anonymity are perhaps two of the most important ethical concerns. According to guidelines from the Economic and Social Research Council (2015), *confidentiality* relates to what is done with the information given to researchers, while *anonymity* relates to whether or not research participants can be identified within the research when written up. Both of these required careful consideration in the current study.

Confidentiality was respected throughout the stages of the research process. Regarding surveys first, self-sealing envelopes were provided to minimise interference prior to them being returned. Signed consent forms were removed and held separately from responses, thus rendering survey data anonymous. Interviews were transcribed as soon as possible, at which stage any identifying characteristics were altered using pseudonyms or removed if necessary. Participants were made aware that data was to be treated with confidence but that if something was disclosed that suggests harm to themselves or others, ethical obligations may demand that the relevant information is dealt with in a way which may mean divulging sensitive information to third parties. Indeed this situation arose when a survey respondent included an extended narrative that made me concerned that he may pose a risk of harm to himself. I decided that this particular case demonstrated a risk that required overriding the concern of confidentiality. I called his wing directly to alert them to my concerns, and was informed that the risks he posed were known to them and were being monitored.

Anonymity proved to be a challenging ethical concern to respect. Due to the unique nature of the Open Academy, I decided that it would not be beneficial to withhold the name of the initiative or the institution. To further make clear the potential implications of this, I discussed this fully with a senior member of staff who signed a letter of approval for the institution to be named in reports and publications resulting from the research. However, in doing so, carefully calculated risks were addressed

throughout the presentation of this thesis to ensure that anonymity of respondents remains protected. For example, data from the small pool of staff interviewees have fed only indirectly into the narrative of the thesis due to the potential identifiability of the interviewees.

Positionality, emotions and understanding allegiances is a significant element of prison research (Liebling, 2001) and is particularly pertinent in the current study, as it involved close interaction with both staff and prisoners and the primary researcher represented a number of organisations related to the prison in a number of ways. As Piacentini (2013) observes, 'power and control ebb and flow in complex ways that are sometimes visible, but mostly hidden' within prisons (p. 21). This was respected through the continuous process of reflexivity. Reflexivity is a key concept of qualitative research: 'we must recognise that social research is part of the world that it studies' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007: iv). The central tenet of reflexive research is that explicit acknowledgment of the relationships between the researcher experience, the interpretation of the data and the data itself provides a more honest, and therefore empirically compelling, account of the study (Byrne, 2004; Tracy, 2010). Reflexivity is thus significant in both the conducting of the interviews and the interpretation of the data within this study, as it allows for the appreciation that 'relational aspects influence the process by which facts are established, and epistemology and ontology converge' (Neilsen, 2010: 309). Reflexive research includes exposing subjective reflections on feelings that were evoked during the fieldwork (Davies, 2011). Prison researchers have called for the increased dialogue of the complex experiences of undertaking research in prisons and the role of emotions in the process (Drake and Harvey, 2014; Jewkes, 2012; Liebling, 1999; Neilsen 2010). However, such accounts have been largely absent from qualitative investigations of the prison environment (Neilsen, 2010; Rowe, 2014) and there is a 'surprising' absence of 'pain' in quantitative studies (Liebling, 1999).

Maintaining a reflexive approach to qualitative inquiry can benefit the research through providing careful assessment of the position of the researcher. In the quest for the 'multiple truths' of the world being studied, we must understand the subjective

bias that we bring with us into the field and the impact that it can have in the building of research relationships. There exists a lack of agreement about the appropriate level of researcher involvement and whether it should be viewed as a variable to be controlled (Ortlipp, 2008: 695). As Liebling (2001) discusses, empathy plays a large role in conducting fieldwork. However, the positioning of sympathies will impact upon the research. Yet whether this undermines or adds to professional integrity 'depends on how this influences our behaviour and where the boundaries lie' (p. 474). This is of particular significance in the current study, which aimed to explore the experiences of, and therefore build trusting, reciprocal relationships with, both prisoners and prison staff. The intricate hierarchies and power relationships between these groups can lead to many complexities of (re)negotiating access, relationships and professional demeanour (Nielsen, 2010). In order to work within this reflexive tradition, a reflective journal was written throughout the research period alongside other fieldnotes.

3.6 Limitations

It is important to recognise the areas in which this study is limited. As it has taken an innovative and exploratory approach to understanding learning in prison, centralising culture at the heart of the inquiry, an appreciation of the limitations is key to developing this approach and recognising its place in the wider field of prisoner education studies. This section reflectively explores some limited areas of the study whilst discussing the implications for the research, the researcher and for future directions of inquiry.

One limitation of the study is its temporality. Despite the spread of time in which the fieldwork was conducted, a number of the methods utilised in this research design, the survey administration and the interviews in particular, are more attuned to capture 'snapshots' in time rather than nuanced shifts in culture *over* time. These methods were supplemented with observations throughout the research period. However, a more ethnographic and longitudinal research design could have captured some of these features more closely.

The decision to conduct the study in a single site was driven by a number of factors including the unique nature of the Open Academy, the intention to study the learning culture of the site in depth and logistical constraints. Although this decision brought many methodological and practical benefits to the research, it limited the study by impacting its generalisability. Thus, the findings from this study at this site, at this point in time, may not be applicable elsewhere.

A challenge which arose through the research period was the role and execution of observation in the study. This was an important method in contextualisation and sense-making of the data acquired through other means. However, the amount of time that was spent observing full sessions of the Open Academy was limited. This was firstly due to the reduction in student access to the Academy and thus the limited number of sessions it would be open per week. Secondly, in the sessions where I was able to be present in the Open Academy space alongside a cohort of students I quickly became aware of the disruptive nature of my presence. This appeared to be related in part to the unstructured nature of the learning practices within the Academy but also appeared to be due to my particular positioning. I was regularly asked questions on effective study skills, questions about distance learning for me to relay to Prisoners' Education Trust or my wider experiences of university. In the context of the other findings from the study, this seemed to be indicative of the needs of the Open Academy students. Nonetheless the challenges in acquiring observational data on the practices within the Open Academy restricted this element of the data.

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has outlined the justification for the mixed-methods approach adopted within this study. It has provided a rationale for the methods selected in the development and analysis of the data underpinning the research and has outlined the processes, and challenges, in acquiring the data. It has introduced the participants of the study, outlined the ethical approaches to data and noted some key limitations to consider.

Chapter Four

The Prison-Wide Learning Culture

4.1 Introduction

Earlier chapters have positioned the current study within the existing literature, reaching into the sociological explorations of the ‘world’ of the prison and drawing upon educational perspectives of learning and learning culture. The previous chapter reflexively described the methodology and methods underpinning the current approach. This chapter begins the presentation of the study’s findings. It describes the ‘learning culture’ across the breadth of the site. As outlined in Chapter Two, the term learning culture refers to sets of cultural practices that capture a ‘way of life’ (James et al, 2007: 28) viewed through the lens of learning – the chapter seeks to address the myriad forces which impact upon this. Learning cultures embody practices which simultaneously structure *and are structured by* individuals’ actions.

To begin the exploration of the learning ‘way of life’ in Swaleside, this chapter adopts a meso-level lens, taking the prison-wide institution as the starting point, in order to situate the cultural learning practices that take place within it. According to James et al. (2007), making sense of the individualised nature of the learning experience requires paying close attention to *diversity*; that is that ‘every single feature that influences a learning culture varies in its form and impact from site to site’ (p. 60). It is vital not to take one influencing factor as evidence of pre-eminent significance (ibid). Thus, although this chapter explores some large, structural concepts, close attention is also paid to the relationships between these factors, with none being taken in isolation. In doing so it will explore both formal education practices and informal and cultural practices that resonate across the breadth of the institution.

This chapter draws upon a range of data. It begins with an overview of the formal educational provision in the prison, framed through a range of secondary data, before presenting the quantitative findings from the prison-wide *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey*, conducted with both prisoners and staff. The remainder of the chapter will

draw upon data collected through qualitative questions from the survey and generated during semi-structured interviews with Skills Advisors – prison residents who represent key educational stakeholders at Swaleside – and students from the Open Academy. Through this discussion, the dimensions of learning culture, as defined by the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey*, will be developed further.

In essence, this chapter explores how experience of a learning culture is distributed across the prison; indeed, this aim of understanding experiential *breadth* is the core reason for giving primacy to both quantitative data (drawn from across the entire prison site) and interviews with Skills Advisors, prisoners who are the exception in that they are able to move with relative freedom across wings to promote engagement with education. As such, their uniquely broad perceptions of the culture of learning across the institution have been deemed particularly useful in describing and unpacking the findings from the survey and understanding central forces at play across the wider range of the prison. It also seeks to disentangle learning experiences at Swaleside across demographic factors, prison-based factors - such as how one spends their time - and attitudes to learning.

4.2 An overview of the formal learning provision

Formal educational courses that are on offer within a learning site are not, and cannot be, *the* defining factor in determining the site's learning culture. However, the characteristics of a particular curriculum of education, including the manner in which they are delivered (as well as who they are delivered *by*), are features of great cultural significance and influence. For example, the distinction between a primary school and a university is framed in part by the learning provision offered within them. In contrast, the prison environment, when viewed as a learning site, retains myriad competing (and often paradoxical) goals, functions and purposes. Security, public protection and punishment, amongst other explicit and implicit functions of the prison, permeate opportunities and practices of learning on the macro, meso and micro level. It is thus necessary to situate the education provision within the wider

priorities of the prison, the prison service and wider policy in order to understand the function of learning and education within the institution. This work is undertaken throughout this thesis.

Throughout the research period (between March 2016 and January 2017), the OLASS education contract for the research site was held by Novus, which represents the specialist 'prison education' branch of the further education provider, The Manchester College. Novus regularly delivered core courses from Entry Level 3 (approximately the equivalent of primary school level provision) up to Level 2 (approximately the equivalent of GCSE level provision at grade A* - C), in English, maths, IT and art. Further contracted courses included the less regular provision of business studies and debt management courses.

This, then, represents the formal 'educational offer' at Swaleside throughout the research period. However, while the core provision 'on offer' remained relatively stable, this did *not* necessarily mean that all courses were available for enrolment at any given time. For example, within the two years prior to the commencement of the fieldwork phase, a number of industrial kitchen workstations were inputted into the catering classroom at a great cost. However, staffing restraints (in particular, finding a suitably qualified catering and hospitality tutor) meant that this room was rerolled to use as an exam hall; the expensive resources were left to gather dust as prisoners and managerial staff within the prison alike grew frustrated - and then eventually ignorant - to the initial purpose of the space. There were also long periods of time where certain courses were not provided, for example the ESOL classroom (English as a Second Language) became the space I was regularly ushered into to conduct interviews, as it remained largely out of action in respect of its original purpose.

Distance learning has grown in priority at Swaleside over recent years, particularly since the arrival of the current Head of Learning and Skills (HOLS). Indeed, several important initiatives that are discussed as part of this research – specifically the Skills Advisors and the Open Academy - and that were initiated in an effort to develop the learning culture of the prison have been spearheaded by this individual. However, it

must be noted that many of these initiatives began under the charge of the previous Governing Governor. It was reported from numerous sources that her influence was 'instrumental' in the development of positive learning approaches (Fieldnotes, March 2016) and that she was active in seeking ways of creating an environment where these initiatives – which challenged elements of the 'traditional' prison culture (cf. Crewe et al., 2011) – were able to flourish.

To summarise, the provision within the Education Department largely followed the traditional framework for prison education sites. The response to, and experience of, this provision both by prisoners and staff will be discussed further below. Prior to that, the following section returns to the quantitative findings from the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* in order to outline the general experiences of wider elements of learning culture, as conceptualised in this way.

4.3 Survey Results by Dimension

The following section reports the findings from the prison-wide *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey*. It begins with a note on the validity and reliability of the survey tools before providing a reminder of the dimensions which make up the survey. It then goes on to explore the relationships between demographic features, as reported in the previous chapter, and the dimension scores. The following section is necessarily focused on the descriptive as it reports the quantitative survey data. The remainder of the chapter then builds on this raw data both conceptually and critically in analysing perceptions and experiences of the prison-wide learning culture at Swaleside.

4.3.1 An important note on validity and reliability of the survey

Before moving onto the discussion of survey dimensions, it is important to note some key points regarding validity and reliability. Table 4.1 gives reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha = α)¹¹ for the survey dimensions of both the prisoner and the staff surveys. They show that within the prisoner survey the measurement of all dimensions except *Safe* had a high level of internal consistency ($\alpha = .723, .765, .795$ and $.829$); that is, that the items within the four remaining dimensions were all similarly measuring that which they purported to. The reliability coefficients ($\alpha = .174$) for the *Safe* dimension did not meet acceptable levels of internal consistency. Therefore, the results for this scale are discussed at the item-level.

Table 4.1 Reliability and dimension mean Scores

Dimension	Prisoner		Staff	
	Reliability	Mean score	Reliability	Mean score
Empowering	$\alpha = .829$	2.90	$\alpha = .677$	3.67
Inclusive	$\alpha = .795$	2.92	$\alpha = .603$	3.60
Engaging/Relevant	$\alpha = .723$	2.98	$\alpha = .351$	3.58
Aspirational	$\alpha = .765$	2.90	$\alpha = .658$	3.62
Safe	$\alpha = .174$	3.09	$\alpha = -.106$	3.12

¹¹Cronbach's alpha (α) is a measure of internal consistency, that is, how closely related a set of items are as a group and to what extent they measure the same thing. A reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations, and a means of indicating that said items are indeed measuring the same concept or experience.

The staff survey generated much lower alpha scores than the prisoner survey across all dimensions, with none reaching the accepted threshold of $\alpha = .7$ (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). This indicates problems with internal consistency in several of the dimensions, and suggests that the individual items did not come together to measure the same thing sufficiently. This may also be related to the much smaller response from members of staff to the survey. Therefore, the concepts cannot reliably be discussed as full dimensions. As such, results from the staff survey will be discussed at item-level and any conclusions drawn will be done so against this backdrop of low-level internal consistency and as such, remain indicative rather than conclusive.

The implications of the staff survey having a much lower response rate and more problematic internal consistency than the prisoner survey are that this thesis largely presents the prisoner perspective of the learning culture of HMP Swaleside. Incorporating the staff survey into the research design was an effort to begin to rectify the largely missing voice of prison staff in research into prisons (cf. Liebling, Price & Schefer, 2010). Further it sought to respond to a recognition that both educational and non-teaching staff are crucial in the construction, development and experience of a learning culture (Gallacher et al., 2007). However, the 'culture of mistrust' often reported between prison staff and researchers (Crewe et al, 2014: 57) created a tension that was not overcome fully in the current study. It therefore seems appropriate that future research should focus more directly on the experiences and perceptions of prison staff within a learning culture of a prison.

These results reflect a similar situation to the initial iteration of the survey by Auty et al. (2016), who similarly found that the staff survey was less able to reach acceptable levels of internal consistency. This was most obvious within the *Safe* dimension (which consistently displayed the weakest alpha scores, ranging from $\alpha = .07$ to 0.453 for the prisoner survey and $\alpha = -1.667$ to 0.634 for the staff survey), as well as achieving unacceptably low alpha scores across the *Inclusive* dimension, and some reasonably low alpha scores in the *Aspirational* and *Engaging/Relevant* dimensions, across several of the eight sites involved in the study. This finding too may have been due to the lower response rate for the staff survey, which was common across both studies.

Nonetheless, it suggests close attention should be paid to scale development and validation, a methodological progression outside the scope of this study, yet which this analysis clearly indicates would be useful for future research.

From this reflection, it is clear that the staff survey data is limited in its usefulness for making inferences wider than the present sample. It is also limited in making conclusive points about the dimensions that it is seeking to establish. The same is true for the *Safe* dimension of the prisoner survey. However, these findings can provide interesting indicative points and the individual items still hold value for discussion.

4.3.2 Revisiting the Dimensions, reporting mean scores and data limitations

As was described in Chapter Three, the survey scales discussed here as forming part of the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* derive originally from the methodological frameworks of the Measuring Quality of Prisoner Life (MQPL) and Staff Quality of Life (SQL) surveys (Liebling and Arnold, 2004: see Chapter Three for a full discussion). To recap, there were five dimensions to the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* that were developed by Auty et al. (2016) as measures of a prison-based learning culture. These were: i) *Empowering* (an environment where prisoners are encouraged to have a say in their learning development in the prison); ii) *Inclusive* (the extent to which staff encouraged prisoners to engage in some form of learning and celebrated their achievements when they did so); iii) *Engaging/Relevant* (the extent to which prisoners were made aware of the learning opportunities in the prison.); iv) *Aspirational* (the extent to which the prison, through staff, prisoners and learner representatives fostered a culture that encouraged prisoners to imagine a positive future for themselves); and v) *Safe* (the extent to which the prison created physically and emotionally 'safe spaces' for learning to take place).

As also outlined in Chapter Three, for both the Measuring Quality of Prisoner Life and Staff Quality of Life surveys, the ‘neutral’ threshold here is set at three, with scores below three deemed ‘negative’ and scores above three deemed ‘positive’. Table 4.1 (above) and Fig. 4.1 (above and below) present the mean scores for each dimension for prisoners and staff:

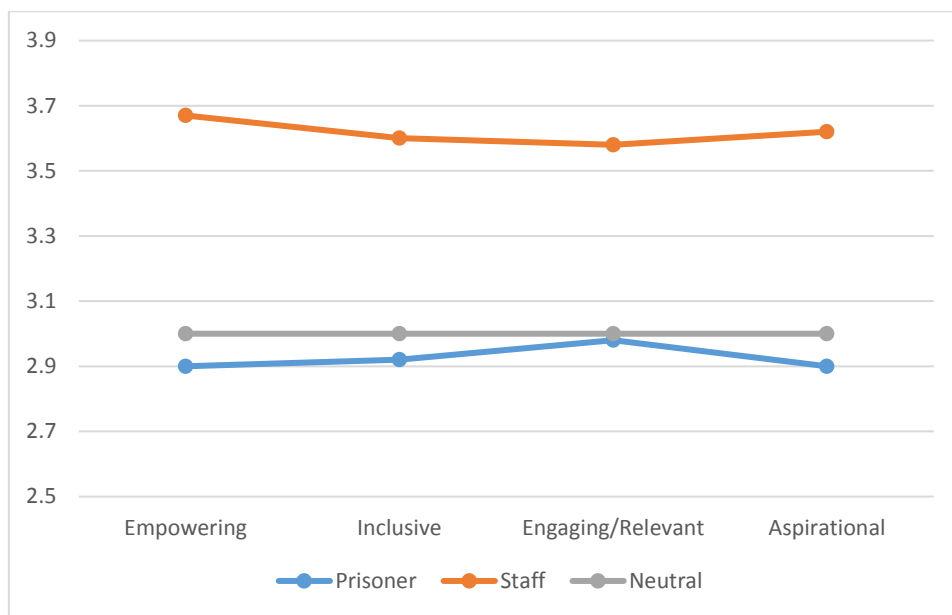


Fig. 4.1 Mean scores by dimension

With regards to the prisoner respondents, it is clear from Fig. 4.1 (above) that none of the four dimensions reached the ‘neutral’ threshold of three – that is, there were no aspects of the learning culture (as measured by the dimensions of the survey data) which prisoners identified as ‘positive’. From this, it can be inferred that this set of respondents did not, in broad terms, consider the learning culture at Swaleside to be empowering, engaging, relevant, inclusive or aspirational. Yet in stark contrast, responses from the staff survey portrayed all five dimensions as broadly positive, with the mean score surpassing the ‘neutral’ threshold in each case – this is indicative of staff perceptions that the learning culture at Swaleside did empower learners, embrace inclusivity, deliver relevant and engaging content as well as promote aspirations.

There are several considerations which should urge caution at this interpretive juncture. It must firstly be noted that the weak internal consistency achieved by these dimensions in the staff survey (as indicated by the low Cronbach's Alpha score discussed above) suggest that they are less helpful to be explored as full constructs. As such, we must be cautious in making direct comparisons to the prisoner dimensions of the same name. This phenomenon is similarly reflected in previous prisons' results from this survey (Auty et al., 2016) and so may be a reflection of the survey construction.

Notwithstanding these important critical reflections on the validity of the data, it remains the case that responses to those individual items which made up the dimensions - discussed further below - *regularly* demonstrated higher mean scores among the staff than within the prisoner survey equivalent, which suggests that staff did indeed perceive the individual elements of the learning culture at Swaleside as more positive than the prisoner respondents.

Alongside the dimensional scale questions represented above, prisoner respondents were asked to rate the prison on how well it promoted learning on a scale of one to ten (with one being 'lowest' and ten being 'highest'). The mean response was 4.9 as shown in Fig. 4.2. Although this may appear to suggest an average, perhaps even a neutral, score for this question, this result may mask a more complex set of relations and experiences, as discussed below.

Question	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
What score does this prison deserve for how well it promotes learning?	281	1	10	4.9	2.235

Fig. 4.2 'What score does this prison deserve for how well it promotes learning?'

Returning to the staff survey, respondents were asked to score the quality of their working life in the prison on a scale of one to ten. The mean response was at the midpoint at 5.14 as shown below in Fig. 4.3.

Question	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
How would you rate the quality of your working life in this prison?	59	1	10	5.14	2.278

Fig. 4.3 'How would you rate the quality of your working life in this prison?'

This score was rather more divergent when explored through the lens of the different roles held by staff respondents. An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the reported quality of working life by officer and senior officer respondents (n=35) and all other staff groups (n=25). There was a significant difference in the scores for officers and senior officers (M=4.44, SD=2.08) and other staff (M=6.08, SD=2.24); $t(57)=-2.9$, $p=0.005$. These results suggest that officers and senior officers experience a lesser quality of working life than their colleagues working around the prison.

Further, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the length of time working in this prison and the reported quality of working life. There was a significant negative correlation between the two variables, $r = -.257$, $n=59$, $p=0.49$. This suggests that the longer a member of staff has worked in the prison, the more negatively they will report their quality of working life to be. This finding could be related to a number of factors. For example, it may reflect that the participants in the sample who had been working within the prison the longest largely fit in the operational staff category, some of which (officers and senior officers) have been demonstrated as rating their quality of life as lower than other roles. It may also reflect changes within the prison service, and this prison in particular, over time.

4.3.3 Prisoner Variability by Demographic

Age

The relationship between age and experience of the learning culture of the prison (as measured by the four dimensions which demonstrated sufficient internal consistency) was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to ensure there was no violation of the parametric assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity. There was no significant correlation found between the two variables of age and any of the dimensions, with *Empowering* and *Aspirational* scoring particularly low (*Empowering*: $r = .06$, $n = 270$, $p = .306$; *Aspirational*: $r = .071$, $n = 271$, $p = .247$). However, the dimensions of *Inclusive* and *Engaging and Relevant* were approaching significance (*Inclusive*: $r = .106$, $n = 284$, $p = .081$; *Engaging and relevant*: $r = .106$, $n = 284$, $p = .081$). This suggests that were there a wider range of ages in the sample, or more respondents, that age *may* present as a factor that relates to these dimensions. Interestingly, the direction of the relationship is positive, meaning that older age may be related to experiencing the learning culture of the prison as both inclusive and engaging/relevant.

Ethnicity

A simple linear regression was calculated to predict the *Empowering* dimension based on ethnicity. The results for the model showed that the transformed variable binary ethnicity (white British and non-white British) was not a significant predictor of the degree to which prisoners experienced the learning culture as *Empowering* ($F(1,275) = 2.075$, $p = .151$, with an R^2 of .007).

However, ethnicity did hold as a statistically significant predictor of whether the learning culture at Swaleside was experienced as *Inclusive*, *Engaging/Relevant*, and *Aspirational*, when taken as a bifurcated variable: white British and non-white British. The effect of the relationship was that participants' scores decreased across these three dimensions for non-white British prisoners; scores for both the *Aspirational* and *Engaging/Relevant* dimensions decreased by .118 respectively, with scores for the

Inclusive dimension decreasing by .208 when non-white British, as compared to their white British counterparts.

This finding, demonstrating a relationship between non-white ethnicity and a lower score, reflected a more negative experience of learning culture across three of the five dimensions. This is an important finding, not least due its significance in three of the five dimensions making up the survey. Although the site of the prison has been constructed as a racialised space in earlier prison research Phillips (2012) argues that it has begun to lose its central place in the narratives of prison sociology, particularly in England and Wales (more research emanating from the United States is grounded upon this socially organising structure). Indeed, the impact of race in the organisation of the learning culture of HMP Swaleside arose at a number of points throughout this research. An important example took place within the Open Academy wherein a wing staff member referred to the need to ensure that the Academy did not become 'too black' (Fieldnotes, September 2016). Such policing of race at times fell onto prisoners in managerial roles within the Academy. This was one observed example of how directly race can play into experiences of inclusionary educational practices and limit aspiration. Phillips (2012) argues that race in prison is not determined solely by ethnicity but rather that regional identities, alongside constructions of masculinity, frame the mechanisms through which it impacts. This is further explored in Chapter 6.

Wing location

The mean score for each dimension by wing are demonstrated in Figs. 4.4 to 4.7 below. Overall, these suggest a stark distinction between the score per wing. The order of scores largely repeat across each dimension, with A Wing repeatedly scoring the highest means and E Wing mostly scoring the lowest.

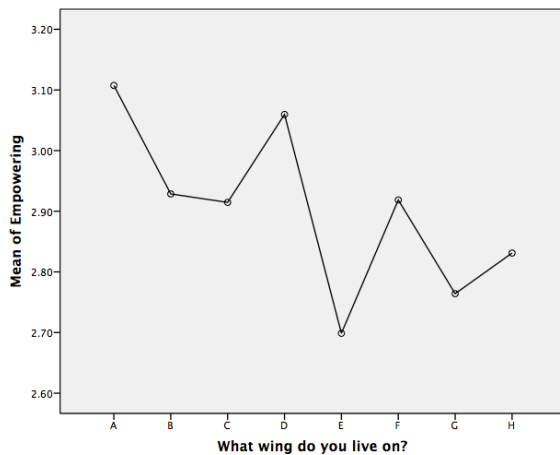


Fig 4.4 Mean Empowering score by wing

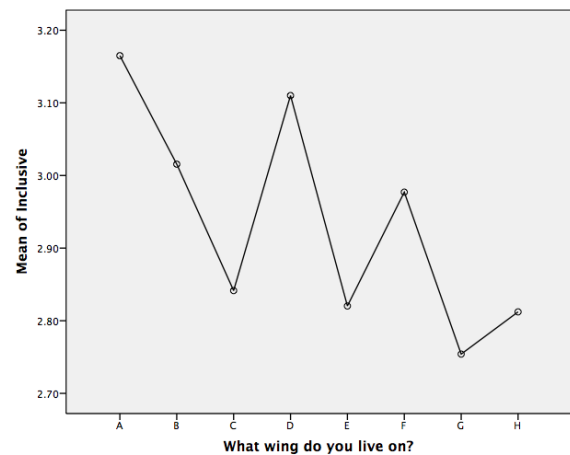


Fig 4.5 Mean Inclusive score by wing

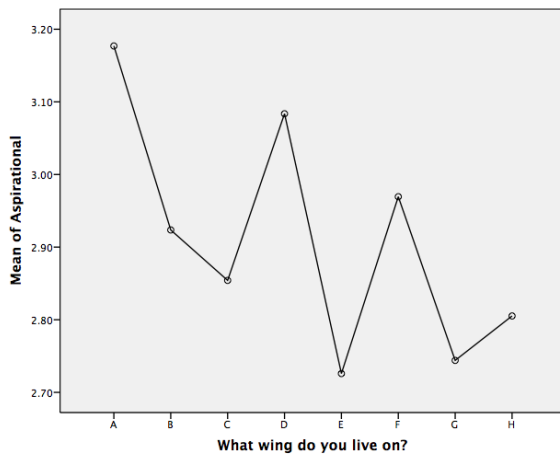


Fig 4.6 Mean Aspirational score by wing

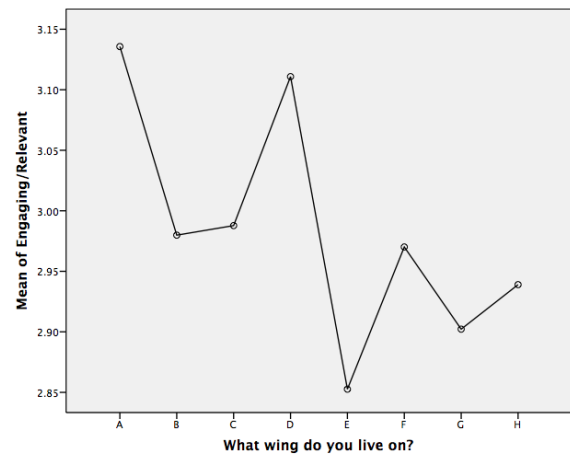


Fig 4.7: Mean Engaging/Relevant score by wing

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore in further detail the potential impact of the wing on which prisoners reside in terms of perceptions of the learning culture at Swaleside, and whether or not the variance witnessed above was spurious or statistically significant. Participants were grouped via their residing wing which ranged from A to H (8 wings). There was a statistically

significant relationship between scores on the *Inclusive* and *Aspirational* scales and the wing on which prisoners resided (*Inclusive*: $F(7, 267) = 2.113, p = .043$) and *Aspirational*: $F(7, 266) = 2.255, p = 0.030$). However there was no statistically significant relationship found between the *Empowering* and *Engaging/Relevant* scales and the residing wing (*Empowering*: $F(7, 265) = 1.419, p = .198$) and *Engaging/Relevant*: $F(7, 267) = 1.045, p = .400$).

For those dimensions that did demonstrate statistically significant results (*Inclusive* and *Aspirational*), a Tukey post hoc test was conducted, which showed that there were no statistically significant differences between one wing and all other wings.

This suggests that different spaces across the prison *may be* experienced differently in relation to learning culture, but that this alone does not in itself represent a causative explanation for these data patterns. The forces and features which determine the experience of the wing-based learning culture shall be further explored in later chapters.

Main Activity

A one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was also conducted to explore the impact of the main activity that prisoners undertook whilst in the prison on their dimension scores. It should be noted that participants were required to select only one answer to this question. The results show that the effect of the main activity that prisoners undertook whilst they are in the prison on their dimension scores was significant in each of the four dimensions analysed¹² (*Empowering*: $F(10, 261) = 2.157, p = 0.21$. *Inclusive*: $F(10, 263) = 2.591, p = 0.005$. *Engaging/Relevant*: $F(10, 263) = 2.517, p = 0.007$. *Aspirational*: $F(10, 262) = 3.205, p = 0.001$).

These results may reflect a number of features of prison activity and demographics. A post-hoc analysis was undertaken which was unable to clearly distinguish which

¹² Readers are reminded that the *Safe* dimension was not analysed through quantitative means as it did not meet the required level for internal consistency.

activity was most closely related to higher scores. However, one factor which may explain this initial ANOVA result may be that a prisoners' selected main activity is likely to be related to their interests and aptitudes prior to their current sentence. This may also be influenced by the availability of programmes and the policies of allocation within the prison site. Thus, despite the data not reflecting a clear relationship denoting which activity was more closely related to the experience of a positive learning environment, these scores nonetheless support the idea that prisons do not operate as a vacuum for those living within them and strengthens the argument that the activities in which prisoners engage whilst in prison can influence the perspectives of the learning culture within the institution.

4.3.4 Highest Scoring and Lowest Scoring items

Table 4.2 below displays the highest scoring and the lowest scoring items in each dimension, for both the staff survey and the prisoner survey, as a means of exploring the most relevant aspects (at both ends of the spectrum) for each sample group underpinning the extent to which each deemed the prison's learning culture to be empowering, inclusive, engaging/relevant, aspirational and safe. It presents a complex picture which draws out divergences between prisoner and staff perceptions and seemingly contradictory perspectives of the learning environment and relationships. Alongside the dimension items, the Table also presents the highest and lowest scoring¹³ means from the additional 'Changing Lives' questions, which were only present in the prisoner survey (four items).¹⁴

The sections that now follow will use the data presented in Table 4.2 as a springboard to discuss significant elements of the culture of the prison, as it relates to the learning culture, which is drawn out through the current analysis. In order to situate these themes fully, it will also draw upon wider sources of data, including interviews with prison-wide education stakeholders (Skills Advisors) and qualitative elements of survey responses.

¹³ In order to produce a rigorous survey, a number of the items were asked negatively and subsequently reverse coded. Where this has been the case, this has been noted in Table 4.2 as 'reverse coded'. In these items a high score denotes the opposite (such as a negative becomes a positive).

¹⁴ Readers are reminded that the questions forming the *Safe* dimension *are* included within this analysis as the items are taken as individual items, rather than as full dimensions. As such, there is no requirement of internal consistency.

Dimension		Items: Prisoner Survey	Mean	Items: Staff Survey	Mean
Empowering	Highest scoring item	I feel that I have a say in the learning on offer in this prison.	3.53 (s=1.21)	I enjoy helping prisoner learners work towards their goals and targets.	4.12 (s = .81)
	Lowest scoring item	Learning activities help me to become a better person in this prison	2.69 (s=1.03)	Effort is made in this prison to give prisoners a say in how learning could be improved here.	3.03 (s = .69)
Inclusive	Highest scoring item	I have been encouraged by prison officers on my wing to pursue learning	3.88 (s= .96)	It is not worth putting in the extra effort to promote learning in this prison as it would go unrecognised. (reverse coded)	3.81 (s= .97)
	Lowest scoring item	Learner reps can be relied upon to give advice on learning opportunities in this prison	2.26 (s= .87)	Prison officers should have more say in the learning opportunities for prisoners in this prison.	3.03 (s= .83)
Engaging/ Relevant	Highest scoring item	Information on learning opportunities often spreads to prisoners by word of mouth from prison officers	3.51 (s=1.11)	Education is an important part of this prison's rehabilitative culture	4.22 (s= .65)
	Lowest scoring item	Learning from peer mentors is good for prisoners who do not want to engage in formal education	2.35 (s= .89)	Prison officers need more training to support learners in this prison. (Reverse Coded)	2.44 (s= .93)
Aspirational	Highest scoring item	Prison officers in this prison encourage prisoners to 'spread the word' about learning to other prisoners	3.91 (s= .96)	Engaging in learning can help most prisoners in their rehabilitation.	4.24 s= (.70)

	Lowest scoring item	Prison officers do not engage in discussion with prisoners about education (Reverse Coded)	2.44 (s=1.11)	Wing staff are encouraged to spread the word to prisoners about learning.	2.80 (s = .94)
Safe	Highest scoring item	In this prison, prisoners are often encouraged away from learning into jobs that pay more (Reverse Coded)	2.86 (s=1.06)	I feel equipped to deal with learners from a variety of different backgrounds	3.63 (s= .85)
	Lowest scoring item	In this prison learning most often takes place in a traditional classroom environment	2.39 (s= .86)	In this prison learning most often takes place in a traditional classroom environment	2.26 (s= .81)
Changing Lives	Highest scoring item	What prison officers do with prisoners in this prison improves lives			3.50
	Lowest scoring item	What gym staff do with prisoners in this prison improves lives			2.60

Table. 4.2: Highest and lowest scoring items (mean scores) from prisoner and staff surveys

Attitudes towards learning in prison (i): Prisoners' perceptions of prison staff

Across the five dimensions, prisoner respondents reported their highest, most positive scores in relation to the work of prison officers in promoting and supporting education and learning (see Table 4.2). High scores on items such as *'Prison officers in this prison encourage prisoners to 'spread the word' about learning to other prisoners'* and *'I have been encouraged by prison officers on my wing to pursue learning'* appear incongruent with other sources investigating the wider prison environment. For example, the 2016 HMIP report at HMP Swaleside, which was conducted at the same time as the present survey, found:

Prisoners were less positive in our survey than the comparator and compared with the last inspection about the relationships they had with staff. While we observed some very good staff, many appeared overwhelmed by the challenges they faced, which affected how they viewed and dealt with prisoners. Far fewer prisoners than the comparator, and than previously, said they had a member of staff they could turn to for help with a problem.

(HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2016: 13)

However, this drop in the quality of relationships was from a reasonably good initial baseline when viewed in relation to the numerous enduring challenges facing the site. In the previous HMIP report (2014), the relationships between staff and prisoners were heralded as a positive feature of a deeply negative place, with *'good relationships between staff and prisoners... mitigat[ing] some of the worst effects of staff shortages'* (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2014:5).

In contrast to the positive responses evident in the quantitative data, the qualitative comments generated from the survey painted a different picture, and explicitly demonstrated generally negative perspectives of officers from prisoners. For example,

in response to the open question *'What three things could be done to make this prison a better place for learning?'* comments included:

'Bring new staff in; [current] staff don't care' (P273, Survey)

'Have a heart and remember not to label us all the same - as 'scum''
(P254, Survey)

'They don't care. Until the prison staff take an interest in prisoners,
nothing is changed' (P23, Survey)

'They don't listen – I never talk to them.' (P10, Survey)

Within these comments (which were in no sense atypical), a recurrent theme was the absence of 'care', and the sense of not having a voice or being heard. Many prisoner respondents reflected that officers do not 'care' or do not take an 'interest'. These comments reflect an experience of low 'respect-as-esteem' (Butler and Drake, 2007) whereby the absence of a courteous, caring relationship is taken to denote a suggestion of low moral worth of the prisoner. However, these ostensibly conflicting results may reflect a distinction between perceptions of individual relationships and perceptions of the officer 'body' at large, which is reflected in the hierarchy of scores in Table 4.2. The role of 'respect' in the learning culture of the prison is explored more closely below, with particular reference to the experience of the elite group of Skills Advisors, and throughout the remaining chapters.

When exploring such themes during the interviews, those employed as Skills Advisors – prisoners who worked as education mentors across the establishment – were more likely to readily refer to officers in a positive light; indeed, it was commonplace for them to identify specific officers who had supported them, either personally or in their role as cross-prison learning representatives. In particular, staff on their wings or staff with whom they had built up a rapport over a long period of time are cited as being particularly influential in their supportive networks. For example, Ryan, a 23-year-old

Skills Advisor who had been at Swaleside for two-and-a-half years when interviewed, listed a number of officers and senior officers on his wing as supporting him both personally and in his activities as a prison-wide learning mentor.

Therefore, a factor influencing these findings may be that this pocket of 'good staff' at Swaleside – whose existence was noted by HMIP (2016: 30) during a recent inspection - have a particularly high level of influence when it comes to positive cultural messages of education and learning. The divided nature of prisoner attitudes towards staff and the degree to which staff had a positive impact on learning (or not) may also reflect the fact that having one or two conversations with a 'good' officer on the wing may be experienced and reflected on as distinct from a general perception of prison officers or staff-prisoner relationships. Further, it may be that these relationships are influenced by the position and social standing of the prisoner within the prison (or 'prison capital' as articulated by Owen et al., 2017); those with a higher level of 'prison capital', such as the Skills Advisors, may be better placed to develop positive relationships with officers.

The need for more staff was an oft-cited refrain throughout the survey responses, both by prisoners and staff. Although this has been a nationwide issue across England and Wales in recent years (Howard League, 2016), Swaleside has suffered particularly hard from the recent national 'austerity' cutbacks in funding. The institution has experienced a drastic reduction in operational staff numbers in the past ten years, an increase in the proportion of inexperienced officers and a higher proportion of those on detached duty (i.e. being temporarily posted to short-staffed establishments) with a limited understanding of the prison (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2016). This feeds the tenor of staff-prisoner relationships in a number of ways, including the framing of expectations of staff by prisoners. Thus, the prisoner becomes less likely to see prison officers fulfilling roles such as supporting education, providing pastoral support, or being 'caring', as they see the officers' stretched time and resources required elsewhere:

‘Unfortunately due to staff shortages, there is not enough time for staff to be able to take the time to talk.’ (P52, Survey)

‘This prison needs more staff so they are better placed and have time to be more involved.’ (P15, Survey)

This perception of a lack of staff - its effects on the capacities of the officer, and the temporal pressures on officers reducing opportunities for regular prisoner-staff dialogue - may be a core reason for the lowest scoring item within the *Aspirational* dimension being ‘*Prison officers do not engage in discussion with prisoners about education*’.

Despite this, prisoners recognised the particularly tough challenges faced by prison staff throughout the institution. The consequential outcome was, to borrow the terminology of Saint, a sense of ‘empathy from below’, which Saint (2012) discusses within the context of South African apartheid as the phenomenon of marginalised subjects expressing an ‘empathetic approach to the[ir] oppressor’ (p. 129). At Swaleside, this translated into a situation whereby prisoners regularly expressed frustration that those holding positions of power over them were not discharging their duties sufficiently, while simultaneously acknowledging a wider picture in which staff too were suffering. One respondent stated that ‘happier staff’ were required in the prison to improve the learning culture, because the majority of officers were ‘burnt out and distant’ (P5, Survey). And while the call for a happier officer workforce here can be seen as serving the prisoner’s self-interest, the recognition of the plight of the prison’s officers did not end at this shallow level, as Ryan’s comments highlight:

‘Staff wise, you get some good staff members, some really helpful, friendly staff members, but they’re very limited in what they can do because of the establishment being under pressure or staff levels or like alarms going off or whatever. So I don’t expect them to be able to help that much. But they do try.’

(Ryan, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Here, Ryan recognises a multitude of pressures that can impact on an officer's ability to complete the multifarious aspects of their role. He sees the tension created between such pressures and a desire to fulfil their role and be able to 'help'. He suggests that despite these shortcomings, officers' attempts to 'try' are visible and valued. This denotes sympathy beyond the self-serving.

Leo also demonstrated this 'empathy from below' as he reflected on the position of the officer:

'Well if I was working for someone and I felt like I wasn't supported, I'm not going to do my job to the best of my ability, above and beyond, if I feel I'm not being looked after.'

(Leo, Skills Advisor, Interview)

By putting himself in the shoes of officers, Leo recognises the structural challenges facing them and the trickle-down impact of an absence of *organisational respect*; a factor identified as the key source of prison officer workplace stress by Cox et al. (1997) and supported by Liebling, Price, & Shefer (2010). Leo's empathetic sentiment also draws attention to the concept of the 'above and beyond' officer. This recognises that for many officers, to do their job at the level that they are required (and would like to) requires energy beyond that which they are contracted (and perhaps physically or emotionally able) to deliver. This tension between resources, expectation and role for officers and other staff within the prison, particularly in relation to facilitating educational opportunities, will be explored further in the following chapter.

Finally, Lewis further articulated the many complexities within an officer's role, indicating an appreciation of the wide range of roles expected of an officer ('support worker, carer, teacher, boss'), and positioned the role as an underappreciated and underpaid one:

‘You’ve gotta think, it’s a hard job what they do. They’ve kinda got to be like your support worker, your carer, your teacher, your boss. It’s all weird. It’s like they’ve got a lot of different roles if you think about it. If you put it into context. It’s not just an officer. It’s like, Y’know... (Interviewer: it’s a complicated role?) Very. Yeah I think it’s... Underestimated I think. I couldn’t do that job. Not if you paid me 50 grand a year. Not on your nelly.’

(Lewis, Skills Advisor, Interview)

There exists, therefore, a tension in prisoner responses to the experience of stretched resources within the prison; on the one hand, this increased frustration, the manifestation of which can include tension, resistance and violence (HMIP, 2017) on the other hand, prisoners’ lowered expectations and an understanding of the downward step-change in resources within the Prison Service make space for an empathetic perspective of the position of the officer.

The role of staff-prisoner relationships in the construction of the culture of a prison should not be understated. The myriad ways in which power, humanity, decency, legitimacy and expectation course through relationships within the prison (cf. Bennett, Crewe, & Wahidin, 2007; Crewe, 2009; Crewe, Liebling, & Hulley, 2015; Hulley, Liebling, & Crewe, 2012), and ultimately structure the learning culture of the institution, will continue to be unpicked throughout this and following chapters.

In contrast to the empathetic and seemingly positive perspective of the work of officers, however, prisoner responses to the role of Skills Advisors – prisoners employed as prison-wide learning representatives (‘reps’) - were *consistently* reflected in the lowest scores across the dimensions (Table, 4.2). Indeed, the negative perceptions and cultural standing of the Skills Advisors was a central characteristic of the *Inclusive* dimension. In order to understand the cultural influence of this particular group of prisoners at Swaleside, this experience must now be explored as a situated practice.

Attitudes towards learning in prison (ii): Perceptions of the Skills Advisors

The role of Skills Advisor remains a relatively new position within the prison, originating in late 2015. This initiative was distinct from many other 'employment' roles within the prison and was open to only the most 'trusted' of prisoners. This role was unique among other prisoner representative/'rep' positions around the prison as it was centralised on distributing messages from the Education Department across the prison. However, around the same time that the Skills Advisor role emerged other trusted 'prisoner rep' positions were set up in a range of areas around the prison. For example, Emotional Wellbeing Reps worked closely with the Mental Health Outreach team to expand access and enrich the support available across the prison. Alongside this, the Community Hub – a new central drop-in space, housed visibly in the central concourse of the prison – was created at Swaleside and staffed by prisoner reps who offered advice and signposting on a range of services available within the prison and in the community, such as housing, debt and addiction support. In summary, prisoners in these roles worked daily to support their peers, often alongside paid members of staff, to enhance access to, and enlarge the capacity of, such services.

A shared characteristic of these 'rep' roles was their 'red-band' status, named thus due to the traditional sporting of a red armband to allow for identification. The red-banded prisoner is afforded vastly greater movement around the prison than the general population and does not require escorting by officers. This practice is new for this specific prison and divergent to previous practices at Swaleside and has created a range of cultural tensions since its introduction. Interviewees in such positions reported experiencing a number of personal and professional frictions arising from being in this 'trusted' position, in what is ultimately a structurally 'mistrustful' institution. The following extract from an interview with Max, one of the four original Skills Advisors, demonstrates some of these tensions, reflecting on officers' resistance to the freedom Skills Advisors were granted by the Governing Governor, and the changing nature of the presence of 'red-bands' on the prison's perceived culture of mistrust:

[Some staff are] so militant that they just hate the idea of prisoners doing something for themselves [The initial officer resistance was] not because, per se the job we were doing, or the role we're trying to fulfil - it's just because we're prisoners. And they just don't like it [...] there's an element that just doesn't like it.

And then there are those that are fine. And there are those you can go to and they're gonna make your job that much easier. But it's getting better, perception is getting better. And you start to recognise... I like to think that I can go to most places in this jail, get to the gate and say, I need to see someone and they understand I'm there for a legitimate reason. And let me on without too much of a fuff [...] It is getting better. But slowly.

(Max, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Max did reflect that over time, this situation had been "getting better", and that staff perceptions of the legitimacy of the 'rep' role was improving. However, his comments neatly articulate the relationship between the structural power dynamics within the prison, including staff attitudes towards the trusted prisoner (which undoubtedly reflect a wider perception of the prisoner population from the staff point of view), and the experience and function of the Skills Advisor role. Significantly, he notes that it is 'not... per se the job we were doing or the role we were trying to fulfil, *it's just because we're prisoners*'. Thus, these features of the learning culture are not necessarily framed by an explicit concept of education but by embedded power dynamics between the prisoner and the officer in the institution of the prison, as have been recognised sociologically since the 'pains of imprisonment' were first articulated by Sykes (1958). The impact of these wider features of the prison culture thus frame and deeply underpin the experience of the prison-based learning culture.

Nonetheless, the Skills Advisor positions were heralded as ‘excellent’ by HMIP inspectors who stated in their 2016 report that ‘[v]ery good use was made of prisoner mentors, which improved the service available and helped create a positive, community culture’ (HM Chief Inspector of Prisons, 2016: 15).

As such, although prisoner perceptions of their peers working as education representatives/Skills Advisors were largely negative, evidenced by their low scores on the item-based analysis (Table 4.9 above), when situated within the wider features of the prison culture - a largely ‘traditional’ carceral culture (Crewe et al., 2011), resistant to change and innovation, and which is often mistrustful of prisoner autonomy - they remain a new (and therefore tradition-challenging) initiative. Embedding such change into the cultural perspectives of the prisoners around the establishment, particularly those who are not already involved in the work of the Education Department, can take time and a concerted effort. The resistance from staff which Max discusses above prevent those in these roles from fulfilling their duties to the fullest extent. This may be a significant factor which may have led to the finding that prisoners across the prison do not rate the support of the Skills Advisors highly. They are also unlikely to have been in touch with many of those who took part in the survey. As Max states, ‘it is getting better. But slowly.’

Attitudes towards learning in prison (iii): Classroom-based learning

The lowest scoring item for both prisoners and staff which related to concepts of ‘safe’ was the statement: ‘*In this prison learning most often takes place in a traditional classroom environment*’ (see Table. 4.2). This item was designed to reflect the emotional and psychological vulnerabilities inherent in any learning process (Mezirow, 1991) and the relationship between this and spaces of emotional safety. This vulnerability is particularly pertinent in prison environments where many learners have previous negative experiences of education in traditional classrooms, with 42 per cent of prisoners in England and Wales in one large-scale longitudinal study having been permanently excluded from school (Williams et al., 2012). Thus, this item was reverse coded, meaning that if respondents scored this statement highly it was taken

to be a negative score. This was then inverted, and therefore the low score discussed here relates to a large number of prisoner respondents agreeing with this statement. As later chapters will go on to explore in greater detail, many students opting to work within the Open Academy referred to the Education Department, largely dominated by 'traditional' classroom settings, as feeling like a 'school', whereas the Open Academy was seen favourably as feeling like a 'college'.¹⁵

As such, this specific item relates to the argument supported throughout this thesis that a positive learning culture in prison is one with a diversified approach to the construction of learning spaces; one which seeks to situate learning into informalised practices, embed learning into other activities and where learning practices are visibly outside of a classroom environment (for similar and policy-oriented arguments, see Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2013).

The low scores for this item, regarding learning taking place in a traditional classroom environment, from both prisoner and staff perspectives points to the idea that education in Swaleside is most often framed in the traditional sense; that 'learning' experiences take place within a classroom in the Education Department. 'Education' here was thus seen as a spatial location or a 'place' within the prison, rather than an active and interactive experience, or a process or plan for the future. This remains the case despite educational and learning activities taking place around the prison, such as the learning within the gym, distance learning around the prison, and embedded learning in some of the workshops as highlighted above. Indeed, the positioning of gym-based learning also arose through the analysis as presented in Table 4.2 and will now be discussed.

¹⁵ See discussion in Chapter Six

Attitudes towards learning in prison (iv): Prisoners' perceptions of gym staff and educational opportunities

At Swaleside, as with many prisons, the gym is an important cultural space. As reflected elsewhere, the prison gym can be a space where men can develop status and perform masculinity (de Viggiani, 2012), can release their frustrations whilst increasing endorphins and make autonomous decisions about the way they spend their time and frame their embodied experiences of a prison sentence. As such it can provide a significant springboard for progression or a 'hook for change' (Giordano et al, 2002; Meek, 2013) and can provide a valuable environment for bringing together sport, exercise and education (Meek, Champion, & Klier, 2012). However, one of the most interesting findings presented in Table 4.2– in the degree to which it contravened much of this previous research related to the role of the gym in perceptions of learning – is that the lowest scoring question for prisoners in the *Changing Lives* question was: '*What gym staff do with prisoners in this prison improves lives*'.

The gym at HMP Swaleside had previously been championed as a site of best practice by Prisoners' Education Trust. Activities which supported the breaking down of silo-working with departments in the prison included rebranding the space as a 'Sports College', embedding literacy and numeracy into the provision at the gym and offering a range of courses internally, allowing gym-based students to progress from Level 1 to Level 3 (Prisoners' Education Trust, 2014).

Since this 'spotlight' in 2014, some of the opportunities made available by the structures and staff within the gym have remained. For example, the Education Department continues to run an outreach class attached to the gym. Ryan, who studied for his Level 2 maths and Level 2 peer support in this classroom explains the way in which this practice uses the 'hook' of the gym to engage men in education.

'That's for students who can't be in [the traditional education] class.

They'll give people an incentive by saying, 'Rather than sitting in here

and cause issues, would you like to do a classroom in the gym? An hour and a half maths or English and then an hour gym session straight after'. Which is a really good incentive.'

(Ryan, Skills Advisor, Interview)

According to Ryan, the decreasing positive influence provided through the gym (and therefore its staff) was directly correlated with drastic reductions in the available provision of related courses:

'Courses used to be running in the gym. There used to be personal training courses. But there hasn't been [one of those] for... more than a year.'

(Ryan, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Courses which were previously offered internally by the trained Physical Education Instructors had been halted at Swaleside due to the funding required to register students and put them through the qualifications. The majority of staff working in the gym have been long-standing members of the team (all gym staff respondents to the survey had been employed at the prison for over 15 years) and as such had experienced various shifts in priorities and fluctuations in their role. Physical Education Instructors (hereafter PEIs) reported deep frustration with their current stripped-back role and cited the shifts in responsibility for first aid training as an example. PEIs were trained and qualified to deliver an in-house first-aid training course. They delivered the course to both staff and prisoners, which gave the PEI role a level of status within the prison as professional 'educators' and 'trainers' (Fieldnotes, June 2016). However, as part of a cost-cutting exercise, this was then rolled back so that the course was only available to staff, not prisoners. This was then further rolled back so that the PEIs were no longer providing first aid training for the purposes of qualifications to anyone within the prison. Instead, as one PEI explained during an informal discussion, the prison now pays for the British Heart Foundation, an external charity, to provide regular first-aid training to staff members (Fieldnotes, June 2016).

This was experienced as evidence of a particularly bureaucratic system that simultaneously deprofessionalised and disrespected the skills of the PEI team. These changes may have contributed to the low score for the prisoner response to the question: *'What gym staff do with prisoners in this prison improves lives.'*

4.4 Situating 'Education' in the prison: Prison-wide narratives of the Swaleside learning culture

The previous sections began by presenting the quantitative findings from the survey and explored the demographic factors that can influence the extent to which a prisoner or a member of staff experienced the learning culture of the prison as empowering, engaging and relevant, aspirational, inclusive and safe. It went on to evaluate some of the ways in which attitudes to learning from a number of key stakeholders across the prison may impact upon these findings. It also drew upon wider indicators of the culture of the prison to help situate these findings further and develop a view of the 'way of life' (James et al., 2007: 28) that underpins the learning culture at Swaleside. The following section further unpicks the dimensions articulated in the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* to reveal a more detailed picture of what each of these dimensions can *mean* to individuals within the prison. In doing so, it largely draws upon the qualitative findings of the survey, but it also brings in data generated through interviews with educational stakeholders and learners from around the prison.

4.4.1 The absence of 'learner voice' and demands for participation

The dimension of *Empowering* was designed to measure an environment where prisoners are encouraged to have a say in their learning and development in the prison (see above, and Auty et al., 2016). Underneath this conceptual umbrella, a number of themes arose through the qualitative elements of the survey responses which begin to shed light on what an empowering learning culture in prison may look like and some of the barriers that preclude it.

The item-level analysis discussed above (Table. 4.2), suggested conflicting perspectives of the role that prisoners play in the framing of educational and learning opportunities available to them. Prisoners reported positively on this with '*I feel that I have a say in the learning on offer in this prison*' (mean=3.53) being the highest scoring item in the quantitatively assessed *Empowering* dimension. In contrast, '*Effort is made in this prison to give prisoners a say in how learning could be improved here*' (mean=3.03) was the lowest scoring item for staff in this dimension. This apparent divergence between the perceptions of staff and prisoners within the institution is further problematised when viewed alongside qualitative responses to the survey, particularly from prisoners which, as shall be demonstrated below, showed a number of deeply negative responses to the level of autonomy and influence that prisoners held over the decision-making processes involved in education.

The quantitative suggestion that prisoners felt that they had a voice within the system in respect of the educational offer at Swaleside perhaps reflects the growing service-user involvement in recent years within many public sector bodies; for example, see Mockford, (2012) on the rise of patient forums in medical practice, Fischer et al. (2007) on service-user engagement in substance addiction treatment, and Schmidt (2013) on the growth of 'User Voice' Prison Councils across England and Wales. The importance of the concomitant notion of 'learner voice' represents an overarching theme within the *Empowering* dimension and may help us to conceptualise what an 'empowering' prison-based learning culture may look like. Learner Voice relates to the practices of service-user involvement, or co-production (e.g. of rules, policies, and practice), which centralise the role of the service user in the delivery of the service (McCulloch, 2015). This is a concept, and developing set of methodologies, which is now embedded across health and education sectors in the community. However, it continues to present a seemingly fundamental tension for many within the criminal justice system (McCulloch, 2015).

According to Rudd et al. (2006), empowerment should represent the end goal that effective and meaningful learner voice initiatives strive towards. Beneath this,

participatory practices may operate to make incremental progress towards this goal. Previous rungs of the 'ladder of participation' build as follows - to inform, consult, involve and collaborate (Rudd et al., 2006). The relationship to co-produced outcomes, including co-produced knowledge and autonomous learning spaces, is central to this approach of service-user participation, and therefore of core importance to the current study. In applying this idea to the present analysis, the data appeared to indicate an absence of those concepts on the lower levels of Rudd et al.'s 'ladder of participation'; that is, there was scant evidence or perceptions of prisoners being consulted, involved, or informed about the daily business and operation of the prison. Supporting this inference, in response to the question '*What three things could be done to make [Swaleside] a better place for learning?*', prisoners highlighted the need to expand on the extent to which they felt listened to:

'Listen to inmates like we are people not prisoners' (P134, Survey)

'Talk more to prisoners. Less paperwork, more talk' (P221, Survey)

Both the 'inform' and the 'consult' elements of the learner voice ladder of participation are implicated here and reported as being absent, which in turn undermines any claim of 'collaborative' practice between the prison and its residents.

With specific reference to 'learner voice' and the educational offer at the prison, prisoner participants felt that increasing the level of input that they had over decisions made in the educational opportunities around the prison would make the environment better for learning. One participant stated that the prison should 'allow prisoners to choose the curriculum' (P92, Survey), while another made clear his view that the 'consult' element of learner voice was not met through his suggestion that the prison need to 'find out what prisoners want' (P234, Survey).

Many prisoners reported experiences that both the course provision and the way in which they were 'encouraged' to attend these programmes were outside of their control. In response to the same question (i.e. '*What three things could make this*

prison a better place for learning?), a prominent theme of 'forceful coercion' was evident, and identified as a destructive and de-motivating factor for engaging in education:

'Do not force inmates to do education' (P86, Survey)

'This prison like many others has taken a coercive approach to learning. All that creates is resentment' (P114, Survey)

'Ask prisoners what they want not force them to learn' (P24, Survey)

'Don't force it' (P98, Survey)

The deprivation of autonomy - prisoners' 'restricted ability to make choices' about how and where they may use their time - is a shared, fundamental element of the experience of imprisonment, an understanding reaching back to Sykes' classic account of the 'pains of imprisonment' (1958: 261). Later work has repeatedly demonstrated that this deprivation continues to be central to the prisoner experience, despite the 'new' pains of imprisonment shifting and expanding in 'depth', 'weight' and 'tightness' (Crewe, 2011). Many authors argue that the practice and spaces of education in prison can push back against the tighter elements of this absence of autonomy (see for example Wilson, 2005; Crewe et al., 2014), yet it is clear from these survey responses that the extent to which this is possible is restricted when practices are experienced as forceful or coercive, features which may indeed exacerbate rather than alleviate this prison pain.

A further theme which arose which could expand the picture of an empowering learning culture in prison was 'celebrating success'. Here, prisoners stated that the following would make the prison a better place for learning:

'Graduation ceremonies' (P145, Survey)

‘More recognition for achievement’ (P151, Survey)

‘Reward people for their achievements’ (P153, Survey)

‘A prize once [we] do something’ (P271, Survey)

The conception that celebrating success is part of an empowering educational experience is well understood throughout education literature (Manning, 2000). However, many prisoner students describe their experience when completing a course as crucially lacking in such celebration. Lewis, a Skills Advisor working to promote positive educational experiences around the prison, recounts examples where students are informed that they passed (or failed) by a slip through the door, with no follow-up to celebrate a pass or constructively discuss a fail (Lewis, Skills Advisor, Interview).

A final theme which supports ways that prisoners felt that they could enhance the empowering nature of the learning culture in HMP Swaleside was through being treated like an adult. As one survey respondent stated in response to the question, ‘*What would make this prison a better place for learning?*’:

‘Remind education staff that we are adults and not to assume we have a school-boy mentality’ (P170, Survey)

Such experience of infantilisation through the education practices within the prison was echoed through the narratives of Open Academy students and wing-based distance learners. For example, Zakariya, a distance learner and Self-Study student within the Open Academy reflects on his experience of the Education Department within the prison:

‘A lot of the teachers tend to treat us like we’re in a school, which isn’t a positive thing. Especially if you’re a grown-arse person as well,

that's probably had businesses, had responsibility, to be talked down to like that. It's no good.'

(Zackariya, Open Academy Student, Interview)

In his descriptions of this fundamental pain of imprisonment, Sykes directly addresses this mechanism of infantilisation: '[T]he frustration of the prisoner's ability to make choices and the frequent refusals to provide an explanation for the regulations and commands descending from the bureaucratic staff involve a profound threat to the prisoner's self-image because they reduce the prisoner to the weak, helpless, dependant status of childhood' (1958: 291). Thus, for education to alleviate this prison-based pain, to be a process that underpins an empowering learning culture, it is vital that practices promote the central autonomy of the learner. These experiences are key to understanding the relevance and function of the Open Academy and will be further explored in later chapters.

4.4.2 Becoming Engaging and Relevant through vocational provision

The dimension of *Engaging/Relevant* sought to measure the extent to which prisoners were made aware of the learning opportunities in the prison and the relevance that available provision had to students' or potential students' present and/or future selves (see above and Auty et al., 2016).

A clear theme arising under this conceptual dimension relates to the provision of vocational courses. As highlighted earlier in the chapter, the formal educational offer in the prison, and indeed across the prison sector in England and Wales more widely, is largely restricted to a small range of subject areas. With OLASS contracts promoting a strong focus on literacy, numeracy and basic IT, there can be little by way of vocational training for many prisoners. Programmes that are offered as 'vocational training' are limited to catering and food hygiene. Alongside a more general call for 'vocational skills' or 'vocational qualifications', respondents referred regularly to particular skills development that they would like to see offered in the prison. For example, 'plumbing, plastering, car mechanics and body work repair as well as other

courses' (P64, Survey) and 'welding, carpentry, landscaping etc.' (P164, Survey) were suggested as areas of improvement for the learning culture of the prison.

For James et al., 'all vocational programmes require relationships with relevant employment sectors – such a relationship is implicit within the name itself' (2007: 75). Yet in a prison setting, the proximity of this relationship is frustrated in a number of ways. Firstly, entry to an employment sector is as distant as a sentence is long. In Swaleside, there are many men serving long and very long sentences and, as such, are denied access to employment for many years. Leo, a Skills Advisor, outlines one set of implications of this on how vocational training may be perceived as relevant within a prison sentence or regime:

'We want it to be so that when guys come here they come here and there are vocational opportunities for you to gain the trade or skill that is going to be there in 15, 20, 30 years' time. Plastering is never going to change. Being an electrician is never going to change. Being a painter is never going to change.'

(Leo, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Nonetheless, the relationship of the educational provision within the prison to employment outside the prison was a concern for prisoner survey respondents. Responses included calls for 'Things we're going to need outside' (P5, Survey), 'Courses that are useful in getting jobs outside' (P172, Survey) and 'Learning that will lead to a trade' (P102, Survey).

The particular challenges of acquiring employment following a prison sentence related to the perceived relevance of an in-prison course or provision. Such implications, stated some respondents, required an increased emphasis on 'practical' courses and less emphases on other areas, including higher education:

'I feel that the education - in most prisons I've been in, especially Swaleside - on offer is unrealistic to help prisoners gain employment

on release. I think education should focus more on gaining practical skills with qualifications than degrees in university. Upon release we have to declare our criminal records to employers, therefore, I think we should be more realistic about what jobs we are more likely to get and focus more of the resources in gaining qualifications in those areas.'

(P251, Survey)

'The majority of these inmates are not interested in higher education they want jobs on release. This country is short of skilled qualified builders! No excuses, it's wrong!'

(P170, Survey)

Similarly, some respondents argued that there is a much greater need for skills development that will specifically support prisoners to become self-employed when released ('better courses for self-employed' was a response repeated three times by respondent P34), a sentiment that also echoes through many of the vocational skills listed and requested above.

The relationship to industry also manifested through awareness of the communicative function of qualifications. As Gaes (2008) asserts, economists distinguish between a gain in human capital, the development of skills, and signalling effects of education. These signalling effects can be seen as an interactive communication between qualification holder and potential employer; by becoming internalised to form part of the holder's identity, they are also externally recognised by employers and the community at large. The 'quality' of qualifications was highlighted by participants as significant in the meaning that they confer to outside employers. This point highlights the future-looking nature of vocational qualifications and the way that they can offer a sense of something to 'look forward to':

'Better qualifications (NVQs)' (P51, Survey)

‘Run practical courses which can be used to gain employment. NVQs in classes...’ (P185, Survey)

‘The whole system is a joke which is why very few people [...] do education. You need formal trade courses which offers a future of employment to look forward to’ (P109, Survey)

Some respondents who have been in the prison system for many years (such as survey respondent P211) noted that these qualifications, which are recognised throughout these vocational industries, were previously offered in prisons. Indeed, an NVQ Level 2 was previously available to those employed in the woodwork workshop within HMP Swaleside. However, these courses had not been running in the months leading up to the research period and had not started again by the conclusion.

Beyond courses directly relating to vocational training, a further prominent theme related to the breadth of courses that were available. Courses that were deemed missing from the formal offer within the prison included the creative arts:

‘Introduce creative/crafts/drama/psychology workshops geared towards engineering citizenship and social capital’ (P114, Survey)

‘More creative, short courses’ (P207, Survey)

Alongside this, many respondents were interested in learning new languages and increasing the opportunities for learning in the gym. Each of these themes were situated within a wider thematic call for ‘more courses’. As such it is clear that respondents presented a strong dissatisfaction held by many for the narrow breadth of the course provision made available within the prison. This associates closely with the notion discussed above of expanding choices and options and to allow for individuals to have a wider say on the areas available to them to study.

4.4.3 Developing aspiration through progression

For the purposes of the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey*, an aspirational learning culture was understood as one in which the prison, through staff, prisoners and learner reps, fostered a culture that encouraged prisoners to imagine a positive future for themselves. Many survey respondents reflected on the low level of the formal courses available which typified many responses to the survey question ‘*What three things would make this prison a better place for learning?*’:

‘Go beyond Level 2 on subjects’ (P16, Survey)

‘Higher levels available in courses’ (P26, Survey)

‘The Education Department should conduct topics beyond basic level such as Level 3 Art’ (P136, Survey)

This effective ceiling on provision can impact upon the learning culture of the prison through a number of mechanisms. Firstly, it prevents those who are interested in taking their learning further than the current course they are studying; progression in a particular area of study. The positive nature of progression was highlighted by a number of respondents:

‘When completing a course, it’s good to jump in a higher level to the course.’ (P125, Survey)

‘Genuine potential learners should be given more opportunities’
(P27, Survey)

A restriction on the upper levels that are readily provided within the prison also impacts upon perceptions and experience of the symbolic relevance of a course, particularly when seen through the lens of those outside the prison:

‘Do more serious courses. No one cares about Level 1 and 2 on the outside’ (P57, Survey)

‘Offer more courses that have value in the outside world’ (P35, Survey)

For many within the prison, a key purpose of prisoner education is the communication of ability, skills, application and status. At a lower level (Level 1 and Level 2) this provision is not able to demonstrate the ‘value’ on the instrumental scale that is required. This may account for the prominent themes of both ‘vocational training’ and ‘higher qualifications’ arising throughout the survey responses.

However, the educational offer impacts within the prison walls as well. For one survey respondent, aspirational educational provision can give students ‘Something to look forward to’ (P271, Survey). Here we can see that aspiration and progression can be important tools for people to navigate their sentence and overcome or avoid stagnation.

The upper limit of these courses has also functioned in a restrictive way across the prison estate. For those who have previously engaged in education and have already achieved this level outside the prison or have completed all of the opportunities available in the prison, the restrictions are felt particularly acutely. Ryan, for example, started his current prison sentence whilst he was part-way through a university degree. Such an academic history shows he was clearly learning at a level far higher than the GCSE equivalent of Level 2. He was also interested in building education into his sentence and using it to shape his time in prison. However, he was required to complete Level 1 and Level 2 in both English and maths in the prison before he was entitled to apply for a role as a mentor in the Education Department. He took this opportunity to support his peers for, as a university student, he found the courses very simplistic:

‘It started two-and-a-half years ago as a peer support worker, where I was basically a teacher assistant in a maths class. I did Level 1 maths and then progressed to Level 2, helping learners in the class.’

(Ryan, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Indeed, this experience of these courses being mandatory and students completing the same course numerous times, particularly when moved around prisons or when starting a new sentence, was repeated through a number of interviews with prisoner students. The following extract from an interview with Mackenzie who has served time in a number of prisons on numerous previous sentences, highlights where the low-level education provision sits with the rest of the prison regime:

‘Every time you come to jail they make you do your Level 1 in maths and English. As long as you’ve got that, mate, they’re satisfied [...] I could teach that. I’m sure I know all the answers off by heart, and I can get the top, top, top mark.’

Interviewer: So, at a guess, how many times do you think you’ve done it?

Ten times, or something. Lots of times. I think it’s just a normal induction routine.’

(Mackenzie, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The implications of this practice, which is repeated across the sector and is certainly not unique to HMP Swaleside, include a repressed sense of aspiration and stunted progression. Nathan, an Open Academy student, reflects on what this means for his opportunities and how, without the Open Academy, he would have found himself trapped in this limbo:

‘A lot of what they offer in prison, as well, is repetitive. In each prison you go to, everything you offer is something I’ve already got certificates for, I’ve already achieved. There’s not much you can offer me. So when I’m trying to swing from one prison to another prison, you’re just transferring me to another prison, you’re not transferring me to anything greater in what I can achieve, other than what they offer here at the Open Academy. So in that transition I was just in limbo, really. There is nothing that I want to do because I’ve done it already. It’s repetitive, and it’s tiresome, and it’s jarring. And nobody likes repeating’

(Nathan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Through offering the same ‘tiresome’, ‘jarring’, low-level qualifications in every prison, the limited depth of provision is failing to promote an engaging offer to Nathan and he has to seek an outlet for his aspiration to learn elsewhere, in this case through the Open Academy.

4.4.4. Access: Demonstrating Inclusivity

A dominant theme arising throughout survey responses related to issues associated with access to education, a theme that can help develop a deeper understanding of the meaning of the dimension *inclusive*. The barriers to education in prisons are numerous and there is not the space to fully address them here, a task that shall continue into the following chapter. However, a number of issues relating to access arose through responses to the survey which shall drive the following discussion.

In response to the question ‘*What would make this prison a better place for learning?*’ many respondents criticised the length of time that is spent waiting to get onto courses within the Education Department once an application has been put in:

‘Getting started quicker’ (P43, Survey)

‘No good if you can’t get on the list’ (P45, Survey)

‘Not having to wait eight months to get on the list’ (P89, Survey)

‘Been waiting to get on the list for two months’ (P35, Survey)

Some respondents highlight that during this often extensive period of waiting following an application to attend an education class, there is insufficient communication from those within the prison. For example, survey respondent P275 stated that ‘applying for courses can be a pain. A receipt or acknowledgment of your enquiries regarding courses would help, or where you are on a waiting list.’ The institutional processes surrounding an application for the Education Department were raised by a number of respondents as creating problems in this regard, with particular sticking points being the communication between the Activities Department and the Education Department:

‘Improve the system for getting onto classes- currently run by activities without good communication to those who have applied for classes’ (P171, Survey)

‘Liaise with activities and to put prisoners in courses quickly’ (P269, Survey)

‘Better communication with activities when waiting for a course’ (P253, Survey)

This practical hurdle, a friction created and exacerbated through the relationships between departments across the prison, is not restricted to the Education Department. Respondents also highlight the excessive waiting times for applications to external educational bodies, namely Prisoners’ Education Trust: ‘Be quicker when applying for PET distance learning’ (P261, Survey).

Barriers to access are not restricted to simply being put on a course once applied. Materials and resources, as well as the important space of the library, can continue to remain out of reach once the course begins:

‘More access to library for those on classes’ (P174, Survey)

‘Access to materials’ (P69, Survey)

‘Pens and stationary are always hard to get.’ (P136, Survey)

As other authors have described in more detail, the barriers to accessing higher-level learning in prison are unique and in many ways additional to those that have been expressed here, which largely refer to the Further Education provision offered in the Education Department. However, an issue relating to access to higher-level education which arose through the survey responses was the current restriction on funding for Open University courses which is time-limited to six years prior to a prisoner’s earliest date of release or eight years for an Access course (PSI 32/2012):

‘Open Uni only for six years or less on tariff is unacceptable’
(P181, Survey)

The deeply negative implications of this restriction also arose through interviews with students on the Open Academy:

‘This sounds like another conspiracy, like, ‘Oh, they don’t want us getting too smart’, but on a serious note they say you can’t actually study anything of substance, you can’t get any qualifications of substance, until you’ve got at least six years left. So I’m saying, ‘Right, that doesn’t make no sense’.

(Mackenzie, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Indeed, this funding restriction was raised as a particularly challenging hurdle in this prison, and in particular on the Open Academy wing, where a large proportion of residents are serving very long sentences. The relationship between this policy framework and the opportunities through the Open Academy are discussed further in the following chapters.

There are numerous examples peppered throughout the qualitative survey responses which demonstrate the various ways in which individuals experience exclusion from education. Some respondents highlighted the need to recognise those with learning difficulties and to adapt the approach to education to be inclusive towards them:

‘Better training for individuals to recognise less obvious barriers to learning’ (P96, Survey)

‘Recognising those who suffer from learning difficulties.’ (P201, Survey)

This call for an adaptive approach was not limited just to those with learning difficulties, but was seen as a more effective way of providing education across the board:

‘More personal approach to individual needs’ (P96, Survey)

‘Tailor-knitted course to the individual’ (P260, Survey)

‘Support workers, who helps write up educational plans the pupil can follow in order to reach his/her goals for a job on the out’ (P87, Survey)

There were particular examples of issues raised which prevented individuals from reaching the Education Department. One respondent noted that ‘when you’re on ITDS

[the Intensive Drug Treatment Service Wing] you have to get up in the morning so should let you do [education in the afternoon]' (P83, Survey). This respondent is referring to the particular drug wing where a strict regime effectively excludes these residents from attending education. A further barrier was highlighted by those who reside on the RAPT wing (a wing dedicated to a drug recovery community ran by the Rehabilitation of Addictive Prisoners Trust¹⁶). One respondent noted that 'RAPT programme really needs a space/community-wing/area of its own to give lads who are determined yet vulnerable in their early steps of recovery a chance to progress without negative sabotaging influences' (P214, Survey). This response reminds us of the myriad conflicting forces operating across the prison, including recovery from addiction and opposing forces which may disrupt a journey of recovery, which cannot be separated from the function and spaces of education within this prison-based context.

A significant theme arising within the survey responses regarding what an inclusive learning culture can look like, relates to the promotion of learning around the prison. Many responses to the question '*What could make this prison a better place for learning?*' were characterised thus:

'Better information' (P19, Survey)

'Better promotion, more posters with information' (P15, Survey)

'More awareness on education offered' (P242, Survey)

'Visiting education reps' (P56, Survey)

As shall be explored further in the following chapter, explicit and implicit messaging around education and the provision that is available is central to the framework of a learning culture. Increasing awareness of opportunities and information about how

¹⁶ RAPT has now become the Forward Trust

to access them is important but can be significantly challenging in a prison environment (see Hughes, 2012; Farley and Pike, 2018 for further discussion).

The Skills Advisor role was created in part to address some of the needs which echo through this survey, particularly those which assert the need to move the messages of the Education Department onto the wings:

‘Wing reps [for] education. Recruitment’ (P222, Survey)

‘More wing promotion’ (P212, Survey)

‘Come onto the wings and talk to prisoners to know what’s going on’
(P209, Survey)

‘More wing visits to promote education!’ (P189, Survey)

However, as the above discussion demonstrates, both quantitative and qualitative survey findings suggest that the Skills Advisor role has not (yet) been fully successful in addressing these needs within this restrictive, distrustful environment.

4.4.5 Safety: Physical, Emotional and Psychological

The final dimension of which to explore the qualitative meaning, led by the survey responses, is *safe*. As has been described above, this dimension sought to measure the extent to which the prison created physically and emotionally ‘safe spaces’ for learning to take place. The quantitative elements of both the prisoner and the staff surveys were particularly weak for this dimension with a low Cronbach Alpha score suggesting that the scale was not accurate in tapping into the experience of *safe* as a discrete phenomenon. The following section will explore why this may be, with a particular emphasis on unravelling what a ‘safe’ learning space can look like in this particular prison-based environment.

One initial theme that arose under this conceptual dimension is the lack of physical safety. Many respondents explicitly stated 'safety' or 'make it safer' (e.g. P108, Survey) as an answer to the question about how to make the prison a better place for learning. Explicit reference such as this is likely to refer to the most common understanding of the word, which relates to physical safety. Many prisoners reported that there were issues with violence, weapons and bullying in educational spaces:

'Reduce the violence, bullying, stabbings' (P288, Survey)

'Less weapons' (P265, Survey)

'Safer feeling [in one's] surroundings, remove bullies!' (P189, Survey)

This is a stark reminder of the reality of the place in which these educational spaces exist and the porous nature of the endemic issues of prison culture. Institutional issues which are wider than the provision within the Education Department, with a further example being the use and spread of drugs (see Survey P266 and P288), enter into these educational spaces in very tangible ways.

The absence of physical safety is an important underpinning feature of the prison estate, with the rates of assault and self-harm increasing year upon year (cf. MoJ, 2019). As these above comments demonstrate, it is also an important precursor to understanding the experiences of educational spaces within a prison environment. This fundamental point echoes throughout this thesis. As has previously been outlined, a riot embroiled the wing of the Open Academy during the research period. Further, the stabbing of an Open Academy student took place outside the entrance to the Academy (which is discussed further in Chapter 7). Not only does this reflect the instability of living safely, or surviving, for many within prison but it can also deeply impact the learning journey and tentative developing identities of these students. Further, the stabbing provided a stark picture in the physical creation of educational spaces within the prison. The student was reportedly moved into an Academy room following the incident, after which he was hospitalised, where he bled onto the

Academy chairs. This space, constructed as a place of emotional and educational safety, thus became a site visibly unable to shut out the violence of the wider prison.

Moving beyond the more extreme elements of physical safety, the creation of spaces of emotional or psychological safety also arose through survey responses. For some, this manifests through the people that one shares a classroom with:

‘Have less prisoners in a class’ (P216, Survey)

‘Students/learners filtered so they are in an appropriate class of their standard and are not impaired by others or impair others.’ (P26, Survey)

‘Fill classes with people who want to learn and not disruptive idiots’ (P185 Survey)

However, this also manifested through the physical environment within the learning space. For example, one respondent stated that ‘new comfortable furniture’ is important for making the prison a better place for learning (Survey P115).

Finally, some respondents related to the education as having the potential to be constructed as a space distinct from the rest of the prison. The conception of education as a ‘third space’ (Wilson, 2005) – wherein the histories and experiences of an individual interact with their surroundings – is important in understanding the potential cultural significance of education.

‘More like a class than a prison’ (P228, Survey)

‘Less time sitting down in the classroom’ (P255, Survey)

What becomes clear through this dimensional analysis is that in order to understand what a safe and positive learning environment may look like in this prison, it is vital to

pay full due attention to the experience of physical vulnerability and the constant threat of violence. However, this does not provide the full picture. Emotional and psychological safety are important factors in understanding the full picture of 'safety' in relation to learning spaces in prison. These qualitative elements of the survey begin to respond to some of the elements of the concept of safety which were not suitably captured in the quantitative elements of the survey tool. This includes the types of emotional safety that permit the forms of vulnerability which are inherent in a learning process. The particular emotional elements of safety and the functions of education in creating an educational 'oasis' and an emotionally safe space are more closely detailed in section 6.2.3, with particular reference to experiences within the Open Academy.

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided a detailed picture of experiences of the learning culture from across the prison. Following a brief overview of the formal learning provision within the prison, the first half of this chapter explored the key findings from the prison-wide *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* and begun to situate these findings within a wider cultural picture of the institution. Key resultant features of this culture have arisen through this discussion.

Demographic factors which impact on an individual's experience of the learning culture of the prison include ethnicity, but practices within the prison, such as a prisoner's main activity or the wing on which they reside, have also been shown to be significant. The complex centrality of staff-prisoner relationships has begun to be explored as a key determinant of the resultant learning culture. The qualitative elements of the survey began to paint a more detailed picture of the elements of learning culture outlined through the survey.

Chapter Five

The Open Academy: Exploring students' educational trajectories, study practices and motivations

5.1 Introduction: Revisiting the Open Academy

The previous chapter explored the role, perceptions and experience of education and learning across the breadth of the prison. Through this examination, a number of features have been shown to be significant in framing the learning culture of the prison, which indicate structures of the institutional learning culture. Interlocking fields include demographically constructed fields of ethnicity (leading to some potential implications for 'race') and education which overlap to form elements of the field of the prison, and prison education in particular. The prison-wide narratives revealed that restrictions on course options, academic progression and a limited say in the available provision shaped the perceptions of education across the prison. This was further problematized when situated within the complexity of staff-prisoner relationships, operating within and across the institution. This chapter builds upon these understandings in order to begin the work of positioning the Open Academy, and the practices taking place within it, within this cultural framework. To begin this analysis, the chapter focuses on the individuals who joined the Open Academy – their prior educational experiences, their approaches to study within the Academy and their differing motivations in doing so.

As described in Chapter Three, the Open Academy (the Academy) was a project located on A Wing within HMP Swaleside, with the aim of utilising higher-level educational resources and dedicated peer led spaces to support formal distance learning and informal educational practices. From the official launch in September 2015 to the conclusion of the research period in January 2017, the number of students enrolled on the Open Academy fluctuated between 20 and 45. Despite not nearing the full capacity of 84 (Fieldnotes, March 2016), which would require two full landings of the wing to be Open Academy students, there existed a number of interested

students who became and remained enrolled in the initiative. As outlined in Chapter Three, the Open Academy student body was made up of students who were enrolled on distance learning programmes either funded by the Prisoners' Education Trust or Open University degrees, which were (mostly) funded through student finance. There was also a small number of self-funding students (one in the interview sample). Alongside these formally enrolled students, the cohort also included students engaged in the '*Self-Study*' programme, either solely or as a complementary practice to their distance learning studies. Understanding the development, role and impact of this less formal '*Self-Study*' approach to studying forms an important part of this chapter.

This chapter demonstrates, by drawing on the theories of learning careers (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2000; Gallacher et al., 2012; Hodkinson and James, 2003) and situating this within the wider framework of 'learning cultures' (Biesta et al., 2008; Hodkinson et al., 2012; Hodkinson and James, 2007), that the Academy was not simply a spatial location; it was also a set of practices which shaped both a personal and a social project. As has been noted previously, a cultural approach to understanding learning requires a simultaneous examination of the varying 'levels of zoom' (Biesta et al., 2008). As such, this chapter begins from the place of the *micro*; the individual students; yet in doing so, it demonstrates numerous ways in which macro structures, such as race and class, intertwine and work *through* the individual to shape the experiences and expectations of such students. It is these such structural features which work to shape the 'positions' of students (Hodkinson and James, 2003) and which interact with students' 'dispositions' (conceived as a 'range of largely tacit or sub-conscious attitudes and approaches to life, which orient our thoughts and actions' (p. 5)) to frame their learning careers. Research from across the field of education which is underpinned by such a conception of learning careers (Bloomer and Hodkinson 2000; Colley et al. 2003; Gallacher et al. 2007; Haggis, 2004; Hodkinson and James 2003), and indeed that which specifically applied the approach to understanding the educational trajectories of higher-level distance learners in prison (Hughes, 2012), enforces the trepidation that should be afforded to a homogenous presentation of prisoner-students which is framed by a 'deficit' approach. Not only do such approaches not encompass the breadth of experience for those seeking to study

whilst in prison, but it can also work to individualise the social inhibitors which will be shown below to largely shape these students' challenging educational experiences.

The following discussion seeks to describe the intertwining individual, institutional and social features that form one such 'layer' in the production and reproduction of social and cultural spaces of learning. In order to meet this objective, the data that will be drawn on largely consists of semi-structured interviews with men residing on A Wing, both those who are involved in the Academy, either as learners or facilitators, and those residing on the wing but not involved in the Academy.

5.2 Introducing the Open Academy students

The past and present position and dispositions of students have significant implications for current motivations and signifying future directions, something which is well established in educational research (cf. Bloomer and Hodkinson 2000; Colley et al. 2003; Gallacher et al. 2007; Gastil, 2004; Hodkinson and James 2003). These too are central elements of the conception of a 'learning career'. A learning career moves away from the normative assessments highlighted above; 'Such a career is not something that can be brilliant or disappointing; it can no more be a success than a failure' (Goffman, 1968: 119, as cited in Gallacher et al., 2002). Through the development of the concept of 'learning careers', Bloomer and Hodkinson (2002) and Gallacher et al. (2002) move towards the understanding of a trajectory which flows through an individual's life:

In particular, 'career' has both an objective and a subjective dimension. On the one hand, it points to the existence of more or less identifiable offices, statuses and situations. However it also points to the individual's subjective experience, the meanings which they attribute to their experiences, and their sense of becoming a certain person.

(Gallacher et al. 2002)

Centralising the trajectories of Academy students is therefore a key purpose of this chapter. In order to understand the social spaces and the culture that students produce and reproduce, it is vital to understand the journeys which they are on and where they have come from.

Although there were some shared characteristics with regards to previous educational experience, the Open Academy students did not have homogenous experiences of school or later educational institutions. Nonetheless, the vast majority of students described their time at school through an explicitly negative lens, either in terms of their experience throughout or with regards to the ultimate outcome, a point largely related to not achieving qualifications. Strong overarching themes resonated through their narratives of *interruption*, multiple levels of *exclusion* and a feeling of *unfilled potential*. The following sections outline how these themes, once embedded in students' schooling experiences, go on to be reproduced through their relationship to educational experiences in the prison system.

5.2.1 Experiences of education at school

An effort to articulate the learning careers of the Open Academy students requires a positioning of the interactions between the objective and subjective features and pressures in their lives. Inspired by the work of Bourdieu (e.g. Bourdieu and Passeron 1990) and that of Hodkinson and Bloomer (2002), Gallacher et al. adopt an approach that 'stresses the ways in which individuals negotiate their identities in an active way, as members of (sometimes changing) social milieus' (2002: 497). Building from this framework, the following section begins the discussion at the point of the school, seeking the ways in which students actively framed their identities through such experiences. The thematic experiences which are consequently explored below are not to be seen in isolation and their intertwining, overlapping nature reflects the multiple disadvantages experienced by many participants.

Interruption

The schooling experiences of many of the Open Academy students were framed by interruption through a number of means, with many not reaching the end of their compulsory education period. Aaron, for example, was in his 50s and serving a life sentence. He left school when he was 14, his formal education interrupted in order to care for his sick mother. It is increasingly recognised that being a young carer can increase numerous difficulties in education, including increased school absence, risk of becoming victims of bullying and behavioural problems (Dearden, 2000), and that these can have long-lasting negative impacts on employment and wider social and economic outcomes (Dearden and Becker, 2004). Such a context may therefore be a significant feature of Aaron's educational journey.

A number of Academy students and non-student residents of the wing were disrupted in their schooling trajectories due to an early engagement with the criminal justice system. Jimmie, who lived on A Wing not as a student of the Academy, first went to prison when he was in Year 9. Whilst in the Young Offenders' Institution, he was unable to sit his GCSEs due to being 'banned' from the Education Department and it not being possible for the prison to facilitate his studying elsewhere. Darren, a 39-year-old book-keeping student of the Open Academy, stated: 'School? I didn't do really that good at school. And then I went to college, but I didn't get to finish college because I got arrested and charged. So that got cut short.' Similarly, after being taken out of the formal schooling system aged 12 in response to truanting due to being bullied, Nelson started working on a construction project when aged 16 – 17. He 'didn't get to finish that cos [he] ended up in jail'.

The phenomenon of children and young people moving from the institutions of education to a carceral institution is discussed in the literature as a clear example of the 'school-to-prison pipeline'. Largely drawing from research in the United States of America, this 'pipeline' is seen as a manifestation of embedded structures such as race and class intersecting with education funding, academic failure and practices of suspension or expulsion (Christle et al., 2010; Wald and Losen, 2003; Welch, 2017).

Distinguishing the British experience from the well-established 'pipeline' in America, Graham (2014) argues that the mechanisms which are at play in this system are a combination of factors which result in schools 'preparing young men for prison'. These factors include a complex historical and current interplay between conceptions of race, class and educational policy. A key element in both the established school-to-prison pipeline and the interruption of studies experienced by interviewees is that of school exclusion. It is to that which we now turn.

Exclusion

Children who are temporarily or permanently excluded from school go on to be disproportionately overrepresented in the prison population. A large scale longitudinal study recently found that 42 per cent of their prisoner sample reported being permanently expelled from school, a number that goes up to 63 per cent when including temporary exclusions (Williams et al., 2012). This contrasts with a rate of 0.1 per cent of the whole school population being permanently excluded and 4.76 per cent with fixed period exclusions in 2016/17 (Department for Education, 2018). Such overrepresentation is reflected strongly in the lives of the Open Academy students and A Wing residents. Both Christopher and Mackenzie, Open Academy students enrolled on A level studies, were excluded from school before they reached their GCSEs. Mackenzie grew up in a deprived area in south London and his exclusion came in Year 9 as a result of what he stated as being 'apparently a bad influence'.

In comparison to Mackenzie, Christopher's history of exclusion began at a much earlier age:

My first primary school kicked me out. My second primary school kicked me out. Then I went to another one, like part time. Then they sent me to this school [for children with educational behavioural problems].

(Christopher, Open Academy Student, Interview)

He preferred this later school environment which he felt supported his 'short attention span'. However, as he grew older his attendance continued to be 'on and off for a few years' before he stopped attending school completely aged 14 and therefore also finished his time at school without any GCSEs.

Similarly to Christopher, both Tyler and Francis first experienced school exclusion in primary school. Tyler and Francis were not Open Academy students but residents of A Wing, and both reported being diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder) at this early point in their schooling lives. Tyler, who was at the mid-point of a five-year determinate sentence, was excluded from his primary school in Year 6 and went on to be excluded from a number of other schools before being enrolled on a Community and Voluntary Education (CAVE) scheme in Year 10. Like the other students noted here, Tyler did not complete his GCSEs. Francis was sent to boarding school following his exclusion as 'no other school would take [him]'. After being excluded from this school he attended another where, in Year 10, he got into a fight which resulted in his teacher's nose being broken. It was this incident which first took him to prison. He too left the school system without GCSEs.

The prevalence of ADHD in the prison population in the UK has been found to sit between 24 and 45 per cent depending on the population of the prison (Young et al., 2010; Young et al., 2009), with international studies showing a prevalence of up to two thirds of the prison population (Young et al., 2011). Thus, Tyler and Francis's experiences may reflect elements of many others across the prison estate. Through the narratives of Christopher, Tyler and Francis, we can see their experience of exclusion as being more extensive than a singular event. For them, it was repeated, embedded in their reflections of schooling and denoted a process of *multiple* exclusions and separations from 'mainstream' educational provision.

(Unfulfilled) Potential

From the above, we can see the range and depth of negative experiences with school that many of the Open Academy students experienced. However, other students who entered the Academy reported their early interactions with the schooling and education system more positively. Joey, a peer mentor in the Academy, left school with 7 GCSEs ('People don't believe that!') and went into a job 'in the city' after school. Dan too reflected positively on his school years. He had a passion for science throughout his school experience. Following the completion of his GCSEs he had a few years working in different industries before trying to find a way to 'excel in science'. It was this that drove him immediately to the Open Academy on arrival to the prison and it is this that he was seeking to study through distance learning.

Indeed, some Open Academy students had experience with higher education outside of prison. Dewayne was a trained accountant before working in civil litigation. He turned to the Open Academy as he was already working on an Open University Business Administration degree whilst incarcerated. Ryan, a Skills Advisor and Open Academy support mentor, was part way through his university degree when he was handed down his current sentence, which was his first time in prison. Despite leaving school with no GCSEs, Zackariya completed a foundation course and a year and a half of an undergraduate degree which he started when he was 30. He was unable to complete his degree at this point due to financial and what he describes as 'life' reasons. It was during this period of higher education study that he found out that he was both dyslexic and dyspraxic, a diagnosis which helped him to challenge the questions that he had regularly asked himself throughout his education; 'why am I so slow, why am I so stupid?'

Like Zackariya, Dewayne's experience of late diagnosis of a learning difficulty reflects the experience of many others across the prison estate. The statistics of those with learning difficulties in the prison setting are contested, partially due to diagnostic conflicts (Talbot, 2008). However, there is some agreement that the numbers are likely to be around 20 – 30 per cent of people in prison living with learning difficulties or

disabilities which make them less able to cope with the prison system (Talbot, 2008). Further, diagnoses are highly likely to overlap (Kaplan et al. 1998). When such conditions go undiagnosed in community education settings and then again in prison, this can lead to many never finding the tools to challenge the questioning described by Dewayne as to 'why am I so stupid?'

Whilst Dewayne's academic potential was hindered by an undiagnosed learning difficulty, Mackenzie's exclusion and interruptions, discussed above, prevented him from achieving what he reported as his very high potential:

I was predicted A*s on whatever was upcoming, I can't even remember what it was called. And I think I did an after-school course in Year 7 or 8. For ages I did this course, I was a proper nerd.

(Mackenzie, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Despite staying engaged in self-directed learning, through the informal means of reading books and newspapers and watching documentaries around topics which he found interesting, Mackenzie's formal 'mainstream' education in the school system came to an end for him in Year 9 when he was excluded. Nathan's experience similarly reflected this capability-interrupted narrative as he stated: 'At school I was very academically capable, but I got side-tracked a lot. The wrong crowd.'

These overlapping experiences of interruption, exclusion and unfulfilled potential demonstrate the number and range of challenges interviewees faced throughout their formative schooling years. Yet the narratives of Joey, Dan, Mackenzie and Nathan reflected positively on their academic capabilities, whether such potential was met or not. We can begin to see from this snapshot of educational histories through school that despite the disadvantages shared by many, this portrait is further defined by diversity and potential.

5.2.2 Experiences of education in prison

Many students came to the Open Academy with prior experience of the education system within prison, both at HMP Swaleside and in other sites across the estate. As the previous chapter has demonstrated, some of the prison-wide narratives of formalised (and in some cases, mandatory) education in the prison were critical of a number of aspects of its form and delivery. Significantly, the academic levels to which the traditional offer was limited was a strong critique for survey respondents. These narratives echoed through the experiences of those who became students of the Open Academy, strengthening the case for a need for a space that seeks to support forms of education which challenge these narratives.

Interruption

For some students, pockets of good practice and innovative educational initiatives within the prison system have provided the promise of opportunity, yet a number of factors inhibited their successful completion. Ozzie spoke positively of the PICTA (Prisons Information Communication Technology Academy) programme that he was studying elsewhere in the prison estate. PICTA was a vocational training programme, funded collaboratively with a commercial company and the Government and – when at its peak – was being run in 36 prisons in England and Wales, with more across Europe (Cisco, 2011). However, when Ozzie was moved to HMP Swaleside, the PICTA project was no longer running. He was therefore unable to continue with the accredited qualifications which he had started through this project elsewhere. Similarly, Christopher began studying for his GCSEs whilst he was in HMP The Mount, as part of a specific project which supported students in a classroom environment to complete a range of GCSE courses. Despite finding it ‘quite a challenge’ Christopher felt that it was ‘definitely achievable’ and he was committed to these studies as he ‘wanted to do something that [he] never got to do’. However, when he was moved to a different establishment, this opportunity did not follow him and he was therefore unable to complete these GCSE courses.

These inconsistencies in provision and delivery, and the interrupted programmes, are just some of many *interruptions* in the educational backgrounds of these students, replicating those experienced by many in their school years through exclusion or interaction with the criminal justice system. Both Ozzie and Christopher found programmes that they were keen to complete, that connected with both their past experiences and their future aspirations, yet the functioning of the prison system worked to interrupt their completion. These experiences demonstrate that without a commitment to being able to follow through particular courses, 'innovative' projects, when operating in a system where regular upheaval moves prisoners from one institution to another, can further embed negative experiences of educational systems.

Institutional hurdles are not the only barriers which can cause interruptions when situating learning careers within a prison environment. For example, Dan was already enrolled on an Open University Access course in the natural sciences when he began serving a prison sentence. After working hard to organise getting the prison in touch with his tutor outside, it was arranged that he would be able to continue the course whilst incarcerated. However, his trajectory was interrupted through an extensive and emotionally draining trial:

I didn't get to finish it coz I was in an 8-month trial and I got caught up in it... it exhausted me, literally. And it was going on for 8 months, I had no time whatsoever to finish it. I think I submitted like 4 of the 6 modules. And that wasn't enough sadly.

(Dan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The lives of those in prison are often filled with such institutional trauma exacerbated by the functioning of the criminal justice system itself; prison-based educational trajectories do not operate separately from these. Dan's experience is just one example of how the lives surrounding a prison sentence can create an intensely challenging emotional environment for successful study.

(Self) Exclusion

Again reflecting the narratives which were well rehearsed across the breadth of the prison in Chapter Four, students of the Academy, and residents of the wider wing, found that they were excluded from the provision and successful completion of educational opportunities within the prison through a number of pervasive mechanisms.

For some students, the availability of the courses were restricted due to their status as unsentenced prisoners. Nathan, for example, explained the impact on this for him:

I was engaged in nothing when I got here. Because I'm actually on a recall at the moment, so I don't have a sentence plan. I don't have much that I'm required to do.

(Nathan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

With a shortfall of over 200 available places across the work and education opportunities within the prison (HMIP, 2016), unsentenced prisoners without a sentence plan - such as those on recall or being held on remand - fall further down the priority list and are less likely to be allocated a role.

Other situations which excluded prisoners from education related to concerns around safety, and particularly perceptions that attending any off-wing educational opportunities would render themselves vulnerable to attack from prisoners on other wings in such spaces (or when travelling through the prison to reach them). Jimmie was a prime example of this in action, an A Wing resident who stated that he rarely left the wing because 'you never know what can happen in jail'. It was understandable that Jimmie did not 'feel comfortable' leaving the wing – not only because of the violent reputation of the prison, but because he had previously been attacked 'en route to education' in a different establishment. Being able to secure a job in the servery and then as a cleaner on the wing, Jimmie was able to avoid going off the wing

as part of his daily routine. However, this spatial self-exclusion prevented him from accessing educational opportunities located elsewhere in the prison.

Individuals also discussed decisions to effectively exclude themselves from the formal work of the Education Department at Swaleside because they found little challenge in the opportunities available to them there. This fits in with discussions in the previous chapter regarding the lack of differentiation within the traditional 'learning offer' within the prison, which means it is not well-placed to be appropriate for all learners or potential learners across the prison (or the estate). Mackenzie found that despite beginning to enjoy a course in the Education Department, the inflexibility of the course structure and course leaders made it impossible for him to move at the speed he felt able to and, as a result, he voluntarily removed himself from the course:

[It was a] decent little IT course. I started doing that, and I was just saying, 'this is easy for me, if you're going to make me do this let me try and progress quickly'. They didn't want to progress me fast enough.

(Mackenzie, Open Academy Student, Interview)

For others, the exclusionary experiences developed through the frustratingly slow speed at which such processes happened. 'It takes forever', said Zackariya, an Open Academy student. 'I thought I'd come straight over here [to A Wing for the Open Academy]. At least I'd be doing something. I was going a bit stir crazy just sitting in my cell'.

These experiences build on the picture developed through Chapter Four of some of the ways in which institutional provision of education were experienced by some as exclusionary. It is important to note that many of the narratives expressed above are not associated with the type or style of delivery of the education provision; rather, they are associated with wider prison institutional practices or issues which work to exclude individuals from education.

A starting point and stepping stone

Despite the negative experiences expressed above, the utility and function of the education provision in the prison estate was reflected upon favourably by some students, which served to provide a distinct and differentiating feature when compared against narratives of compulsory school education. As discussed earlier, Ozzie and Christopher both experienced positive opportunities through innovative education delivery in the prison environment. However, with an inability to complete these programmes, their value was ultimately reduced.

For some students, the qualifications that they received whilst incarcerated were the first that they received after finishing school with no GCSEs. For Darren, Carl and Christopher this was the case and, as such, due to the minimal level education requirements for the Open Academy, these provided an important stepping stone on their current trajectories.

However, this utility was limited as many students reported repeating courses and completing courses well below their ability as 'it was a requirement for the [prison] job that [they] wanted to do' (Ryan, Open Academy Student, Interview). Ryan here thus describes his experience of such education in functionalist terms, limited in its utility to within the narrow confines of the course of prison employment and as a necessity to endure so that he was able to go onto something else.

Through this exploration of interviewees' experiences of education to date, the above discussion has demonstrated the ways in which experiences of education in prison have at times replicated the negative elements of interviewees' experiences in school. This educational portrait of the interviewees shows both shared disadvantage but also important diversity, all of which worked to shape their individual learning careers which follow them into the culture and community of the Open Academy. The following section will now go on to outline the practices within the Academy and the ways in which they intertwined with these individual journeys to shape the framework of the cultural space of the Open Academy.

5.3 The formal and informal study practices of the Open Academy

The cohort of Open Academy students can largely be distinguished into two categories; i) those who were enrolled on *formal* educational courses being studied through distance learning; and ii) those who were not enrolled on such a course but who frequently used the space to study in an *informal* way, using the resources of the Academy and accessing support through the peer management structure. The latter approach, a model developed by the Academy managerial team, is termed within the Academy and throughout the remainder of the chapters here as the '*Self-Study*' approach to learning. There is an overlap of students in terms of their engagement with these two types of study; some students are involved in just one of these (i.e. formal *or* informal), whereas others choose to engage in a combination. Over time, and for reasons which are addressed below, students' engagement with each of these modes of study shifted.

Of the 28 Open Academy students at the time of initial interview recruitment, 16 were part of this research project (for a full discussion of the methods involved in the sampling, see Chapter Three). Ten interviewees were enrolled on formal distance learning courses from external providers at the time of interview, some completing Self-Study practices alongside these courses, with the other six involved solely in Self-Study. Of the interviewees who were currently completing formalised distance learning courses, the most popular topics consisted of business courses with another large cohort completing social science courses, particularly sociology. This reflects wider trends in the provision of further and higher-level courses in prison, with *Business Start-Up, Level 3* and *People, Work and Society*, a social sciences Open University Access module, being the two most requested courses to Prisoners' Education Trust in 2016 (PET, 2017). Seven of those enrolled on full distance learning courses were studying at Level 3, the equivalent of an A Level course, which for most (five) consisted of an A Level, whereas for two students this was a practical Level 3 course. The remaining three students were conducting higher-level courses at undergraduate degree level through the Open University.

In the early development of the Open Academy, the resources were intended to be made available solely for students already enrolled on distance learning programmes. However, despite there being over 100 distance learners within the prison - as reported by the prisoner mentor responsible for supporting prison-wide distance learning (Fieldnotes, May 2016) - there were only two formal distance learning students on A Wing at the time of opening of the Open Academy. The Open Academy managerial team therefore developed the Self-Study model as a way of widening the Academy provision. As one of the Open Academy prisoner peer managers¹⁷ described:

I thought to myself, 'Well, if you're not on a course, what's stopping you from actually learning from just reading from a book?' You're not gonna get a qualification but you can still read, you can still learn, you can still *develop some power*.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

For this interviewee then, the purpose of the introduction of the Self-Study option for students moved beyond the pragmatic and created a space for students and potential students to engage with the benefits of 'empowering' forms of education.

The informal format of the Self-Study programme permitted Academy students to select a resource that they were interested in (such as a textbook from a Level 3 Psychology module) and sit with the Study Manager, a prisoner-held role, and plan a strategy to work through the resource. Together they decided targets (such as read a chapter in one month) and ways to demonstrate meeting these targets (such as written notes). This study-planning document was intended to make that student accountable to those aims, and the study manager in the position to take action should these aims not be met. In the following extract from an interview with a peer manager, he described the intended function and purpose of the Self-Study framework:

¹⁷ In order to protect the anonymity of the Open Academy peer management participants their pseudonyms have not been used where it could lead to identifiability.

Self-Study [has] been designed for people who are not on a course, so they're not actually involved on an A Level, or whatever it is, degree. But they are reading Open University level modules, current modules and learning and developing skills for themselves... So it gives them personal knowledge. The structure of it, so we can see things are being done, is just by evidencing work, that's all it is... You're expected to work through the tasks of the book as if you were actually on the module.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

The Self-Study approach thus offered students the opportunity to *rehearse* 'studenthood' and formalised learning practices – concepts which are further considered in the following chapter – in an informal manner in the semi-formalised setting of the Academy. The peer manager then went on to outline the ways in which the interrelationship between the attributes of informality and formality of the model worked together, specifically in terms of developing the confidence of those who have had the unsettled educational careers to date described above:

People can develop their own, academic knowledge, ability, but mainly their confidence, and their self-worth... A lot of people sit there and say, 'Oh I would like to do a degree but the last time I was in school was ten years ago, and I'll never be able to do it'. Well actually you're looking at degree material now... If you applied to do a Level 1 module that's exactly what you'll get in the post – 'oh' – and all of a sudden they see they can do it.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

The Self-Study model, then, was developed out of a pragmatic necessity to broaden the reach of the Academy beyond that of current distance learning students, but was grounded within an understanding of the experiences and hurdles facing many

potential students. Through this, it presented a model of education which coupled formal and informal attributes to both address the needs and nurture the possible vulnerabilities of potential Academy students.

The informal Self-Study route into the Open Academy was also repeatedly identified as a useful and important means of navigating and negotiating the web of complex frustrations and barriers that often stood between the potential learner in prison and completion of the formal education enrolment processes. As noted elsewhere in this chapter, students frequently criticised the time it took to join a course within the Education Department. The process at HMP Swaleside through which an application for distance learning was processed, however, was often equally, or more, lengthy. There are a number of individuals and organisations involved in the process and with challenging communications systems within prisons, the processes can take many weeks. To begin with, the prospective student must speak to a member of the National Careers Service (NCS) based in the establishment, who will be able to provide them with an application form. Once this has been completed, the NCS team member must get official sign-off from a member of the Education Department before the application gets signed off by a member of the security team. Following this it will be sent to the Prisoners' Education Trust who meet monthly to assess applications for funding. Provided the paperwork has been completed correctly the response is then returned to the prospective student who, if successful, will then receive the course documents from the course provider. Throughout this process a number of hurdles can arise through poor communication or stretched resources. When asked if NCS are involved in the work of the Academy, a peer manager replied:

Yeah, they have to be. Because obviously, being a prisoner we can't do the official forms. One they kind of have to do and they send off to PET [Prisoners' Education Trust] off their email, etcetera, etcetera.

Interviewer: So are they down in A Wing regularly?

No. I'm quite disappointed in them. Coz they only do 2 days a week. Obviously they're working around the prison as well. So we really don't see them.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

As this peer support manager highlights, the resource made available through the National Careers Service (NCS) was restricted; throughout the research period there were two members of staff, each working at the prison one day per week. Their role required them to be moving around the prison and following up on many issues and enquiries. Yet as the peer manager clearly outlined, the role of NCS was central to the administration of distance learning within the prison estate. The Skills Advisor framework (the cross-prison team of education mentors discussed in Chapters Three and Four) was set up to reinforce the administration and support of distance learning across HMP Swaleside, yet as the above interviewee noted, there are elements of this process which are necessarily ones that NCS staff 'kind of have to do'; that is, that such endeavours are impossible without the support of these gatekeepers of learning opportunities, and that limitations on their resources have significant ramifications¹⁸. These staff members then played significant parts in what could be termed the *educational infrastructure* of the prison, a phenomenon which relied on the systems and processes operating around the prison in order to support the practices of education in the prison. This concept will be revisited in Chapter Seven and Eight.

Unlike the formal distance learning route, the Self-Study model did not require the processes of application or reliance on internal and external gatekeepers described above. As such, the Self-Study programme allowed students to circumvent many of the barriers to prison-based higher-level learning. Instead, all that was initially required to access the Open Academy as an official student was to be enrolled through the Activities Department. However, once living on the wing, students were able to

¹⁸ This perhaps makes it all the more important to note that the Ministry of Justice recently - and quite unexpectedly - decided against renewing the contracts for NCS within prisons in England and Wales, which has left many prisons across the estate without careers advice and guidance, or this vital service for distance learning administration support, since the 31st March 2018 (Prisoner Learning Alliance, 2018).

use the resources outside of their allocated Activities time slots, thus further cementing the Academy's Self-Study programme as a means of circumventing the many prison-enforced hurdles to higher-level learning. It also offered a means of learning engagement for those who were disinterested, or perhaps physically unable/unwilling, to engage in a formal educational programme. Aaron, for example, became interested in psychology since he had a mini-stroke. His mobility around the prison became reduced and he experienced unusual psychiatric symptoms. His interest was thus piqued in this area but he felt that he was now 'too old' to embark on more formalised studies. Thus, with such flexibility in access to resources, this informalised approach to study was, for Aaron and others like him, a means of providing sufficient academic stimulation when the application and academic structures around formalised study were neither attractive nor necessary.

For many students, however, Self-Study provided a route towards the formal enrolment onto a distance learning course. It therefore was able to provide an opportunity to continue with study whilst being held up in the application process for a distance learning course described above. Discussing his choice to get involved in Self-Study, Darren stated that he had initially notified the prison of his intention to study for a distance learning course but 'nothing came back'. Officers who chased his application were unable to find any information, and he therefore decided to engage with the Open Academy through Self-Study; 'I was just waiting to start the course in my eyes', he said (Open Academy Student, Interview). Darren saw the practice of Self-Study as a largely informal process and practice. For him, the practice was about 'just reading a couple of books, business books, psychology. Whatever interested me, I would read it'. Thus, the gap that it was filling for him was the liminal period prior to the commencement of his formalised studies. Darren's narrative was indicative of a number of students' experiences who found the resources and model of Self-Study to be a means through which they could fill the gap and the extended time period associated with securing a distance learning course, while maintaining their motivation and interest in learning and study.

5.4 Joining the Open Academy: Motivational 'push' and 'pull' factors

The motivating factors that guided students to the Open Academy, and the initial interactions that directly led them there, were diverse, situated, and personal and can begin to shed some light on the role that the Academy played in the trajectory of their learning careers. The following discussion will borrow from the organising language of Hughes (2012) in outlining some of the factors which acted to 'push' potential students towards the Open Academy and those which 'pulled' them away. In her analysis of the motivating factors and disincentives for distance learners in prison, Hughes separates these into 'personal', 'prison-based' and 'the influence of others', yet recognises the multitude of ways in which these interact and overlap. In exploring the motivations of the Open Academy students, the categories which have been identified, and which thus frame the following discussion, are i) *Educational and aspirational 'push' factors*, ii) *Social and aspirational 'push' factors*, and iii) *Institutional 'push' and 'pull' factors*.

Within this organising framework, the discussion also features the Bourdieusian language of *capital*, as a means of helping to make sense of and understand the production and reproduction of 'culture' within the Academy. Bourdieu (1986) posits three forms of capital which guide the shape of an individual's position within a culture; 'economic' (material wealth), 'social' (the network of relationship and connections an individual has) and 'cultural' (the knowledge, education and skills which provide social advantage) capitals. Building on these ideas within the specific context of the prison, Owen et al. (2017) identify distinct forms of 'capital' which are built through the carceral environment. They develop a framework built upon the concept of 'prison capital' to describe the survival mechanisms of women in American prisons, the features of which include social, human, cultural, emotional and economic capital. Champion and Noble (2016) further utilised ideas of building capital with specific regard to the purpose of education in prison. Alongside the recognition of 'knowledge, skills and employability', 'wellbeing' and 'culture', the model adopts the language of 'human capital' (conceived as both 'motivations to change' and 'moving

forward’) and ‘social capital’ (involving ‘belonging and community’ and ‘active engagement’) in framing an understanding of the roles that education can play in a prison and for a prisoner. These concepts provide an important lens through which we can view the motivations of students who came to join the Open Academy.

5.4.1 Educational and aspirational ‘push’ factors

For some students, the premise of the Open Academy was attractive due to how it could support educational practices that they were already engaged in, or had previously been engaged in. Carl, for example, had previously been a distance learner at another prison. After completing this course he was now seeking to enrol on another. The Open Academy gave him an opportunity to engage with these studies differently:

To me, it’s not what led me to education, it’s what I was doing anyway, what I wanted to do anyway. That just gave me more facilities and more resources.

(Carl, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The Academy therefore appealed to his strong existing student identity. Carl had a history of achieving qualifications prior to prison – he passed his GCSEs despite being ‘always in trouble’ – but had recently dropped out of a course in the Education Department as he disliked the teacher and he felt that he ‘talked down’ to him. He therefore wanted an opportunity to study on his ‘own terms’, something that the Open Academy could provide. He is now engaged in Self-Study whilst he applies for funding from Prisoners’ Education Trust for a distance learning course.

Dan, too, had a strong interest in being involved with distance learning and higher education when he entered the prison. As described above, he was enrolled on an Open University Access course when he entered the prison system on this sentence, which was interrupted through an extensive trial. He first heard about the Academy

when he was going through the reception process at Swaleside and stated that he was immediately interested.

I always wanted to get back into the OU anyway from when my access course kind of crumbled basically. I wanted to get back into it. So when I heard about A Wing I knew this was where I wanted to come.

(Dan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The way in which Dan and Carl thus describe their introduction to the Open Academy appears to present a type of dormant educational aspiration which was invigorated through the opportunities promoted through the Open Academy. For Carl, his trajectory had been hindered by negative relationships and experiences within the prison education system. However, through this he had learnt about his preferred studying style, which was not set within a classroom environment, and he was therefore looking for a way to rehearse a self-directed form of learning. For Dan, his interrupted studies continued to be something that he wanted to complete. Becoming a part of the Open Academy had been a route to maintain motivation and practical and administrative momentum ('[the peer managers] have been so supportive'), in moving forward with his established educational plans.

5.4.2 Social and aspirational 'push' factors

The aspirational motivations for joining the Open Academy reached beyond the strictly academic and development of formal or informal educational knowledge or skills, yet can still be seen as developing education capital. One such additional aspiration was demonstrated through prisoners helping in developing the Open Academy as well as the framing and delivery of provision. The day-to-day manager of the Open Academy was a prisoner, not a staff member, and was involved from an early stage. He lived on the wing at the time of the initial development and states that his first conversation regarding his position happened as the supervising officer in charge of transforming the wing had initially suggested his suitability for the role, based on an awareness of his existing commitment to self-directed learning. He recounted with

pride how his increasing educational capital was acknowledged by one member of the Senior Management Team, who remarked:

I met [member of SMT] who said 'oh yes I've seen you walking around with trigonometry books' and I said, 'yeah that's me - super boring, that's me!'.
I met [member of SMT] who said 'oh yes I've seen you walking around with trigonometry books' and I said, 'yeah that's me - super boring, that's me!'.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

Prior to his involvement in the Academy, this individual had been involved in higher-level distance learning whilst in prison, studying through the Open University. The attraction to higher-level education and this 'trusted' management role appeared to be associated with a developing social and cultural capital, thus elevating his position in the hierarchies within the wing, rather than educational. Indeed, this interviewee stated that, due to the time pressures involved in running the Academy, he had since paused his distance learning Open University degree so that he could concentrate on developing a smooth running Open Academy initiative. This social capital thus formed a substantial 'push' factor in the attractiveness of the Open Academy educational initiative.

The breadth of the benefits that the peer management reported through their roles is discussed in the following chapter. However, it is important to note here that the aspirations associated with this peer manager in becoming a part of the Academy were beyond that of developing the form of educational capital which is defined by qualifications and speaks more to developing the type of social capital which can be further conceptualized as part of the 'prison capital' framework of Owen et al. (2017).

It was during the induction process that Joey first came across the concept of the Open Academy, which at this stage had yet to open:

It was kinda hearing another prisoner talk passionately about something that was gonna help other prisoners. There was a thought

process for me... It was something new. If you can do education that's run by prisoners, it's better than working at DHL where you can have a future doing what? As a shelf packer. And that's not what I want. I don't want to be big headed, but I'm more intelligent than that. My goals are much higher than that.

(Joey, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Joey's motivations and ultimate goals in joining the Open Academy, then, were not centred on developing a particular form of educational capital or identity, nor was educational knowledge the driving force behind this.

Further, and significantly, Joey also describes his motivation as emanating from the peer led framework for the management of the model. Inspired by the passion for 'generative' approaches to supporting other prisoners - that is, acting with a concern or care for something outside of oneself (Maruna, 2001) - Joey distinguished this project from the other work that was available to him at this point. A striking message from the tone of the interview was the gratitude that he had for the Open Academy Management Team (and the prisoner lead in particular) for the aspirational opportunity that this had afforded him. He remarked that he rose to hold a key role within the Academy not long after living on the wing as 'they put a lot of faith in me, even though they didn't know me.' The impact of this role on Joey is discussed further in the following chapter.

The above narratives have provided examples where the opportunities for the development of social *capital* became initial motivating features of the Open Academy for some students and particularly those in management positions. However, a further form of motivating force within the theme of social and aspirational push factors extended beyond the institutionally determined 'prison capital' described above. For Mackenzie, his aspiration to progress his education, and thus his initial involvement with the Open Academy, was motivated by a wider social aspiration. Mackenzie had become increasingly interested in issues surrounding the oppression of black people

in society. As a young black man from a deprived area in south London, he had become impassioned by the reading that he had been conducting and the documentaries that he had been watching, which argued that structural oppression continued to impact in ways he previously had not considered:

I watched a DVD on black history, yeah, and after I watched that I was, I don't know, I felt inclined to educate myself. I just felt like I can't just be a quote-unquote 'stupid nigger'. I need to fix up and do something right. So I started trying to study sociology because of that same DVD. It kind of influenced me.

(Mackenzie, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Through this awakening of his sociological imagination, he had become determined to share these messages with others that he had grown up with and those that are from the same area, who he describes as being trapped in the culture and society that previously entrapped him.

But I've clocked, like, black people, they don't want to hear nothing you've got to say unless you can say, 'here's the evidence, here's the proof, I've got credentials, listen to what I'm saying'. So that was what motivated me to actually want to gain the qualifications themselves.

(Mackenzie, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Mackenzie lived on A Wing as the Open Academy was being developed – he was 'one of the first' students of the initiative – and he became involved in the Academy whilst he was waiting for his distance learning course to arrive. Through Mackenzie's experience, we can see the interrelationship between the Open Academy and motivations to study at a further or higher level. We can also see the way in which these can germinate from socially generative positions.

5.4.3 Institutional 'push' and 'pull' factors

The functioning of the prison system, the regime and other institutionally-bound factors worked to either push or pull students and potential students to the Open Academy. Relationships on the wings around the prison is one example of a force that can both push and pull. For Aaron, an overarching motivation to move to the wing was the deterioration of inter-personal relationships on his previous wing. He reported that he was being bullied and ultimately felt unsafe in this environment. He was therefore 'pushed' off the previous wing and onto A Wing, home to the Open Academy. However, this push factor was combined with the pull factor that he had a close family member already on A Wing and involved in the Open Academy who he was keen to be closer to. Nathan also described a push factor through pre-existing relationships on the wing, a 'peer' who was able to 'pull the strings' to get him onto the wing quickly. Wider relationships, both within and beyond the Open Academy, can therefore form important motivating factors, both pushing and pulling students and potential students into the Open Academy.

A number of the newer members of the Academy, and the prison, reported that the most influential factor in their request to go to A Wing was the messages of the Open Academy being shared at induction. Similar to the ways in which Joey had discussed the inspirational impact of a 'prisoner talking passionately about helping other prisoners', Joey himself went on to take this role and inspire and motivate others coming through the same route as he did, as Elliot describes:

After [Joey] told his whole story, I was interested. And he told everybody, 'yeah if you want to have first chance', after his speech he said, 'yeah you can give me a shout'. And that's what he's done. He give me all the time what I needed, no rush, no hurry no nothing. He explained me everything.

(Elliot, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Elliot's praise for being able to take his time yet noting the significance that Joey has done what he said he would do, resonates through the narratives of many who first heard about the Academy through the induction process. This positive finding of the powerful role of Open Academy peer mentors contrasts with the negative quantitative finding (discussed in chapter 4) of the prisoner experience of learner reps across the prison. This serves as a reminder that the Open Academy operates as a learning site within a wider culture and how the practices contained here may be in contrast to those elsewhere across HMP Swaleside.

A final institutional *push* factor, that is a factor which left students with very few other options than to become involved in the Open Academy, was related to the type of incarceration which students were being held under. Nathan, for example, was in prison on recall. This excluded him from other activities within the prison. The most recent HMIP (2016) report showed that there was a shortfall of over 200 spaces for prisoners in activities and as such, it is often felt that those who were without a required sentence plan, such as those on recall, would most certainly be excluded from these activities. Similarly, the benefits of this being a wing-based initiative had very practical implications for some students who were restricted in their movements for any reason. For Aaron, who had been bullied on a previous wing, this meant that he did not have to leave the wing, where he felt a sense of safety.

5.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the Open Academy and the students studying within it. A diverse yet largely challenging set of experiences of previous education is represented through the cohort, which has been shown to frame the distinct meanings of the education and learning happening within it. It has shown that previous experiences of educational trauma can be repeated through experiences of education in prison and that these experiences cannot be separated from other forms of institutional trauma associated with criminal justice and imprisonment. It has gone on to demonstrate the

practices of the Open Academy, which incorporates both formal distance learning practices and informal practices of Self-Study. The chapter has argued that there is an inherent value in the Self-Study model, beyond its utility as a gateway for further study. Indeed, some of its value derives from the administrative, educational and symbolic challenges of distance learning by this cohort in this prison. By taking these individual and institutional characteristics of the Academy together, the motivations students gave for becoming members of the Academy can become positioned within this situated understanding of their lives.

Chapter Six

The Open Academy at its best: Creating an ‘oasis’ and supporting ‘studenthood’

6.1 Introduction

Chapter Five provided a picture of the individuals who made up the Open Academy cohort, seeking to make sense of their experiences and begin to situate their learning careers, drawn out through their previous educational experiences, motivations and their initial interactions with the Open Academy. Through this discussion, the chapter sought to develop an understanding of the learning careers (Bloomer and Hodkinson, 2002, 2013; Gallacher et al., 2002) that shaped the trajectories of their education and learning which led them to the Open Academy. Conversely, this chapter turns to the situated understanding of the experiences of the students within the cohort, developed in the previous chapter, and begins to understand this layer of the ‘learning culture’. It is an analysis which draws on areas of relevance to the development of learning cultures identified by Hodkinson et al. (2007) including (but not limited to): the inter-relational ‘positions, dispositions’ of the students and those around them; the ‘location and resources of the learning site’; what is being learned; and (building on an understanding developed through the prison-wide research discussed in Chapter Four), the ‘wider vocational and academic cultures’ (Hodkinson et al., 2007: p. 29) present within A Wing and HMP Swaleside more generally.

With regards to the structuring of the current chapter and that which follows it is worth pausing here to note the reasons for separating the material on the Open Academy experience into when it worked well (this chapter) and when it did not (Chapter Seven). This framework was predicated on the striking dualisms across the data which typified interviewees’ presentation of the Academy, with both high praise and deep criticism present *in each individual interview*. This split narrative characterised all responses, without exception: from those given by students of the Academy, to those that worked within the Academy, through to those that resided on

the wing but did not study within the Academy. In order to capture the meaning and nuances of this apparent dichotomous reality of the Academy, the following chapters will address these distinctions in turn. This chapter will therefore begin this part of the analysis by reporting 'appreciatively' the 'sources of life and energy' (Liebling, 2001: 163) operating in the Open Academy when it was 'good', and when it had the potential to be at its best (although as discussed in Chapter Three, this research was *inspired by*, rather than strictly adhering to, the appreciative methodological tradition). Here, the focus is primarily on these ideas as they apply to, firstly, the Open Academy as a 'third space' in the education and learning landscape of the prison, and secondly, in supporting the development of 'studenthood' identities among learners in the prison.

Through this appreciative analysis, three key conceptual mechanisms emerged which are used here to indicate the core 'functions' of the Open Academy which facilitated potential and actual positive outcomes for individuals in the prison. These were: (i) a *motivational* function, which denotes the practical and emotional ways in which the Open Academy worked to motivate and support students to learn; (ii) a *symbolic* function, which operated through the presentation of self and which was keenly related to the senses of identity and the 'positioning' within and away from the prison environment; and (iii) a *transportive* function, which operated through providing a space distinct from other spaces within the prison. Each of these themes overlap throughout the elements discussed within this chapter and shall continue to be drawn upon throughout.

6.2 Positioning the *space* of the Academy

Understanding the spatial dimensions of education in prison is a relatively new endeavour and one largely missing from the traditional sociological exploration of the prison. Significant developments in this regard include Crewe et al.'s (2014) analysis of the 'emotional zones' of a prison. They argued that some spaces of education can become 'marginal spaces' or 'intermediate zones' which fitted neither the 'frontstage' nor 'backstage' analysis that dominate prison spatial analyses. In these spaces many

of the 'normal rules of the prisoner society were partially or temporarily suspended' which allowed for a 'broader emotional register' than elsewhere across the prison (p. 67). Wilson's (2005) application of 'third space' theory to prison literacies further frames a spatial analysis of the understanding of learning and education in prison. Through an understanding of space as something beyond the binaries of 'autonomous singularity' or 'social multiplicities', Wilson argues that literacies are developed in prison through the uniqueness of each individual and the social meaning that they bring to create a 'third space'. Based upon this work, the following section will explore the 'space' created through the Open Academy and the mechanisms through which this is achieved.

The situated nature of the Open Academy is framed by its positioning on a wing within the prison, separated physically and in practice from the Education department. However, the 'space' that it creates moves far beyond this. As Nathan describes below, the Academy, at its best, provided something akin to an 'oasis' for some inhabiting students; a 'fertile spot' for new ideas, new practices and new identities within the rest of the prison, which is often characterised by oppressive and restrictive practices which work to deny the agency and autonomy of those residing within it. This section describes and analyses the ways in which the resources of the Open Academy were received and utilised, and the ways in which it succeeded in forming a space apart from the rest of the prison for those operating within it.

6.2.1 Resources and environment

As has been discussed throughout this thesis, a central barrier to the engagement in, and completion of, further and higher education in prison is the hurdle to access resources. Access to textbooks, educational technology and wider study resources, as well as allocated study time, are hindered through a web of policies, practices and limited resources. In light of this, the academic resources which shape the content of the Academy becomes central to meeting the deficits not addressed elsewhere in the infrastructure of education provision in HMP Swaleside, which is repeated elsewhere across the prison estate. The consideration of 'location and resources' has been noted

by Hodgkinson et al. (2007) as crucial in making sense of any given learning culture; perhaps nowhere is this more true than within the restrictive confines and limited resources of the broader carceral estate. It is therefore important to note that the volume of donated Open University resources was experienced as unique and overwhelming and the resources were received by those prisoners in the initial processes of shaping the Academy with disbelief, joy, and gratitude. As Mosi explained, upon being told that the books had arrived, he had 'no idea what to expect. I honestly thought it was gonna be maybe a couple of shelves load of books'. During the interview, he recounted his surprise and shock when he walked into the room and saw 'the whole floor covered with books (laugh) up to sort of chest high – it was like, woah!'

This initial excitement resonated through interviewee narratives. As has been noted in the previous chapter, the visibility of these resources for those who reside on the wing was an important *motivational* and inspirational mechanism in the initial interests and recruitment of residents who ultimately became involved in the Open Academy. Yet as Mosi goes on to explain, it was not simply the sheer volume of books, but the breadth of intellectual study that it represented which inspired many students:

We had a *lot* of books man - I couldn't believe it. When me and [the wing's Supervising Officer] went down there the first time we went [for hours] - we didn't get back to the wing till like 6 o'clock coz we were so engrossed in all the books, we were just digging through them! We saw sciences, we saw maths we saw arts we saw history, we saw everything. We thought this is gonna be great!

(Mosi, Open Academy Student, Interview)

In response to a specific question regarding his best experience since being involved in the Open Academy, Dan, who had been consistently denied access to materials related to chemistry - a subject that he was determined to study but which was

consistently blocked by the prison - highlighted the importance of the breadth of resources, hitherto unavailable to him:

I think [the best thing about the Academy is] all the textbooks that's available. Definitely... The variety, the given course that I'm looking into. That's just the vast amount of resource that they have.

(Dan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

These books thus became significant 'artefacts' in the creation of the space of the Academy. A cultural artefact is a 'material object' which is given cultural meaning through the way in which it is used to form part of a culture. That is, it does not hold any significance 'beyond that which they acquire through an abstract and socially accepted system of distinctive features and constitutive rules governing the ways in which they may be used' (Watts, 1981: 19). Yet, as Hodgkinson et al. (2007) remind us, 'the meaning of artefacts and institutions is not completely malleable' as actors within a culture always operate within 'systems of expectations' (p. 419). As such, the meaning of these artefacts – the role that these resources ultimately play in the construction of the cultural space of the Open Academy – becomes negotiated through both their enduring and essential meanings *and* the ways in which they are used by the actors of the space. The books and resources of the Academy, which Mosi and Dan here show to be important signifiers by their very presence, are returned to throughout the chapter as their usage (importantly, beyond that of basic study practices), plays central *symbolic* roles.

The creation of visually stimulating and learning-led environments is now a multi-million-pound industry across non-custodial sites of higher education. For instance, in 2012 the University of Manchester (at a cost of £24 million) opened their new 'learning commons', designed to offer a 'world-class 21st century study space' and 'stimulating focal point' for learning (University of Manchester, 2012). Similarly, the University of Birmingham (2016) recently opened the doors to its new Main Library, which promised students a 'transformational experience' with 'state-of-the-art' facilities

(costing £60 million). Similarly, shifts in the building and conceptualisation of prisons have resulted in innovative approaches to prison design. Historically, there has been 'little attention' paid to the 'emotional or affective geographies' of the prison, and scant critical consideration of the ways in which prison design and construction – often hindered by tight state budgeting – consistently creates problems in the estate (Moran, Turner & Jewkes, 2016: 419). However, in recent years carceral geographers have begun to focus on the importance of prison design and the links between the architecture of such institutions and the lived socio-emotional experience of living and working in such spaces. Such work has identified the ways in which features of the carceral space – including the furnishings, lighting, and other 'aesthetic' items – have been found to 'encourage personal and intellectual creativity' (Moran & Jewkes, 2015, cit. Hancock & Jewkes, 2001: 170). However, although this may significantly influence upon the experience of a prison-based space, 'open, colourful, flexible spaces' – as we shall see in Chapter Seven – are not necessarily as 'liberating' as they might superficially appear to be' (p. 178).

Despite this cautionary note, many of the interviewees referred to aesthetics – particularly the cleanliness and colour/design of the walls – which so demonstrably distinguished the environment of the Open Academy from elsewhere in the prison, and from the rest of the wing. Elliot, a Self-Study design student with limited previous experience of education prior to this, stated that the Academy was his favourite place in the prison:

You know they make the study rooms nice, they painted them nice.
It's not like the other places - everywhere in the prison, you walk around and it's dirty and everything. But the Open Academy, you walk around and everything is proper clean. Tidy. It's nice to sit in this kind of environment.

(Elliot, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The physical environment as one that is clean and tidy contrasts with Elliot's experience of other places around the prison and, as such, signals a level of respect for the Academy that he has not experienced elsewhere in the prison. On a similar note, the bright colours, selected to differentiate this space from others around the prison, work to frame the space for Elliot. Similarly to studies noted above exploring the impact of colours and other design features on the experience of carceral space (e.g. Moran, Turner & Jewkes, 2016; Moran & Jewkes, 2015), this bright design feature became an important element of the environment for students of the Academy.

Equally important (*symbolically*, at least – see Chapter Seven for a conflicting discussion) was the provision of a designated space on the Open Academy that was designed to be dedicated to technologically-enhanced learning, through the use of 15 brand new computers which were set up within the room. Prior to the installation of these computers, infrastructure work was undertaken in order to give these computers access to the 'Virtual Campus'; a nationwide secure intranet system operated by The Open University which would allow prison-based learners to view audio-visual material, take part in module quizzes and interactive activities, complete assignments and contact tutors (The Open University, 2018). Punitive limits on technology continue to characterize the experience of higher level learners in prisons across the country and internationally (see, for example, Champion and Edgar, 2013; Farley and Pike, 2018) and as such this was, in theory, a unique and exemplary resource. This fact was evident in the responses of the learners to the computer room, with many noting that the 'use of computers' (Ozzie, Open Academy Student) was a central motivating feature of the Academy.

In summary, it can therefore clearly be seen that the resources underpinning the Open Academy not only provide access to studies and study materials that would otherwise be unavailable in the prison context, but they also operate as symbolically significant and signify important cultural features of the space.

6.2.2 A space characterised by ‘madness’ (i): A Wing within the context of Swaleside

Throughout the research, an enduring negative reputation of both HMP Swaleside and its A Wing became clearly apparent. This was reflected by senior management staff involved in setting up the Open Academy - who described the wing as ‘lacking in identity’ (Fieldnotes April 2016) - prisoners living in other wings around the prison, and staff working around the prison. Tyler, for example, reflects on a conversation with the officer who allocated his residing wing on entrance to the prison:

She said, ‘you don’t want to go to A Wing, my darling’. She said, ‘I’ll put you on C Wing’. But I said I wanted to go to A Wing - they were probably looking at me thinking, ‘this guy ain’t going to do well on A Wing’.

(Tyler, A Wing Resident, Interview)

The reasons behind Tyler not being seen by this officer as a person suitable for this particular wing may be built upon a wide range of overlapping cultural features. He went on to say:

A-wing is more-, it’s not black or white, what colour you are, or how big you are. It’s just one of them wings where it is like a little community already... basically [you’ve] seen this skinny white guy, and I’m saying, ‘yeah, I want to go to A-wing’

(Tyler, A Wing Resident, Interview)

We can see from Tyler’s reflection that race and ethnicity, despite protestations that it is not framed as a ‘racial thing’, appear to feature in this construction of the ‘community’ of the wing. This interaction, Tyler’s reflection of how he was framed by a member of staff as not suitable for a particular wing, is reminiscent of Goodman’s (2008) study of reception centre practices in two Californian prisons. Goodman outlined a number of institutional practices which upheld the informal racial divisions of the prison, including the talk delivered by officers on entrance wherein staff

directed newly admitted prisoners to find ‘your people’ to understand the cultural processes of the institution.

However, despite race appearing as an important structuring narrative in this assessment of suitability for the wing, Tyler also refers to indicators of a particular type of masculinity which he does not embody as a ‘skinny white guy’. As Ricciardelli et al (2015) argue, ‘muscularity, physical prowess and ability are valued signifiers of power, dominance and manliness among prisoners’ (495). Thus, this ‘community’ of A wing appears to be, at least in Tyler’s reflections, framed by a racialised, masculine, ‘community’ which determines its suitability for some, and excluding others. Underpinning these references are implicit suggestions that may appear to associate these cultural features with other structuring features of a prison wing, such as higher levels of violence.

A troubled reputation played a central part in framing the set up and initial stages of development of the Open Academy and impacted on some individuals’ views about the potential success – or more likely, the failure – of the initiative. As Mosi described, senior management had told him that the Academy would ‘only be open for people that are living on A Wing, so we will need to get all the students around the prison moved to A Wing’. Knowing the reputation of A Wing at that time, he remarked that he thought to himself “this guy is absolutely mad, because nobody wants to come to A Wing. Back then, no-one wanted to come here” (Mosi, Open Academy Student, Interview).

As outlined by staff involved in the early development of the Open Academy, the wing was selected as the space to house this initiative in part *because* of this reputation:

It’s a wing without purpose. It’s seen as a dumping ground. It needs *something* to have a positive influence.

(Organising staff member, Fieldnotes, April 2016)

This played a dual function in the initial framing of the utility of the Academy. On the one hand, it was sought to challenge the enduring reputation of the wing which had manifested partly as a result of its lack of ‘identity’. Due to other wings maintaining a more specific purpose than the wide-reaching ‘general population’, prisoners who met these range of criteria were generally sent to reside on these wings (see Chapter Three for a discussion of the population breakdown of the residential wings). On the other hand, as is clear from Mosi’s description above, this made the task of developing and communicating the attractiveness of the Academy an even greater challenge as it was competing against the persistent prison-wide reputation of A Wing. Despite the difficulties of this undertaking, this juxtaposition heightened the potential impact of the Academy. This point can also help to demonstrate the utility of Hodkinson et al.’s (2007) ‘learning cultures’ theory, as it makes clear the importance of any ‘vocational or academic culture’ outside of the learning culture being studied. The accounts given by interviewees lend themselves to the assumption that outside of the Open Academy, the wider culture was less favourable – and perhaps even proactively hostile – to such academic ventures.

Indeed, the reputation of the prison itself preceded many interviewees’ first-hand experience of the prison:

Yeah. I heard rumours that it was supposed to be a bit rough here but I thought it was worth it for this.

(Interviewer: So where had you heard these rumours from?)

Other inmates... In here. And in [another local prison], everyone said that it was really rough. It was basically, like, the last man walking when I told people I was coming over here. Even my bloody physio. I had a physio appointment the same day, because I hurt my leg before I came in. He was there saying, ‘ah, they’ve been locked up for ages, it’s really horrible over there, they call [the prison] “

Slash-side''. And that was from somebody that actually works here.

But, wow.

(Zackariya, Open Academy Student, Interview)

For many, then, the reputation of the prison framed their expectations when moving over to Swaleside. This was exacerbated as, due to its nature and category of the prison, every interviewee was already in the carceral system before they arrived at Swaleside, with time for its reputation to have impacted before arrival.

Despite the reputation of the prison, and indeed the particular wing on which the Open Academy is housed, being characterised overwhelmingly as one of violence, the lived experience of the wing was described with a multitude of characterising features. It was undeniably the case that for many of those interviewed, violence – either direct or indirect experience, both visible and invisible, both threatened and real - was a defining feature of daily life on the wing. In response to the question, 'How would you describe the day-to-day atmosphere on this wing?' many respondents turned first to the issue of violence. For example, Christopher (aged 28, Open Academy student), who had served seven-and-a-half years of an IPP sentence¹⁹ in some 20 different prisons, was clear that A Wing at Swaleside lived up to the reputation that preceded it:

It's known as a violent prison, init? [...] Listen I've been to 20 different prisons over my life. I've done previous sentences before in my life in 20 different establishments, but 15 I'd probably say that I've been there and lived in. I would say, yeah Swaleside, I've seen quite a lot of violent stuff here.

¹⁹ The imprisonment for public protection sentence (IPP) is a form of indeterminate sentence introduced in 2003 (with effect from 2005). The sentence has a 'tariff', which is intended as the proportionate punitive element, and lasts until the Parole Board judges the prisoner to be no longer a risk to the public. The sentence was widely recognised as deeply problematic from the outset, putting impossible demands on the resources on the prison system and Parole Board and forcing prisoners to 'navigate their way through a system of Kafka-esque complexity' (Jacobson and Hough, 2010: 51). It was abolished in 2012, yet as of December 2017, there are still 2,884 individuals serving this sentence (MoJ, 2018).

(Interviewer: In comparison to other prisons?)

100 per cent.

(Christopher, Open Academy Student, Interview)

However, despite violence being described as a central feature of the day-to-day experience of the wing, very few interviewees related this to having been a direct victim of physical violence. Rather, it was *witnessing* violence and navigating the cloud of its constant threat which shaped this particular element of the climate of the wing. Elliot, for example, describes A Wing as more violent than the previous wing he was on, the induction wing, and claims that violence and drug dealing was rife, yet he coped with this as 'I see it but I keep away from it'. Edgar and Martin (2001) argue that although descriptions of prison culture recognise the ever-present threat of violence, they 'rarely explore the consequences of fights and assaults for the prison as a community. They say little about how the extent and threat of victimization structure social relations among prisoners' (p. 5). To demonstrate one such implication of violence on the 'social relations' of the 'community' of the wing, Mackenzie, who had in fact been a victim of a violent attack on the wing during the research period, described the way in which this has changed his presentation of self on the wing:

I won't show no one my back out here. I have to stand against the wall. I have to see everything. Yeah, I don't trust it... I used to be chilling. I'd be cutting through in my bathrobe, big spliff hanging out of my mouth, not watching or nothing. Now, I'm not getting high... You're not catching me buzzing out of my nut so you can knock me out or try to kill me again.

(Mackenzie, Open Academy Student, Interview)

However, when exploring the culture of a wing or a prison, elements of the importation model dictate that a wider appreciation of the lives outside of the prison help to situate the reality on the wings (cf. Irwin, 1970; Irwin and Cressey, 1962), an approach which echoes the 'learning cultures' focus on wider fields of influence (Biesta et al, 2008; Hodkinson et al, 2007). As such, it is important to recognise that such violence may not be too distinct from residents' lives outside the prison walls. In describing his experience of the violence of the wing, Zackariya states:

Oh, it's been fine. I understand what people say but, to be fair, most of the people that told me those reservations haven't been from London. For me, this is just like London. It's just London life, really.

(Zackariya, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Unknowingly echoing the language and concerns of carceral geographers, Nathan suggested that part of the disjuncture between perceived violence on A Wing and the seemingly lesser experience of this in reality might have been a result of the "open-planned" versus closed design and "different layouts" (i.e. style and shape) across different wings at the prison. In the main, however, his perception is that the chaotic and violent reputation of the wing had little traction in his own experience:

I don't find it any different [from the rest of the prison], really. Officers are pretty much the same, the prisoners are pretty much the same. It's not much different, to be honest with you.

(Nathan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Through this discussion, it has been argued that the Open Academy is situated within a wider context of both threatened and experienced violence, on a wing characterised as such, within a prison whose violent reputation precedes it. Yet the Open Academy sought to create something quite distinct from the experiences discussed above. Nathan himself acknowledges this, drawing a line between his perceptions directly

above, likening A Wing to other wings across the prison, to those of the Academy, which he describes as an 'oasis'.

6.2.3 A space distinct from the 'madness' (ii): The 'oasis' of the Open Academy

As the above section has demonstrated, for many, A Wing itself – the broader location of the Open Academy – was a space that was characterised by some of the more challenging elements of living within the prison culture. It is where issues of violence and safety, respect and relationships were described as particularly fraught. In stark contrast, the Open Academy was described as a distinct space within this broader culture of fear, threat and violence, as an ambient space imbued with a sense of calm missing from elsewhere within the prison:

(Interviewer: How do you generally feel when you're using this space to study?)

I generally feel calm, relaxed. The ambience is already set. I feel relaxed coming in here. It's open as well, it's spacious. The books alone keep you interested. Yeah, it's a good feeling. It is.

(Nathan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The sense of 'calm' and 'relaxation' which Nathan reports provides a stark contrast to the 'madness of the wing' outside the Open Academy, as described by Mackenzie and demonstrated above. Through a closer exploration of the meaning of this we can begin to unpick and understand the reasons that the concept of 'safety' did not quite hold together in the quantitative elements of the study discussed in Chapter Four.

Nathan, who was 27 years old and had been on A Wing for seven months by the time of his interview, had specifically requested to be moved there from another wing in the prison to become involved in the Open Academy. He was a Self-Study student at the Academy, meaning that he was not formally enrolled on a distance learning

course. His narrative indicated that he utilised the Open Academy because of what might be described as its *transportive* function; that is, it was a space which allowed him to transcend the experiential walls of the prison and, through learning, escape in his mind to the outside world, stating: ‘in the cell you feel caged in, but here, in the Open Academy? Your mind can escape in here’ (Nathan, 27, Open Academy student).

Having left school with no GCSEs, Nathan’s educational history was mired with exclusion, behavioural disorder diagnoses and referral units. At the time of his interview, he was being held in Swaleside on recall²⁰, and as such did not have a sentence plan. This therefore meant that he was denied access to many of the elements of the regime. Without an opportunity to work or engage in the Education Department in the prison, the Open Academy was therefore perhaps uniquely positioned to provide a positive opportunity for someone in Nathan’s precarious ‘liminal’ position, facilitating engagement in something productive during this difficult element of his sentence. Indeed, with full employment or education not always possible within Swaleside, with a shortfall of around 200 spaces (HMIP, 2016), this level of exclusion from meaningful activity could fall on any prisoner within the prison, not just those bound by their sentence status.

Darren also described his feelings about the Academy within the language of ‘comfort’, with particular reference to the structure through which it is run; being led by fellow prisoner-students. Here it becomes clear that the ‘oasis-like’ space of the Open Academy was not solely related to resources, artefacts and aesthetics, but also in terms central to the learning culture theory of the relative ‘positions, dispositions and actions of the students [and] the tutors’ (Hodkinson et al, 2007: 417), who in this case were from the same ‘peer group’. Darren explicitly identified the role of the peer mentors and their prisoner status as central to the ‘comfortability’ of the Academy

²⁰ A person can be ‘recalled’ to prison if they have been released on licence or parole and then are found to have broken the rules of their probation requirements. There are three types of licence requirement: fixed, standard and indeterminate, but all have been argued to impact negatively on the recalled person’s well-being and sense of legitimacy in the system (Digard, 2010).

learning culture, particularly in contrast to how he perceived the culture and atmosphere might differ had these roles been taken by prison officers:

(Interviewer: Do you think it would change what happens in the room, if [the person in charge] was [not a prisoner]?)

It's more comfortability, isn't it? Its more comfortable than having an officer just sitting there reading a newspaper or something. Because, obviously, them lot are probably doing courses themselves. The prisoners relate more. You can talk about courses, this and that. You can talk about whatever, life, you know what I'm saying? Talk about whatever you want. With an officer it's just one dimensional. Just do what you're doing, kind of thing.

(Darren, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Through the descriptions from both Nathan and Darren it becomes clear that both the physical environment as well as the *relational* aspects of a space frame its potential to be experienced as 'comfortable'. Yet this 'comfort' can operate through and manifest in different ways as demonstrated through Darren's description of his studying practice. When asked to identify his favourite place to study, his short and immediate response was 'My cell'. He continued:

Yeah, must be just my cell, just the comfort of it. You can spend as much time as you want doing it, so you're not rushing.

(Darren, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Similar to Darren, Mosi - who was studying for an open degree with the Open University - also reported that his studies were conducted largely in his cell:

I think it's because, identifying the time I best study. So my comfort zone is me studying by myself, no distractions, and the only time I've

got that is when I'm in my cell. You've got to bear in mind I started studying a long time before the Open Academy came up. So that was sorta my routine and what I done.

(Mosi, Open Academy Manager, Interview)

For Mosi, then, his learning 'comfort zone' was framed not simply by the available resources, nor the relational and social distinctions in the spaces of his cell and the Open Academy, but also by the temporal nature of the Academy and where it fit within his more established routine and narrative as a student in prison. Mosi here returns us to an important issue raised earlier by Darren: the sense of control over time and the choices that are being made within it are key determinants of the experience described as 'comfort'. And although it was the case that the Academy was more 'comfortable' than other learning spaces around the prison (as seen when Darren states that the environment here is much better than the Education department for these very reasons), it is worth reflecting that it was unable to improve on the solitude and focus offered by study in an isolated cell. What can be ascertained through this discussion of 'comfort' and the Open Academy is that there were many layers to this concept and a multi-faceted relationship between it and the experience of a strong, positive, supportive learning environment. The factors that are associated with the development of comfort and comfortability are thus: the physical environment, particularly due to the *symbolic* function held by the particular efforts to draw distinctions between the Open Academy and the rest of the wing, the ability to develop relationships built on mutual trust and the development of a place with a clear 'purpose'.

It is therefore clear that the function of the Open Academy - particularly in terms of the comfort that it provides and the space that it forms in the world of these students - operates beyond the practical and did not necessarily represent the student's ideal study space. This is because the space represented different things to individuals within their own specific experience of the learning culture within the prison. For Nathan, his cell represented a place where his mind was trapped, something that was

remedied by the spaciousness of the Open Academy. Yet for Darren, the comfort and relaxation that was provided by the Academy serves a different (primarily social) purpose, preferring the purely autonomous world of his cell to conduct his studies. These accounts are interpreted as being broadly indicative of the *transportive* functions of the Open Academy.

6.3 Rehearsing and supporting ‘studenthood’ identities

With these features constructing a space that is framed by comfort, relaxation and a space to rehearse the social elements of *studenthood*, the previous section makes clear the ways in which the Open Academy was shaped and operated in stark contrast to the rest of the wing which, as described above, was characterised by mistrust, volatility and the constant threat of violence. Although the benefits of this in the creation of a bounded emotional zone (Crewe et al, 2014) have been discussed above, it would be remiss (in terms of a cultural analysis) to stop the description there. As James and Biesta (2007) make clear, efforts to understand any given learning culture of a site require a recognition of the porous nature of these phenomena, as well as accepting that ‘a learning culture is not the same as a learning site’ (Hodkinson et al, 2007: 419), since the latter is likely to have clear and definable boundaries, while the former does not. Taking a cultural approach to understanding the Open Academy thus recognises that not only are these people and practices situated within the spaces around it, but that those that *move through* this learning culture indeed ‘produce and reproduce’ the culture that it becomes. As Hodkinson et al note (2007), cultures are ‘produced, changed and reproduced by individuals, just as much as individuals are produced, changed and reproduced by cultures’ (p. 419). In this specific context, this means acknowledging that the phenomena that manifest in the rest of the wing do not stop at the door of the Open Academy, just as the culture of the Open Academy is not solely restricted in all ways to that specific physical space. As Hodkinson et al (2007) observe, the ‘fields of force’ at work within learning cultures tend to ‘spread well beyond the site itself’ (p. 421). This acknowledgement is not only pertinent to what follows in *this* chapter, in terms of the more positive aspects of this experience,

but also relates to the following chapter, in terms of the potential dangers of cultivating a 'comfortable', relaxed learning environment such as the Open Academy, where (academic) vulnerabilities are drawn out under the guise of a *safe* environment, within a broader culture of violence and mistrust.

The presentation of studenthood in the community contrasts with the framing of studenthood within carceral settings. Bound by a deficit of resource, community and support, the experience of studying at a higher level inside prison can differ significantly from experiences outside (Hughes, 2012; Nichols, 2016; Pike, 2014). The framing of 'studenthood' can vary from the practical, formal and administrative to embodied conceptions of identity (Biesta, 2010). It is to this that this chapter will now turn in order to demonstrate the ways in which the Open Academy functioned to support these varying types of 'studenthood' in the students affiliated with it. These are conceptually framed in terms of allowing students to (i) exercise *autonomy*; and (ii) develop '*learning communities*'; and (iii) facilitate '*cultural bleed*'.

6.3.1 The Academy as a space for rehearsing *autonomy*

It was significant for many learners interviewed here that the space of the Open Academy was removed from the normal practices of both the wing and of the Education Department. Alongside the ways in which the Academy functioned in terms of a physical environment and the respectful use of the space, students also reflected regularly on the role that this sense of individuality and autonomy (including, but not limited to, being able to choose what they studied and how) played in shaping their experience and understanding of a student identity. Darren explained how this sense of autonomy acted in practice in the Academy:

Some people doing their work, you know what I'm saying? Some people prefer working at different times of the day. Some don't really like working in the morning, whatever. It's good that you can just do whatever floats your boat.

(Darren, Open Academy Student, Interview)

This notion of a carceral space where students feel that they are free to ‘do whatever floats [their] boat’ operates in stark contrast to the learning cultures in alternative spaces of education within the prison system, as reflected in Chapter Four in the prison-wide narratives of learning and education. The significance of this ‘relaxed’ space – which would, in education literature, be couched in terms of the value and empowerment of ‘self-directed learning’ (cf. Merriam, 2001) - was outlined by Dan:

You’re on your own time, on your own terms. You could do it for ten hours, you could do it for three, two, stop, start. It’s your own space.

(Dan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

A central mechanism in the operation of self-directed learning within this autonomous space was through the day-to-day management being run by prisoner peer mentors. The way in which the Open Academy thus subverted the traditional power dynamics of the prison went beyond that of the prisoner and the prison officer and reached out into a rejection of the hierarchical spaces of education classrooms. For instance, Zackariya described primarily negative experiences of the learning culture within the Education Department of the prison in particular its rigidity and formality, and the focus on functional skills. He found that this left scant opportunity for self-directed learning of the sort that empowers rather than disempowers students. For him, the best thing about the Academy was being able to study and learn ‘on your own terms’:

But [unlike Education], when I came here, and they said you could do it-, and the way you could do it, on your own terms, and you could just get the material and teach yourself. That’s what I like best about it, and what drove me, probably, to do it.

(Zackariya, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The opportunity to exercise such autonomy was thus, for Zackariya, a central attraction, a motivating feature and a fundamental framing of the learning processes

taking place within the Open Academy, and represents a beacon of personal choice and responsibility within an institution which has traditionally sought to restrict and crush autonomy (the 'deprivation of autonomy' being one of the long-recognised 'pains of imprisonment') (cf. Sykes, 1958). It is also worth considering here that in supporting autonomy in this manner, the Open Academy – knowingly or unknowingly – can be considered to be at least partially working that which Jack Mezirow identifies as the 'cardinal goal' of adult education; the development of 'autonomous thinking', which cannot be achieved without 'fostering self-direction' and creating an environment in which learners 'become increasingly adept at learning from each other and at helping each other learn in problem-solving groups' (Mezirow, 1997: 11). Not only this, but it appeared to offer an existential affirmation of 'worthiness' to some of those who used the Academy. For example, Nathan described receiving the workbooks from the Open University as engendering the feeling that he was 'actually doing something with my life'. This point was reflected across the interview cohort; that is, that the Academy offered the opportunity to be autonomous and proactive and to take ownership over an element of one's life which could be beneficial in one's future. Set within an environment with many restrictions and hurdles - both those structurally intended and those arising as collateral consequences of a dysfunctional regime (see the following chapter for an extended discussion of this) - students reported that outside of the Open Academy, they experienced limited levels of opportunity to influence their current and future selves in a positive way.

Self-directed use of the space, which was framed by the collective standards of respect, maintaining quiet and comfort and supporting each other in their studies, permitted the Academy to be a place whereby their autonomous decisions on studenthood (within these boundaries) were constructed and rehearsed by Academy students, rather than defined and imposed from a more rigid external structure.

6.3.2 Identity shifts: 'becoming' a student

The cultural approach to understanding learning that has been adopted throughout this thesis recognises that the process of learning is one which is possible in any

situation and is a constant communication between the 'nature of the learning culture and of the position, habitus and capitals of the individuals, in interaction with each other in their horizons for learning, as part of a field of relationships' (Hodkinson et al, 2008: 41). There is always a possibility of learning; whether that learning be deemed superficial or significant is a value judgement which is beyond the discussion of the process of learning itself. The metaphor most appropriate for this understanding, one which recognises the embodied and holistic nature of these learning processes and the centrality of this concept to the individual's ultimate sense of identity, is that of 'becoming' (Colley et al, 2003; Hodkinson et al, 2008; James et al, 2007). In the words of Hodkinson et al, 'learning as becoming only ends when we die' (2008: p. 41). This section demonstrates the ways in which the Open Academy fostered such processes of 'becoming'.

Through the mechanisms that have been explored throughout this chapter, it becomes clear that through the rehearsal of the type of studenthood made permissible and desirable within the Academy, students were able to shape elements of their identities into positive ones associated with their role as students, with the cautious reframing of their 'master status' (cf. Hughes, 1945) into something away from that of 'prisoner'. For some Open Academy students, their sense of self had previously been more closely related to identities of studenthood prior to the disruptive shifts in 'master status' associated with incarceration, or earlier in their prison and education trajectories. Nichols (2016) argues that some people in prison are motivated to engage in education as a strategy to maintain such an identity. This indeed was another role played by the rehearsal of studenthood and therefore another position that the Open Academy played in relation to the identit(ies) of those working within it. For example, Dan (an Open Academy Self-Study student) had a strong pre-established interest in science prior to his incarceration. He stated: 'it kinda consumed me, I was all about science'. The numerous barriers which he faced in continuing his studies, including a disruption to his Open University Access course due to an extensive trial (as discussed in Chapter Five) and an inability to enrol on a formalised chemistry distance learning course, meant that the resources in the Academy provided his sole source of engagement with this part of his identity. Being

able to use the Academy to do this became ‘the most important thing for [him]. Literally.’

Christopher: *almost* a distance learner

Christopher’s trajectory, however, is of particular interest here, because this account of his ‘becoming’ and his developing studenthood is one of *almost* becoming a distance learning student, and what this tentative, threshold experience meant for him. His journey of ‘becoming’ demonstrates the role the spaces and practices of the Open Academy had in his wider learning career and confidence in moving towards an identity of a student. In a shift from the majority of the findings presented here, and in the traditions of both education studies and the sociology of deviance, Christopher’s experience is taken as a case study – a technique supported by Maruna and Matravers (2007) – as a means of exploring in depth the experience of those within the criminal justice system, and in this specific case, of one prisoner’s experience of the learning culture within the Open Academy in supporting the development of his fledgling ‘student’ identity.

Christopher came to prison with no qualifications and had previous experiences of education characterised largely by exclusion, experiences of failure, and a sense of unfulfilled potential. Since being in the prison system, which he first entered as a juvenile (which has a different weight of focus on education), Christopher achieved his Level 1s and 2s in maths and English. Whilst residing in a different prison, he became involved with music and music production, which he enjoyed, but similar courses were not available in HMP Swaleside. Elsewhere he was also able to begin a range of GCSE studies taught in a full class format provided through the Education Department. However, he was subsequently transferred from this prison to another establishment which did not support the delivery of this type of qualification. This terminally interrupted these studies and prevented him from completing the courses.

Christopher was first excluded from school whilst he was in a primary school. He was soon moved to a school specifically for those with educational and behavioural

problems (EBP) which he attended intermittently until approximately the age of 14. Christopher had been living on A Wing prior to the development of the Open Academy initiative. As he saw it develop, he found that it “appealed to [him]” and felt that being involved in further level study would be “achievable” for him. He began to use the Open Academy space and started reading a number of the available resources, engaging in a Self-Study approach to studying sociology.

Christopher disclosed that he wanted to work with children in the future, inspired particularly by the helpers that had supported him in his EBP school, and in order to do this felt that he wanted to “get to know the social environment”. As he states:

I know that we all know from our eyes but there’s also from all different aspects... the way that you look at the world and the way that I look at the world are two different things innit. [Sociology] was the nearest thing that could sum everything up. While I want to work with children in the future, I can start looking at it in a different angle.

(Christopher, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Through his sociology Self-Study he continued this interest, developed his confidence in his ability to ‘achieve’ and applied to Prisoners’ Education Trust for funding for a sociology A Level, which he was awarded.

Throughout the time that the research was being conducted, Christopher became an increasingly visible student of the Open Academy and would make use of the Academy space whenever possible. He would often walk between his cell and the Academy with his distance learning course books underarm. However, despite receiving his course materials months before, at the time of the formal interview Christopher had still yet to open the seal on the course (something which was required in order to begin the studies) or contact the potential tutor or formally become enrolled:

I haven't opened the seal. So if it goes on for another month or two and I don't do much more I might give it back because there's no point wasting the resources.

(Christopher, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Instead of starting with this course whilst he was in the Open Academy, he continued to read around the topic, selecting books to continue his Self-Study of sociology without undertaking formal studies with a recognised qualification. When pressed further as to why this was the case, Christopher revealed many layers of anxiety from numerous areas of his life which fed into the barrier that he experienced in getting started on his A Level. The overarching, central feature of this was the uncertainty that came with his sentence. After serving seven-and-a-half years of a 5-year IPP sentence, and with an upcoming parole hearing in the following months, much of Christopher's mental energy was taken up by establishing how to navigate the stresses and strains of this uncertainty – which Jewkes (2005) refers to in terms of 'the pains of indeterminacy' – making him less confident in his ability to complete the programme. Yet he also spoke with trepidation about the way in which other concerns interacted with this. For example, he expressed a lack of confidence that this course was "the right one". He took comfort in carrying on with the Self-Study that brought with it no chance of incomplete studies or failure. Despite not opening his own distance learning course, Christopher went on to become a peer mentor in the Education Department.

Through Christopher's experience, then, we are able to see his developing capital as a student through the informalised processes of Self-Study. The resultant shifts in his identity, and indeed his confidence, emanated from an opportunity to safely rehearse his studenthood. We can also see that in the case of Christopher, the threshold of becoming a student was not bound up in a preoccupation of completing a formalised course. It was not even inextricably tied to beginning one. This shows the real significance of the informal, peer led Self-Study programme and has important implications for how success and progress should be measured in these processes.

6.4 The Academy as a space for developing learning communities

The data indicated that the Open Academy was 'at its best' when it functioned as a 'learning community', echoing the shift away from the individual in the analysis of learning and education, which is at the heart of a 'learning cultures' approach. Such a shift in analytical focus further characterises a wider movement at the turn of the century, away from 'the century of the learner' (Kilpatrick et al, 2003). Theorists, influenced by a more 'situated' approach to learning (Billett, 1996; Brown et al., 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991), moved towards concepts of community as fundamental concerns in the understanding of processes of learning.

The practices described by Open Academy students demonstrate the tentative development of what Lave and Wenger describe as a 'community of practice' (1991; Wenger, 2010 - see Chapter Two). Communities of practice are 'groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.' Building upon this framework, Wilson et al (2004) identified a number of features which facilitate the creation of *learning communities* as communities of practice. These features are shared goals; safe and supportive conditions; collaboration; respectful inclusion; progressive discourse toward knowledge building; and mutual appropriation (2004: p. 5). Developing from the above discussions which have begun to show how the Academy reaches some of these conditions, such as the safe and supportive conditions for Christopher to develop his studenthood, this section goes on to demonstrate further the ways in which the Open Academy fostered learning communities.

The nature of the development of this learning community is described here as 'tentative' because of the temporal limits on the extent to which the community could become embedded. According to Wenger, developing a 'repertoire of resources... through its history of learning' is central to a community developing its 'social history of learning' (1998: p. 2). This is necessarily developed over time, something which the Academy has yet to achieve. Further, the challenges addressed in Chapter Seven are key to understanding the limits of the community development.

What follows therefore examines the experience of learners at the Open Academy through the 'learning communities' lens with a focus on three key aspects of life at the Academy which represented this learning community 'at its best': firstly, *aura and camaraderie*; secondly, *finding inspiration*; and thirdly, *support through similarities*.

6.4.1 'Aura and camaraderie'

As the discussion in section 6.3 above has leaned towards, the benefits that students outlined of the Open Academy when functioning at its best could best be described as *relational* and *interactional*. This aspect of the learning community that was developing within the space took on further significance as a defining feature of the Academy itself. In an extract reflecting many student narratives, Dan explains that it was the "aura and the camaraderie between the prisoners having the discussions and the debates" that distinguished the Academy from other learning spaces in the prison. He noted that the restrictions to the use of the Academy (to be discussed in Chapter Seven) were not detrimental to individuals in terms of their capacity to learn because "people could easily do their studying behind their doors". However, what cell-based learning could *not* offer was other learners and the reason that Academy students were so "frustrated" with the access limitations was "that they miss the very things I said - the camaraderie, the discussion, the atmosphere in the room, the jokes", adding "as well as the studying" as a seeming afterthought (Dan, Open Academy Student, Interview).

Here, then, Dan outlines a central mechanism of the Academy, repeated across the narratives of many student participants; that is, while the studying itself was supported through the opportunities of the space, particularly with resources and time dedicated to the purpose of study, this was frequently secondary to the sense of *belonging* that came with being a student of the Academy. This 'camaraderie' thus frames the rehearsal of studenthood, creating the safe and supportive environments for interactional knowledge building, central to the development of a learning community.

6.4.2 Finding inspiration

The conceptualisation of a situated learning community works to reduce the significance of hierarchical and didactic relationships in the learning process. Rather it focuses on the peer level, horizontal relationships and the learning processes that occur in the interrelationship between these (Lave and Wenger, 1991).

The development of role models, and the processes of role modelling, emerged as a significant theme in understanding the developing community within the Open Academy. When discussing who he speaks to about his experiences as a student, Nathan states:

There is one particular guy that I do, because he is-, I think he's actually doing Spanish now, but he was doing something else before. And so he's got past that first initial grind-, now it's second nature to him. I actually look to him for inspiration, because he's doing it. He's gone through what I've gone through and I admire him for that. He's come from the same background. Not everybody wants to take this step.

(Nathan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

For Nathan the significance of relatability in the person he selects to discuss his course with is evident here. It was clear that he saw his fellow student as 'inspirational' because Nathan was able to see himself – also a man in prison with 'the same background' – as having the potential to *also* succeed, and that what was inspiring was knowing that he too could overcome the 'initial grind'. It is the presence of their shared life experience which meant that Nathan's fellow student represented an aspirational, informal role model, and a proxy for Nathan's *own* chances of success.

Role models were also created through the peer management team, both in terms of the management structure, but particularly due to the traits and qualities of the individuals in those roles. As Elliot describes;

[This member of the peer management team] is putting all his heart in it. You can see it. He likes it. He wants people to study. And I can see it if somebody does something with passion I like the person... Now I want to become a skills advisor as well. Let me do something for other prisoners... It gives me motivation.

(Elliot, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The 'passion' and dedication of the peer management team were consistently cited as 'inspiring' and highlighted as significant motivators in students' studies. They can therefore be seen as central in shaping the horizons of the learning community.

Further, the impact of this role on the peer management members themselves became an important outcome of the Open Academy initiative. This peer manager – who was described by a fellow peer manager within the Academy as the 'biggest success of the Open Academy to date' – explained what he has taken from his role in the Academy:

I've spent a year trying to build this up. Personally I'm so proud of myself for what I've achieved. Not with my education but with my personal- my confidence and stuff like that. And like I've looked after so many students who I didn't think I'd ever talk to. I've made people smile, I've made people happy, and I've made people's family proud of them. That can never be taken away from me.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

His sense of pride here emanates from the 'legitimate contribution to the world' that his peer supporting role has allowed him to deliver (Deville, 2005: p. 231). A significant

part of his developing identity, the role has allowed him to be both inspired and inspiring to others within the community of the Open Academy.

6.4.3 Expanding disciplinary horizons/cross-fertilisation

An important feature of the Open Academy, and one which renders it distinct from other constructed learning communities (which typically focus on a particular topic or, at the very least, tend to be located within the same disciplines) was that the learning at the Academy transcended disciplines, levels and even formality of enrolment. This meant that purely by the process of presence, students were expanding their knowledge and interest across a broad range of subjects and issues, resulting in a sort of learning that was often removed from their own area. Denoting the application and benefits of the Open Academy beyond the progression through a discrete course of study, Joey reflects:

In general, I've learnt a lot more [being here than studying alone]. Not through this [course] or whatever *but what I've learnt from other people*. That's the good thing about the Open Academy. Even though I'm not studying maths or I'm not studying psychology or sociology, you do pick up little bits.

(Joey, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Such relational elements of the development of studenthood for Joey are also significant in the development and maintenance of the learning community that was being developed within the Academy. Clearly it was not only processes, practices and identity of studenthood which were strengthened through the Open Academy, but – as Joey notes here – that the multidisciplinary approach of the space served to create opportunities for a *cross-fertilisation* of ideas. Through a community which is not bound by a discipline or a level, it is possible for students within the academy to experience their learning more holistically, through exposure to a range of academic areas.

However, other students felt that the multi-disciplinary nature of subjects in the Academy actually restricted the potential and utility of the space. For instance, Darren argued that “there should be more emphasis on similar people that are studying similar things”:

Instead of having somebody studying Spanish over here, maths over here, IT over there, try and fit it together. If there were three people that do business a lot, you could get them all out [of their cells together]. You could use their ideas how to study - new studying, or whatever, new topics and that to talk about. [That would] better the experience.

(Darren, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Darren here points to another significant feature of a learning community, that the practice around which members converge is suitably narrow for them to share in an experience that sets them apart from others (Lave and Wenger, 1991). However, the natural coming together of students on the same or similar courses had begun to happen within the space (Fieldnotes).

Through these experiences of the learning community it is possible not only to see the practices of the Open Academy but to also see its potential through the eyes of the students. However, and as will be explored in the following chapter, the tentative ‘learning community’ of the Academy was – like many educational institutions – dominated by hierarchical politics and exclusion.

6.4.4 Setting the boundaries of the learning community

Students discussed the development of exclusionary criteria for those who had chosen to use the Open Academy and met the criteria set by the prison, but were not seen to be appropriate for the space. Students distinguished between those who were ‘serious learners’, such as themselves, and those who were not. Many stated that there were a number of ways in which non-serious learners were identifiable; they

may 'try and then just fall off' (Dan, Open Academy Student, interview) or they may be distinguished as 'there is probably only about four or five people on each wing that sit in their cell and actively study' (Mackenzie, Open Academy Student, Interview). Nathan outlines the relational role that is demanded of Academy students:

The other day when you came into the room, there's not many people, and that's because most people wasn't serious. But the people who are there, they want to work and they help each other out and they interact.

(Nathan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Hughes (2000; 2012) argues that distance learners in prison are the educational 'elite', distinct from the general population through their educational endeavours. Through Nathan's comments, which echo the reflections of many others distinguishing themselves from other students within the prison, a new type of 'elite' can be seen, particular to the learning culture of the Open Academy. *Acceptable* studenthood in the Open Academy is framed not only by being a distance learner (particularly as many are not formally enrolled on a distance learning course); it also requires a purposeful motivation and, significantly, the social demands of supporting others and interacting. This is in contrast to the 'bedlam' that Nathan describes occurred at points prior to the embedding of the community boundaries within the Academy; 'People were shouting, screaming, eating, smoking. There was a lot of things going on and no one was really working'.

Student reflections, such as these, on what constitutes the right *type* of student for the environment and the community of the Open Academy were reflected and reinforced by the perceptions and actions of the peer management team. The language of 'rules' and 'boundaries' are prevalent throughout Mosi's narrative:

The rules are set, well in essence they're kinda set by me. And within those rules, again, I guess there's boundaries, and... on my watch,

they don't get crossed. ... it's tailored to how I like it... If you're unhappy about it, stay outside. It's simple.

(Mosi, Open Academy Student, Interview)

This language and approach is one that developed over time. At the beginning of the research period, Mosi spoke more of inclusivity and efforts to make the space as accessible and inclusive as possible (Fieldnotes, March 2016). At the time of interview (approximately half way through the research period), this had been overtaken by language which denoted the significance of developing firm boundaries and having 'solid and direct' expectations that required policing. This appeared to reflect, at least in part, a fierce protectionism that had developed in response to the growing threats to the space which are discussed in the following chapter.

Taking on the responsibility to both decide the rules and police those who were abiding by them or not, denotes a powerful position in the hierarchies of the space. These 'rules' are different to those set by the prison, who simply require a demonstrable minimum of Level 2 academic standard and to be living on the wing. The development, interpretation and application of these rules have thus emerged as cultural developments of the Academy. The criteria for acceptance into the learning community, as seen in Nathan and Mosi's comments above, is shaped by the cultural presentation of the students. Attitude, perceived motivation and relational qualities far outweighed the qualifications that students held or were seeking to acquire.

6.5 The Academy as a space for facilitating 'cultural bleed'

The final aspect of the Open Academy 'at its best' discussed here can be understood in relation to its potential to achieve a positive 'cultural bleed'; that is, the transference of specific cultural 'traits [...] into neighboring cultures' (Price, 2002: 33). The above section has outlined that the tentative development of a learning community occurred throughout the research period. This section responds directly

to the research question seeking to establish the porosity of the boundary created around this community and the extent to which it could be said that this fed into the wider consciousness and practices of others on A Wing.

Tyler was serving a five-year sentence, the longest he had received following a number of smaller sentences. He is not a student at the Academy, but resides on A Wing, wherein the Academy is situated. He described his experience of HMP Swaleside as an “eye opener” and found it particularly challenging to find himself in “a lifer’s prison with guys younger than [him]”. In discussing the “madness” of the extreme length of sentences being served on the wing (“The guy over there, he is 22 and he’s got the same sentence as your age - 22 years, and he’s only 22. It’s mad”), Tyler appeared to exhibit what could be considered a sense of *vicarious* ‘temporal vertigo’; that is, the ‘dizzying’ feeling of disbelief at sentences which often exceed the years that the individual serving them had been alive (cf. Wright et al, 2017). It was in the context of being surrounded by such extensive sentences that Tyler positions what he viewed as one of the most positive aspects of the Open Academy:

Trust me, it’s mental. You’ve got stuff like this Open Academy [...] You got me, ten months left. And - I *will* do it [study at the Academy] but it’s not my main priority. But these guys on long sentences that actually want to prosper in life and go and do something, learn something [...] they actually *want* to do this.”

(Tyler, A Wing Resident, Interview)

The visibility of the Academy to those like Tyler – an initiative that facilitates the practice of higher level learning and in doing so supports students to ‘prosper in life’ – adds an additional level to the cultural milieu of the prison which he was seeking to make sense of. He spoke as though impressed by the resilience and the tenacity of students seeking to ‘do something’ meaningful and positive in their lives, despite the ‘life-trashing’ (cf. Simon, 2001) length of their sentences.

There is evidence that the availability and visibility of the practices taking place within the Academy were impacting upon other non-student residents of A Wing and their perceptions of, and willingness to engage in (particularly higher) education, and distance learning courses more specifically. Accounts attesting to this suggest that the intended positive 'cultural bleed' of the Academy was indeed becoming a reality. For instance, when Francis arrived at the prison, he applied for several courses within the formal Education Department. However, upon hearing about the Open Academy during the induction process, he applied to move onto A Wing, despite received wisdom regarding the wing's violent nature. Since residing on the wing, Francis had applied to Prisoners' Education Trust to study a law GCSE and at the time of the interview, was awaiting a response. His motivation to, at some point, join the Academy was positioned against the hectic Education department (where not everyone attended through autonomous choice). The attraction for Francis was its limited numbers (and thus, he assumed, less audible distraction) and his perception that those who were there all had a common purpose, leading to a 'more relaxed' atmosphere in which to study:

I'm not going to be surrounded by people 24/7, because if I was in Education then I'm going to have people making loads of noise and everything like that. People that are on these courses have chosen to come over here because they want to study in a particular subject. And it can be a more relaxed atmosphere.

(Francis, A Wing Resident, Interview)

A central feature shaping the porosity of the boundary between the developing community and culture of the Open Academy and the rest of the wing was thus the *visibility* of the community and the practices taking place within it. The Academy was seen by other residents as attractive through the relaxed environment, the autonomy and the choice that is visibly being exercised within it. Some studenthood identities discussed above flourished under the gaze of others on the wing. As Mackenzie stated: 'I love people looking at me thinking that flipping nerd'. This comment reflects the

representative finding as to how significant it was for students to be witnessed and *seen* as students from others outside of the immediate Open Academy community. This operates in contrast to the ways in which distance learning and self-directed studies are largely conducted across the prison estate, where they are mostly conducted in-cell and hidden from view. In this sense, then, the Open Academy at its best facilitated a sense of 'cultural bleed' which enhanced the visibility, viability and attractiveness of higher education across the wing in a way that was not the case with solitary in-cell learning practices.

6.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has taken an appreciative perspective of the Open Academy and explored the way in which it functioned 'at its best'. Through viewing the Academy as a situated space on a wing, the chapter described how it is seen as an 'oasis' in a challenging, violent prison environment. Yet the benefits which students reported from using the space were largely outside formalised study practices. The concept of 'studenthood' has been used to show the relational and social practices whereby students used the Academy to rehearse, sometimes tentative and sometimes established, student identities. The social element was analysed further through an exploration of the features of the community which was developing within the Academy and this was then shown to impact wider on the wing due to the mechanisms leading to positive 'cultural bleed'.

Chapter Seven

Understanding the ‘Closed Academy’

7.1 Introduction

In the last two chapters, a picture of the Open Academy has been painted which seeks to show its positive potential, encouraging functions and impact. Through an exploration of the educational experiences and positions of students within the Academy, patterns arose to demonstrate repeated experience of forms of exclusion, ‘unsafe’ learning spaces and unfulfilled potential. Through the peer led and semi-formal framing of the learning experiences within it, the Academy served as a space to rehearse tentative and established ‘studenthood’ identities, many of which had previously been defined by deep tension and embedded messages of failure. However, as was alluded to at the beginning of the previous chapter, the overwhelming experience of the Academy by its students was coloured by ambivalence and incongruity; these emergent identities were growing *against and in spite of* the forces of numerous functions of the wider prison culture, which posed a powerful counter narrative pushing against the aspirations of the students and of the community of the Academy itself.

This chapter works to shape this understanding and explore some of the particular features of the institutional positioning of the Open Academy. As such, it primarily starts from a ‘meso-level’ lens which represents a core component of making sense of the phenomenon of the Academy and the trajectories of those involved in it (educational and otherwise) within a ‘learning cultures’ framework. The chapter will develop an understanding of the interrelationship between a number of key individual and institutional cultural features, including the role of staff in supporting educational opportunities and elements of the wider regime, which can help to shed light on parts of the journey of the Open Academy. In doing so, the chapter reaches out beyond the boundaries of the Open Academy and into some of the features of the wider institutional culture to explore the interrelationship between these and the initiative.

It is important to note that this chapter is not seeking to provide a comprehensive analysis of all the reasons leading to the particular route that the Academy eventually took. Rather, it seeks to use illustrative examples of some of the factors which shaped its eventual picture. Further, these are not, and cannot be, discrete and separate factors; rather, they are a set of 'complex interactions' (Hodkinson & James, 2003:394), inextricable from each other, which are developed through and from one another. The remainder of this chapter explores the factors leading to the process of the Open Academy becoming what I have termed the 'Closed Academy' and the implications of its development.

7.2 Becoming the 'Closed Academy'

The Open Academy at the moment is a good image. And it's a good image that the prison needs to see. But at the moment, the logistics underneath that image can't be run.

(Lewis, Skills Advisor, Interview)

As Chapter Six described, the *potential* the Academy had for individual learning careers and trajectories, the development of a learning community and having a cultural impact on the wider wing appeared far reaching. Through this appreciative approach to reporting the impact of the initiative, the chapter sought to depict the 'best of what is' (Liebling, 2000); the Open Academy at its best. It was clear how positive implications were beginning to be developed for those involved with the initiative. However, as is discussed throughout this chapter, this only formed one part of the story of the Open Academy. As reflected in Lewis's comment above, the disparity between the presented picture, the potential of the Open Academy and the experiences of the students and peer managers working within it resonated throughout the narratives of interviewees.

By the end of the research period, the Open Academy was rarely open and was decreasingly accessible to the students who were scheduled to use it. The concept of

the 'Closed Academy' arose through an observed conversation between a senior member of staff from the Education Department and a peer manager at the Open Academy (Fieldnotes, November 2016). This senior member of Education staff arrived to support students to complete some paperwork and found that there were no students in the study room 'again', she said. 'This is more like the Closed Academy'. Positioned within the wider cultural features and frameworks operating through the prison which are being addressed throughout this chapter, here the attention will be focussed on their direct application to the Open Academy and the processes that led to it becoming, in practice, the 'Closed Academy'. Below, the central features of this new operation of the Academy are addressed, with a focus on the restricted access to space and resources, the loss of legitimacy for students and the wider forces of the role that staff *can* play in the promotion and support of education across a prison, as well as the institutional inertia that characterised the research site.

It was in the very final stages of this research period that a riot broke out on A Wing (see Chapter Three for an overview). It began, and was contained in, A Wing and the damage caused resulted in a gutted lower landing – 'The Ones' – which remained closed for a substantial period of time following the completion of the research. This palpably disrupted the Open Academy as prisoners who were originally located on this landing were moved either elsewhere in the prison or to a different institution altogether. Some Academy students were 'ghosted' to different prisons (suddenly removed to alternative institutions with very little notice) with apparent disregard for the question of their involvement in the disturbance (Fieldnotes, January 2017). Alongside these direct implications, this event is significant in seeking to develop a cultural understanding of the Open Academy. Prison disturbances such as these are 'complex and diverse events' that 'raise profound questions over human action, social structure, historical process and political reasoning' (Carrabine, 2005: 896). They are thus symptomatic of wider issues influencing the delicate balance of social order developed through the push and pull of the features shaping institutional legitimacy. A disturbance such as this is therefore a significant indicator of the tensions and issues facing the prisons sector, this prison, and indeed this particular wing, at the time of this research. The previous chapter demonstrated some of the ways in which 'cultural

bleed’ could be observed with practices and artefacts of the Open Academy impacting upon the rest of the wing: here and throughout this chapter the emphasis lies on the ways in which the porous boundary of the Academy shapes cultural bleed in the other direction. This incident was not the cause of the ‘Closed Academy’ – the process of closure began long before this incident – yet recognising that these were occurring alongside one another offers insight into the cultural pressures within which the Academy was operating.

The very final incident shaping the trajectory of the Academy over the course of the research period, and which led to its temporary closure, was not the riot. There were accusations from members of staff working on A Wing that the Academy systems, structure and hierarchies were being used to smuggle contraband and infiltrate the system. This ultimately led to the dismantling of the Academy and the full and formal closure of the space, albeit temporarily. The peer managers were removed from the wing. However, one was moved into a ‘trusted’ role elsewhere in the prison. Another manager took up his position in a Category C prison elsewhere, a move which he had previously put on hold in order to continue working in this role within HMP Swaleside. This incident occurred after the conclusion of the research period and there are deeply conflicting perspectives held by members of staff and Open Academy students about the reality of this situation. There is not, therefore, suitable data to discuss this incident in detail. However, regardless of the grounds of the allegations, this incident clearly reflected a division between the officers working on the wing and the peer managers working within the initiative. It also acts as a reminder of the complexities of the relational hierarchies which were operating within and through this space and their relationship to the success – or not – of a prison-based educational initiative.

It is worth recognising that this was not the final end of the Open Academy as there have since been efforts to reignite the initiative. Yet this research focuses on, and hopes to learn from, the journey up until this point.

7.2.1 Restricted access to space and resources

Throughout the research period, students' access to the Academy became restricted and the opportunities for students to make use of the resources, space and community of the Open Academy began to be eroded. Students were allocated two sessions per week for which they were paid to use the Open Academy. This was an important structural feature of the Academy as an effort to subvert the barrier to education of higher pay for other forms of work around the prison (Braggins and Talbot, 2003; Taylor, 2014), yet access to these sessions became irregular. At the point of interview, Dan stated that '[the Open Academy] hasn't been on for some months' (Open Academy Student, Interview). Darren points out that when we met in the Academy space the week before the interview, 'that was the first time [he] had been there for a couple of months'. Elliot, in an otherwise enthusiastic description of the practices and potential of the Academy, stated that 'the only thing is that they don't give us so much time to come out.' It is important to note that the Open Academy continued to be an 'activity' in terms of the prison allocation system; students continued to be paid for their two sessions a week and were still scheduled to have full sessions within the space. Yet when students were not permitted access to these sessions, they were instead left either 'banged up', remaining locked behind their cell door, or on association on the wing for the session when they were due to be using the Academy.

As McGunigall-Smith (2004, cit. in Johnson & McGunigall-Smith, 2008) identifies, such capriciousness within carceral regimes – in an environment where one's daily routine may represent the sole source of 'stability and predictability' – can lead to deep feelings of 'loss and discontent' (p. 342) among residents. Such feelings were evident here, and with no dependable knowledge of when they would be able to access the Academy, students were left navigating these 'pains of inconsistency' (McGunigall-Smith, 2004) on an ongoing basis. Nathan describes the implications of this inconsistency on the relationship between the Open Academy and his studying practices:

I've had to not rely on this place for me to study. It's not consistent, so how can you expect me to-, you know, it wasn't on on Monday but Wednesday you're telling me it's on, and telling me I have to work in here but, hold on. How do you know I wasn't studying last night? My brain needs a rest now.

(Nathan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

In the previous chapter it was established that a central function of the Academy was the environment it offered for rehearsing 'studenthood', which appeared, at this stage in the journey of the Open Academy and those of the students within it, to be perhaps *more* important than completing a formal course of study. Despite the positive impact that students reported through such informal usage of the space, this was also framed as a deficit in response to the inability to use it for formalised practices of study. Demonstrating this in response to a question about how his use of the space has changed from when he was a Self-Study student to becoming formally enrolled on a distance learning programme, Darren pointed out that this fact was almost irrelevant, as he was unable to consistently access the Academy for study purposes, 'because it's never really open' (Open Academy Student, Interview).

Another way in which a barrier to access was manifested was through the computers, described by interviewees reported in the previous chapter as a central motivating feature to join the Open Academy. They were in fact never made available to students. According to a number of interviewees, this was due to the requirement that a member of wing staff needed training in order to oversee the use of the Virtual Campus on the machines. This process would require somebody from another department in the prison to come onto the wing and give a brief training session, something which had reportedly been arranged numerous times but had not happened. Barriers to access to the Virtual Campus have plagued it since its roll out across the prison estate, including the lack of staff confidence in its usage, staff resource to monitor usage and issues in the regime preventing prisoners from getting to the machines (Champion and Edgar, 2013; Taylor, 2014). However, bringing the

computers onto the wing was intended to mitigate these issues (Fieldnotes, March 2016). Such a bureaucratic hurdle created a sense of frustration for the students and Academy staff alike, as one of the most visibly appealing elements of the Academy was never realised.

What's our selling point? This room that we're sitting in now. The [Virtual Campus] room. Computers. You have got interactive learning two steps away from your cell. But unfortunately, nearly two years down the road, we're still not up and running. Because of tedious nonsense like staff haven't been trained yet and all this crap.

(Mosi, Open Academy Student, Interview)

These barriers to access became an important part of the story and reputation of the Open Academy, thus making it increasingly challenging to recruit students and potential students to the wing for these purposes, as alluded to by Mosi above. By moving onto the wing and signing up for two Academy sessions per week, students are risking spending these sessions 'banged up' rather than in purposeful activity elsewhere across the prison.

It is important to reflect briefly on the point raised in Chapters 3 and 5 above that at no point throughout the research period were all Open Academy spaces filled. This was despite the fact that there were more existing distance learners in the prison than there were spaces in the Academy (see section 5.2 for further discussion). The perceived risk of 'bang up' which prisoners would have to take when transferring to the wing to engage in the Open Academy may have acted as a factor which 'pushed' students away from the initiative. This risk is particularly pertinent as many existing distance learners may have trusted employment positions on their wings. Thus, an initial lack of trust in the success in the initiative, alongside an increasing reputation of the *closed* Academy is likely to have influenced the number of students engaging with it.

In a similarly disheartening way to the dwindling access to Academy study spaces described above, there was not a conclusory point where it was determined that the computers were not going to be functional. Rather, it was experienced as a series of regular *broken promises* with numerous assurances that the barriers will be lifted, only for them to continue to remain.

Through these processes, challenges arose to the legitimacy of the initiative, something which is now to be explored.

7.2.2 Losing legitimacy

Throughout the journey of the Open Academy within the time frame of the research period, it acquired interest from a number of external organisations and individuals, largely due to its unique positioning within the prison estate of England and Wales, but also due to the proactive advertising by senior members of the Open Academy team at external-facing events. As one peer manager stated proudly:

We've got the [BBC], we've got the Guardian newspaper, Inside Times [newspaper], the [Ministry of Justice] came down. Loved us! We've spoken to people from the Committee of Learning... We've been getting such high praise out there.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

The first of these external-facing events was the launch of the Academy in September 2015 which brought a number of high-profile individuals (locally and nationally) into the prison, alongside key stakeholders such as the Open University, Prisoners' Education Trust and Novus. In the words of one peer manager, 'we had people like, right up the *tops* of their professions there.' The event impacted heavily on the peer management team who were involved in organising it:

And then we had the open day which was - kind of a bit surreal! They gave me a t-shirt with 'Open Academy orderly' on and we've got all

these visitors coming from outside. We had [a high-profile Baroness]. I loved that! Brilliant.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

The status of the individuals at the event supported the external legitimacy given to the Academy, particularly through the organisations which are important for the educational infrastructure of the prison and, in the case of Prisoners' Education Trust and the Open University, distance learning in particular. Significantly, it also brought senior members of governing staff to the Academy. Peer management interviewees spoke of the launch event positively as a way to promote the intentions of the Academy and the work that had already been underway in shaping it into something valuable for the prison. 'It was a celebration of success if you like', said one peer manager, 'because we had opened the Open Academy' (Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview).

The role of external organisations and stakeholders in the Academy at this early stage was thus significant in developing momentum and drive. It also framed the role of the Academy in the eyes of the senior management. This is reflective of Auty et al.'s (2016) analysis which found that a 'legitimate' external influence could be an influential feature in maintaining momentum in innovative educational initiatives in a prison environment. This has potential implications for understanding the necessary structures which could work to support the Open Academy in the future.

However, as the functioning of the Academy became more problematic over time, the public narrative began to operate in tension with the realities of those working on and within it. An illustrative example of this can be seen in the responses to when a wide-reaching national BBC TV show filmed a segment in the Open Academy championing the initiative.

Peer managers reported initially hoping that this high-profile engagement, which had gone through many levels of bureaucratic approval before the television cameras

entered the prison site, would have the same impact on senior management interest in, and accountability for, the Open Academy that the launch event did. As one such interviewee stated:

Look once that [BBC programme] comes out, this Gov will need to have to stand up and say 'Right. Fuck it. Let's do it. Let me be more involved with the OA.'

(Peer Manager, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Yet, the eventual screening of the programme, which was watched by many on the wing, provoked a mixed response. Tyler, who is not an Academy student but resides on A Wing, described a positive reception for the screening; 'everyone – they rated it'. He went on to argue that such a public presentation of the work of the Open Academy is valuable in shaping perspectives of prison and prisoners, but also breaking down attitudinal barriers to higher-level education:

You've got guys that are [not in prison] right now- you even show them Open University, they will laugh at you. They will just laugh, they will be like, Open University, me? Nah, no way. And it will take something like this to make them want to start to do that. So what that bit of the TV can do is actually make people look at it and think, 'you know what, maybe if I do this now...'

(Tyler, A Wing Resident, Interview)

For Tyler then, the rehabilitative and positive deterrent potential of this public presentation of the Open Academy was an important benefit of its broadcast. The picture he describes is one in which the presentation could in fact be more significant than the experience.

However, there were far more cynical perspectives from many Academy students who felt that the presentation of the Academy was unrepresentative of their realities. As Mackenzie stated:

Do you think it's beneficial for us, do you think there's enough people engaging, do you think it's just some publicity stunt for Swaleside to look good on that [BBC programme]? Because everything that they said on that programme was bollocks.

(Mackenzie, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The way in which the Open Academy was publicly demonstrated as something unrepresentative of his experience was disempowering for Mackenzie as it did not reflect his frustrated, interrupted experience. This was further echoed by Carl:

Personally, I don't know about everyone else here, but you see all this [BBC] programme and everything that goes on. It's far from the actual reality, what's actually happening here... because nine times out of ten it's closed.

(Carl, Open Academy Student, Interview)

In much the same way as Phelps (2011) identified the multifaceted problems with the 'gap' between 'rhetoric and reality' in prison rehabilitation programmes and regimes, so too did the disjuncture between the projected narrative of the Open Academy and the externally-presented 'reality' create a tension for many of its students. Further tensions were created internally due to the delicate educational infrastructure of the prison and the weak relationships upon which it is built. As one peer manager outlined, the positive news story of the Academy did not appear to be well received by other departments in the prison, particularly the Education Department, where relationships were already fraught:

I think it's a little bit of jealousy. Again, I don't want to sound big headed but look, you've got two prisoners who's made such progress and made this prison look good for something, that's good.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

This section has argued that in order to understand the impact of the 'Closed Academy', it is important to explore the extent to which the projected narratives, those largely constructed and carefully managed by the institution, reflect the experiences of the students. When there is tension or a disjuncture between the projected and experienced 'reality', this can work to deepen the 'pain' of a poorly-functioning initiative. In contrast, and as demonstrated by the above discussion of the launch event, where a platform is provided for prisoner participants to shape the externally-projected framing, bringing external organisations and perspectives into the prison can provide a significant mechanism to develop the momentum and institutional-positioning of an initiative.

7.2.3 Variant levels of staff support

In seeking to make sense of the 'Closed Academy', the following section will look beyond the initiative and look at the structures operating at the meso-level, across the breadth of the prison. As has previously been established, in Chapter Four in particular, the relationships between staff and prisoners across the prison estate – with particular reference to the fieldwork site – is both complex and significant in understanding prison-wide learning cultures. As important elements of the educational infrastructure of the prison, this chapter draws together reflections on these roles to explore the potential for their support, or otherwise, of the Open Academy. This section seeks to bring these understandings together to further apply to the distinct roles that staff can play in shaping the experience of a culture of learning.

Staff working across a prison have been heralded in previous studies to be potentially significant in the creation (or not) of an environment conducive to learning, and to educational innovations such as the Open Academy. Uniformed staff are thus significant 'others' in the lives of prisoner students who can influence the experience of the student, particularly the distance learner who is arguably more reliant on their actions and reactions (Hughes, 2012), and either support or hinder a learning journey. Describing the ways in which such prison staff perceive their role in supporting education, Braggins and Talbot (2005) found a spectrum of roles. These ranged from the frustrated 'turnkey' and those who saw themselves as an 'under-utilised resource', to those who felt unable to support due to the demands of the role and the need to be 'all things to all people'. From the prisoner perspective, Nichols (2017) found that these roles shaped impactful relationships between prisoners and uniformed and Education staff alike. These relationships went on to provide either encouragement, connection or discouragement for the prisoner learner.

Building from this baseline, the following section proposes an iteration of a typology of roles which staff can play in the construction and maintenance of a positive prison-based learning culture. It draws on data from Open Academy students and Skills Advisors and on their reflections from throughout all of their experiences of prison, not restricted to HMP Swaleside. It is important to note that this draws solely on the perspective of prisoners and does not include the staff perspective. Thus, although it reflects the lived experience and visceral perceptions of prison residents about the attitudes and actions of those in charge of their ability and claim to be entitled to an education, it does not claim to offer the entire picture. As such it remains a tentative typology which could provide a baseline for future research. This wider framework is important in understanding the attitudes and actions through which staff members shaped the Open Academy.

A significant factor on which interviewees described the differentiation of staff roles in the learning culture of the prison was one of 'ethos' or 'motivation'. As Leo, a Skills Advisor working around the prison, reflects:

Lots of officers come to work in a prison for so many different reasons. You never know some could be ... negative reasons. Like, these are the people that bullied me in school. Or it could be like, 'I wanna help these people'. Or it could be 'I need to have a pension, I need to pay my mortgage, my bills or whatever and this is the best job going.' So you got loads of officers but they're not on the same ethos. They're all thinking different reasons.

(Leo, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Here, Leo appears to relate this 'ethos' to something intertwined with internal motivations and individual reasons for choosing to work in the role of prison officer. Yet elsewhere he further reflects on the external and structural factors which can influence how this individual 'ethos' becomes constructed:

What happens is you'll get them on detachment from other prisons. So rather than getting new staff you'd get staff from other prisons where their jails are run differently. So you'll get them coming here and saying 'bloody hell, is this how bad it is here? I don't wanna work here'. So they leave. Some come, some stay... then old officers who have got a bit of clout, good officers, they may go. So now you don't have a community on the wing because no one knows each other.

(Leo, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Being driven by forces originating in the wider field of the prison, fed by policy dictating the recruitment of officers, Leo suggests here that the combination of these features, transient and temporal, intertwine with the more embedded dispositions of the officers and their individual motivations. This ultimately leads to a relational understanding of the functions and practices of officers, set within the broader context of the personal, cultural, professional and socio-political landscape within which each individual staff member is also located.

This relationship between the 'ethos' and the relational and situated (or community-oriented) perspectives underpin the framework for this typology. As such, these categories are developed through the way in which behaviours and actions of staff are *experienced* by prisoners. This is not to define an individual staff member, their approach, or to suggest that these actions are necessarily enduring beyond the point of this discussion. The following categories reflect the ways in which individual staff responses to the stronghold of the prison culture are experienced by prisoners.

Tenacious Crusaders

When you see the members of staff that really crusade for education, for rehabilitation, for reform, they are that. They're crusaders. They stand out on their own. They are not the usual tribe-like mentality of prison staff. I don't have much more than that to say.

(Max, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Many interviewees reflect both on the challenges of studying or accessing learning opportunities around the prison. Indeed, it has been reflected upon throughout this thesis that the multitude of ways in which barriers are constructed to learning opportunities within and across the prison are a centrepiece of the experience for many. In response to this web of hurdles, as has been established above and in previous chapters, many cultural forces operating within and through the prison function by pulling the key features of the prison culture away from the opportunities for learning (Bayliss, 2003). However, students, peer mentors and wing residents alike point to those who have been influential in actively pushing back against some of these more negative forces. These are staff that *crusade*. As Max outlines above, there is an experience of the 'usual' approach by staff within the prison as working from a 'tribe-like mentality'. Therefore, those that crusade are notable from their distinction; 'they stand out on their own'. The education, rehabilitation and reform approach is far removed from the overarching experience of the purpose of the prison, one framed by security and punishment.

Central actors within this crusading category, those with institutional power to influence this agenda, may include those in management roles suited to the promotion of education within the prison. Innovative crusaders in these roles, such as Head of Learning and Skills, Head of Education and Heads of Reducing Reoffending, can draw on capital often held in more powerful positions to situate their approaches within the wider prison culture. To demonstrate this, we can look at the role and impact of a specific member of prison staff who interviewees consistently identified as critical in making the Open Academy a reality. For instance, when asked what would be required to set up an Open Academy elsewhere in the prison estate, Mosi was of the opinion that this individual was so integral to the Academy that it would not be possible to replicate this unique event elsewhere without them:

If somebody said to me now, what do you need to set this up somewhere else, I'd start with saying, me and [that member of staff]. We need me and [that person] to put the things forward. Coz [they are] like a breath of fresh air with Swaleside. [They] come through [this prison] like a steam train with all these fresh ideas; [ideas] that are working.

(Mosi, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The qualities that Mosi highlights here as significant to 'crusading' in this capacity include creativity and innovation, framing this staff member's approach as 'a breath of fresh air', coupled with the tenacity to see these ideas through even when in opposition to features of the prison learning culture which may be pushing firmly in the opposing direction; 'like a steam train'.

Lewis expands on this by also positioning that same staff member within the prison system when he reflects on what he has seen of the Open Academy:

[They] did tonnes of work and without him none of this Skills Advisors wouldn't exist, the new vocational training programme they're talking

about bringing in next year wouldn't exist, the Open A wouldn't exist. None of those things would even exist if it wasn't for [that person]. But [they are just] one person.

(Lewis, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Through both Mosi and Max's comments, then, we can clearly see the positive action they attribute to the crusading work of particular individuals. They recognise the role that tenacious and committed individual staff members play, while making the limitations of being a 'crusading' individual clear (both explicitly and implicitly), being bound by the practices and resources of a system which may not be sufficient to support their visions.

Facilitating Allies

While the 'tenacious crusader' was a polemic type of individual whose 'master status' (Hughes, 1945) was chiefly defined by the promotion and creation of education opportunities across the prison, such individuals in reality were few and far between at Swaleside prison. More common among interviewees' narratives were tales of staff members who acted as *allies* and *facilitators* in actively supporting prison learners on their journeys, and whose central role operates outside the key areas of education. Similar to those being led by an overarching and explicit mission to support both individual and collective educational opportunities at the prison, those who worked within a *facilitating ally* approach were *also* identified as actively operating against the grain of the more repressive features of prison culture in order to support students and potential students wherever possible, although without the status, power and innovation of those falling at the 'crusader' end of the continuum.

Facilitating allies can be found working in different areas within the prison. It is perhaps unsurprising that a number of the individuals who actively take up the baton of championing education, either at the institutional or the individual level, despite the confines of the traditional prison, are teachers or facilitators of education. It is worthwhile reflecting on prisoners' experiences of outstanding teachers in seeking to

understand how such traits could reach beyond the prison classroom. Max, a talented and award-winning artist, discusses powerfully how he first found a route to his passion for art guided by a member of staff in the Education Department of a former prison. The qualities she demonstrated included providing consistent and meaningful encouragement:

She was encouraging, supportive... She encourages, she enthuses, she is just an amazing teacher. Brilliant at what she did. She's just great at developing skillsets. Because when I look back and I look at the early stuff I did. It was atrocious. I'm the first to say it was terrible stuff! ... But the time she ended up spending, helping me with stuff was unbelievable.

(Max, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Such unconditional positive regard and openness not only supported him in developing a talent he didn't yet know he had, but denotes a significant departure from the experiences many prisoners discuss having elsewhere around the prison. Similarly, it is far removed from the narratives of exclusion and failure reported as shaping a large extent of many interviewees' previous educational experiences, as discussed in Chapter Five.

Further, Max states that 'the *joy* of it was that she had such patience.' This too can be contrasted with the demands in the current, under-resourced and under-staffed prison system, whereby staff report they are working in conditions where time and care can be one of the hardest gifts for prison staff to give to a prisoner.

Finally, her teaching was driven by both talent and nurturing capabilities, the connection of which created an inspirational approach for Max:

And was quite driven and was quite strict when she realized what you were capable of... She was very generous of spirit and she was a

fantastic teacher. Just massively, massively talented artist as well. Which was so inspiring... So yeah that's how all of this, all the genesis of me doing peer mentoring, all goes back to [her].'

(Max, Skills Advisor, Interview)

A concluding point here is the transferability and the breadth of impact that this relationship had on Max. Being inspired by this teacher, Max went on with the intention of reflecting these traits in his approach to working within the prison. This teacher thus propelled Max onto his current trajectory as a peer mentor and Skills Advisor.

Hughes (2012) states that a number of the distance learners in her extensive study refer to members of the Education Department as being key 'others' in supporting their otherwise often lonely and isolating distance learning studies. Students referred to spaces being made available for group study, computers and printers being made accessible 'out of hours' as well as the spaces of education providing something distinct from other spaces within the prison. Indeed, the very function of education and the space in which it takes place can provide a welcome 'emotional zone' for prisoners (Crewe et al., 2014). However, as has been discussed elsewhere in this chapter, those who work in the Education Department, and the Education Department itself, do not *necessarily* produce the empowering space that Max states that this individual did for him.

As we have seen in previous chapters, the prison-wide narratives of education and opportunity, as well as the success of more innovative wing-based initiatives, are heavily framed by the approach of officers and other frontline staff across the prison. Officers that work within this *facilitating ally* category were described by many as being 'proactive'. Such officers were often identified as those who go 'above and beyond' what is expected of them with a specific commitment to supporting the educational needs of prison-based students and potential students. Some of these did so because they understood first-hand how challenging further and higher education

can be and were personally committed to the cause. Lewis highlighted one such officer who he bonded with through their shared experience of distance learning and its challenges:

Of course there's proactive officers, some doing the same degree as me. We clicked straight away. She's gone back to [another prison] now. So she was very proactive about distance learning. But that's only coz she's doing it. If you don't understand something, or believe in something, you're not even gonna entertain a conversation.'

(Lewis, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Lewis recounted conversations with this officer about completing their studies as important in maintaining his own personal learning motivation. She also helped him in getting hold of vital resources, such as pens and paper, when he needed them; this again is something Lewis attributed to the staff member's empathy, based on being in a similar position. Dan, an Open Academy student seeking a distance learning course in the sciences, also spoke to an officer on his wing who was studying with the Open University 'about what courses she wanted to study and that' (interview). A participant in Hughes's (2012) study noted that some wing officers who 'encouraged' his studies, were now interested in taking up such a course themselves (p. 132). This participant, Mike, was on a particular community-oriented wing, a 'therapeutic community' which Hughes argued was an environment 'particularly supportive of learning' but which does 'not reflect normal prison living arrangements' (p. 131). It is therefore encouraging to see indicators in the current study of how these mechanisms of support can reach beyond the particularly supportive environment of a therapeutic community wing. Through these smaller interactions, officers did not need to reach beyond their role in order to facilitate educational opportunities as these conversations work to normalise study and provide routes to informal support.

However, Lewis was clear that he did not believe that the defining feature of a 'proactive officer' was the requirement that they too had been through, or were

undertaking, higher or further level study. In response to the question ‘what does a proactive officer look like?’, he replied:

Well he’ll advise people about what educational opportunities there is, he’ll advise, give you the information, how to get a job and what and speak to a Skills Advisor etc.... But that’s where we come in, that’s where Skills Advisors come in, coz all the officer needs to do is say ‘Go and speak to a skills advisor’. That’s it. So that is a better job for him because he don’t mind doing that, coz its signposting the client, prisoner, whatever you wanna call them to the correct source, and then we’ll get them the information what they need.’

(Lewis, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Through this we can begin to see some significant features of the *ally* – that rather than being the source of information regarding educational and learning opportunities, this approach is recognised when the member of staff is *linked into* the existing structures of support that may be more targeted towards educational opportunities. Although Lewis here specifically related this to officers providing a conduit between prisoners with educational queries and the Skills Advisors, officers could equally be closely connected to staff from the Education Department or the National Careers Service who administer the distance learning support.

However, when interviewees discussed such allies, the perception again was that such individuals were in a minority; indeed, perceived to be *far* more common – and often defined by attitudes and behaviours which existed in opposition to those of the allies and crusaders – was that of the *apathetic inhibitor*. It is to this group that we now turn our attention.

Apathetic & Active Inhibitors

The range of features of the prison culture drawn out throughout this thesis and well established in prison sociology (see for example, Crewe, 2009; Sparks et al., 1996; Sykes, 1958) suggest that the priorities of a prison – particularly those which shape important features of its culture – are most likely to be framed by concerns regarding security and conceptions of punishment and incapacitation. Certainly, in the main, they are not considered to be framed by concerns relating to the active promotion of education and learning among prison residents (Bayliss, 2003).

As shown through the prison-wide survey, discussed in Chapter Four, while prisoner perceptions of uniformed staff were complex, ‘normal’ wing-based prison officers – constructed by contrasting the experiences of such individuals against experiences of those who regularly exceeded this perception (i.e. in this instance, facilitating allies and creative crusaders) – were most commonly identified within the roles of *apathetic or active inhibitor* type. This underpins the ‘tribe-like mentality’ to which Max referred above. In Braggins’s (2001) survey of prison governors and education managers, the ‘lack of commitment by uniformed staff’ was found to be the second-most pressing concern. In the current study, this type of perceived staff role in the promotion of educational opportunities across the prison was, at best, typically identified as that of the wing-based officer who positioned education as especially low down on the list of relative priorities for prison staff to be attending. At worst, such individuals were defined by their consistent apathy towards opportunities (including educational) for prisoners, an act which, whether intentionally or not, often resulted in an inhibition of opportunity for learners at HMP Swaleside.

Leo’s comments provide an excellent case in point here. In his discussion of ‘proactive officers’, as noted above, Leo was keen to explicitly contrast those (uncommon) staff members who actively support educational and learning opportunities, who go ‘above and beyond, with ‘the majority’ of prison staff; the disinterested standard by which he measured other staff approaches:

If you talk about something that I don't like, like football... I walk away and go do something else, I hate football. So why would an officer be bothered about trying to get you to sort your life out? They just wanna-most officers... the majority openly admit they just wanna come here, have a good day, not get attacked and go home to their family or to their loved ones. They're not really interested. It's a job to them... it's payment.

(Leo, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Here, Leo articulates the conflicting staff priorities within which prison education sits; when there is a threat to the personal safety of prison staff, it becomes difficult (perhaps perverse, even) to consider supporting prisoners to 'sort [their] lives out' as their key objective. For Leo, this then reduces the officer position to one guided by 'payment' rather than a desire, willingness, or – perhaps most accurately – the *ability* to effectively and meaningfully support those in their care. Through Leo's characterisation of *apathetic inhibitors* forming the 'majority' of officers, this apathy regarding educational opportunities (recognised as being part of a wider mix of features and forces) forms the norm; an apathetic majority forms the attitudinal current. It is against this current that the *tenacious crusaders* and the *facilitating allies* find themselves swimming upstream.

Even further down the continuum were those staff members characterised as *active inhibitors*. Some interviewees expressed an opinion that the response by *active inhibitors* to those prisoners engaged in further and higher education was more than passively malicious, and located chiefly in the realm of envy. For example, Michael responded to a question about whether officers were interested in education and supportive of his work as a Skills Advisor by stating that some 'don't like it'. His rationale for this was that because 'prisoners get more educated than [prison officers], they get a bit of, I dunno, envy or [something]' (Michael, Skills Advisor, interview).

Such an attitude resonated with particular pertinence through the Open Academy, being defined as it was by further and higher-level education and with access to it being more dependent than other educational initiatives on the actions of wing-based officers. Indeed, Mosi – responding to the same question as above – shared similar views to Michael, that is that officers’ apathetic or actively negative attitudes towards (particularly higher-level) educational opportunities were a reflection of the comparatively limited educational opportunities experienced throughout the standard prison officer life course:

Maybe 30 per cent across the prison are invested in it. On [A] Wing, 20-30 per cent are invested in it. I literally just look at it as they can’t be bothered. Some of them have their own personal views, which you know gets in the way sometimes. I know for a fact- *‘why should prisoners get that? I don’t have that’*- that comes into it.

(Mosi, Open Academy Student, Interview)

It is worth bearing in mind that, in a critical sense, Mosi had no statistical evidence to back up his attempt to quantify the number of prison staff who were committed to the cause of the Open Academy within the wing. That said, such comments nonetheless represent an important and accurate reflection of Mosi’s feelings at that time, that a combination of envy and a question of deservedness served to define the attitudes towards the Open Academy of a substantial number of officers at the prison.

Lewis went further in suggesting that it was the prison environment itself that served to maintain a cultural norm among staff of the *apathetic* or *active inhibitor* to educational opportunity, by failing to provide prison staff with the necessary information and contacts to support learners within the carceral estate, even if they actively sought it:

I don’t think the prison environment - or the prison officers or prison staff - are that really, they’re not really proactive. They’re not keen on

[education] - they're not used to it. You need to have like monthly or quarterly talks; presentations from education and distance learning to the prison officers. Coz you've gotta think if there is an inmate on the wing, like where would they go for information? To an officer. The officers are not educated or aware of what's on offer.

(Lewis, Skills Advisor, Interview)

It is worth reflecting here on Lewis's perspective that the way to address this issue would be to provide education and support to the officers to allow them to support education for those prisoners under their care. This perspective is shared by Max who argues that it is part of his role as a Skills Advisor to begin that process of educating *apathetic* or *actively inhibitive* staff members around education, a role he describes as 'tough'. He goes on to reflect on his perception of the prevalence of the attitudes that make this challenging:

You see so much: 'well why aren't they just banged up and we throw the food under the door at them'. It's where a lot of people would happily see prisoners. And I know to a certain extent it's true.

(Max, Skills Advisor, Interview)

It is worth repeating that there has been no attempt to corroborate these perceptions with staff practice or attitudes. However, the prevalence of this perception and the existence of both *apathetic* and *active inhibitors* across interviewee narratives, denotes the extent to which the continuum of support must reflect those at each end of this spectrum in order to understand the different ways in which staff can support or obfuscate cultures of learning across a prison.

7.2.4 Institutional inertia

This section continues in the exploration of prison-wide cultural features, seeking to understand the positioning of the Open Academy. In doing so, it draws on a number of features which stem from and contribute to the lethargic functionality of the prison institution itself. It seeks to demonstrate the ways in which these institutional-level actions (and inactions) can influence the running and experience of the Open Academy and describes a range of features which, when taken together, create a form of *institutional inertia*.

One such structural factor which has impacted on staff morale and the sense of direction for the organisation is the high level of churn in the management positions, particularly Governing Governors. As HMIP highlighted in their 2016 report, there has been a consistently high turnover of senior managers within the institution for a number of years. This management churn in turn has led to high-level priority changes which have embedded instability into the experiences and approaches of management and lower-grade staff within the institution. The Open Academy initiative began under the direction of one Governing Governor. Throughout the research period another Governing Governor took the priorities of the prison in a different direction, with a particular emphasis on reducing drugs in the prison (Fieldnotes, September 2015). Since the conclusion of the research period, a new Governor is now running the prison. Discussions with staff involved in the Academy have highlighted that this churn has directly related to how they frame the progress and activities associated with the Academy due to the priorities, or not being aware of the priorities, of each of those filling this role (Fieldnotes, November 2016).

However, the core narrative regarding the perceived inertia dictating system-level responses to the Academy initiative centred strongly on the process of the *roll call* within the functioning of the prison regime. As such, this crucial task – whereby the start and end of every movement period in any given prison requires officers to complete a roll call, accounting for the location of all the prisoners in the prison – was re-narrated as an institutional-level action (or more specifically, *inaction*) being *wilfully*

misappropriated to negatively influence the running and experience of the Open Academy. Throughout the research period, numerous interviewees brought up the subject of the roll call to demonstrate the problems with the functioning of the regime at Swaleside. When discussing his perception of the officer role in the disrupted regime, Lewis stated:

I don't see what the problem is, they can never get the roll count right; they can't even count. These officers can't count, so, how do you expect an officer to create a learning culture when they can't even get the roll count right themselves?

(Lewis, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Errors in the roll call are seen by many interviewees as often not accidental, but an intentional disruption to the regime. The implications for the roll call being wrong are that prisoners are not permitted to move until the prison-wide roll comes back correct. The direct implications for the Open Academy included the denial of access to the space; as Lewis explained, 'if the roll count's not in we can't move the students to A Wing to show them [the Open Academy]' (Lewis, Skills Advisor, Interview). This again links into the 'pains of inconsistency' highlighted above (cf. McGunigall-Smith, 2008, cit. in Johnson & McGunigall-Smith, 2008), but also tapped in to deep-rooted concerns among the Academy students that prison officers were *deliberately* obscuring access to such positive initiatives for residents.

Yet, despite the implications of this for the Open Academy, students recognised this as a wider issue that has an impact beyond this particular initiative. Max outlines this analysis below when describing when this notable shift in the running of the regime began:

When the new No 1 [governor] came in and said you've got to start running this prison properly and put the POA ²¹ [Prison Officer Association]'s nose out of joint. So now they get the roll wrong just so they can sit on their asses in the office and drink tea. Coz if the roll's wrong there's nothing for them to do.

(Max, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Students thus felt that they were 'caught in a war between the POA and management' (Leo, Skills Advisor, Interview). Max recognised that such a perspective may reflect 'an exaggerated view because prisoners are always gonna say that [prison staff] do nothing', yet, importantly, he states; 'that's the perception in the prison'.

The Open Academy was thus functioning within a wider culture framed by mistrust, a prisoner perception of staff apathy and decreasing levels of legitimacy. The central reason given by students for the limited operation of the Open Academy was the oft-stated restrictions to staffing levels and the resultant argument of a lack of staff. In a simple explanation of the fundamental issues facing the Open Academy, and reflecting the sentiment of many students from across the Academy, Mosi stated: 'we never have any staff for anyone to be unlocked' (Mosi, Open Academy Student, Interview). As has been noted earlier in the thesis, this research took place during a time of enduring challenges to levels of frontline staffing within and across the prison estate. The reduction in experienced staff has been linked to an exponential rise in violence, self-harm and suicide since deep funding cuts were made and have widely impacted on the functioning of prison regimes across the estate (HMIP, 2018). As was noted in Chapter Three, HMP Swaleside was hit particularly hard by the reduction in staff and had been increasingly reliant on the provision provided by officers on detached duty (HMIP, 2016). Therefore, the reality of the staffing situation within the prison certainly was one which is heavily strained.

²¹ The Prison Officers Association is the largest union in the United Kingdom representing uniformed prison grades.

Nevertheless, the *experience* of the lack of staff and the perception of the truthfulness of this argument in relation to the running of the Open Academy, was met with doubt and mistrust. As one peer manager argues:

They say they don't have staff. But many times I've been sitting there and there's been four staff on there and they're just sitting there doing nothing. And we've been told that they can do it with less staff.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

The contested number of staff required to run the Academy became a common refrain from students. Nathan takes this sentiment further:

It's like, excuse you, how much staff do you need? In Education, there's only two. I swear there's only two down there. Pretty much in a room there's always two officers. So I don't really buy it, to be honest with you. I reckon there's a conspiracy, you know.

(Nathan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Many students felt as though the argument put forward that there were not enough members of staff to permit the running of the Academy was part of a wider 'conspiracy' and thus perhaps reflective of the *apathetic inhibitors* which, as argued above, shaped the status quo of the staff response to education within and across the prison. Dan, for example, argues that the lack of staff is exaggerated or falsely applied to the situation of the 'Closed Academy':

Well apparently they say, that they need more than two staff, but I know for a fact that they've had more than two staff but they just can't be bothered to have it on. Because then they have too much people to watch at one time and they don't wanna do that.

(Dan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

Thus, despite students recognising the reduction in officer numbers across the estate, and within this prison, these perceptions – framing of the *excuse* of no staff – are developed and maintained through the cultural positioning and framework of the role of staff (officers in particular) in response to such innovations of the Open Academy. According to Carl, ‘they’ll find any excuse to keep it closed’ (Open Academy Student, Interview).

As was described in Chapter Six, the absence of staff *within* the structures and practices of the Open Academy was a significant element in the support of the development of a learning environment which fostered autonomous self-directed learning by students, and the development of positive learning communities. However, this was limited by the experience of the ‘hands-off’ approach to getting the Academy open. As vital facilitators of a functional regime, the absence of officers to unlock prisoners from their cells and permit the running of Open Academy sessions, students thus experienced many officers working on the wing as creating a situation as either *apathetic* or *active inhibitors*. Thus, being positioned on the residential wing and being ultimately dependent on the daily decisions made by over-stretched officers working within it, a framework whereby the Open Academy managers and students felt unsupported by wing staff developed. However, there were other areas and roles within the prison where Academy peer staff were reliant on support which they argued was missing.

Throughout the interviews, peer managers reported dissatisfaction with the way that they were treated and how they felt they were perceived by staff members of the Education Department. In response to the question ‘How is the relationship between your work at the Open Academy and the Education Department’ a peer manager reported:

Shit. Yeah. Shit. In a nutshell, I just don’t get any support from the Education Department. I actually feel like I’m always hitting my head against a brick wall when I’m trying to deal with them.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

This absence of perceived support from the Education Department appeared to operate for many reasons. Firstly, there was a divide between the more senior members of staff who were involved with the Open Academy and those within the Education Department; personal tensions influenced 'silo' working approaches. Secondly, and as shall be discussed below, there were perceptions of 'jealousy' for the 'attention' that an innovative initiative such as the Open Academy was receiving to the perceived detriment of the challenging work and environment of those of the Education Department (Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview).

A further area in which Academy students and staff alike felt unsupported was through the perceived lack of priority it was given by some of the most senior members of staff within the prison. Discussing the role that the Governing Governor has taken in addressing some of the challenges of the Academy, a peer manager recounted:

We've collared him in the hallway and got chairs to sit on just to talk to him. And we've said, about the OA and he says yeah yeah yeah, he says everything right, but then there's no action taken.

Interviewer: And what do you need him to do?

We need him to be kind of, take notice. He's been to the OA probably twice in the time that he's been here.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

Interviewees regularly recognised the numerous pressures on the senior members of staff in the prison ('Ok, there's a lot of negatives [they're] fighting in this prison' (Joey, Open Academy Student, Interview)), yet this did not take away from the experience

of a symbolic neglect from those with the perceived power to influence the path of the Open Academy.

7.3 The implications of the 'Closed Academy'

As has been highlighted above, the process through which the Open Academy became the 'Closed Academy' was one which led to an experience of inconsistency and uncertainty for the students of the Academy. The implications of this were far reaching, as one peer manager outlined:

They're getting frustrated coz at the end of the day [the peer managers] have gone in there, we've said, this is how it is, it's run by prisoners, it's the best thing since sliced bread. And then lately, they're not been coming out.

(Peer Manager, Open Academy, Interview)

Not only are students' frustrations developing, peer managers felt that their ability to advertise the benefits were being undermined due to processes outside their control. Men were taking a risk when selecting to, often, move onto the wing in order to be a part of the Academy. This is particularly clear when considering the reputation of the wing, as discussed in Chapter Five. Yet, as this peer manager outlines, this risk did not pay off as students increasingly found themselves 'banged up'. This significant interruption to student trajectories can be seen as reflective of the previous educational experiences of many of these students, further embedding this into their future expectations.

Students widely argued that the Open Academy was 'not a priority' either for staff on the wing or elsewhere in the prison. As Darren argued, 'whoever's in charge, it isn't a priority. If it was a priority, it would be sorted out' (Open Academy Student, Interview). Many students reported a deep sense of frustration at the way in which they felt that the promise of the Open Academy was being removed from them, either

through institutional thoughtlessness or from being at the bottom of a long list of priorities for the prison service and HMP Swaleside in particular.

This was even recognised by those who were not Academy students. Tyler, for example, states: 'It's not a priority. It's far from a priority. Far, far, far from a priority. The laundry is probably more of a priority than this Open Academy right now' (Tyler, A Wing Resident, Interview).

The recognition returns the narrative of students to that which was reflected in Chapter Four; the 'absence of care':

That shows me that they don't care. They really don't care, because if the landings had to be clean, they will get people out to clean the landings.

(Nathan, Open Academy Student, Interview)

The frustrated implications of this shone through the narratives of interviewees. The visibility of the Academy, being located on the wing, was a constant reminder of the issues that they were having in achieving meaningful access to the resources and the developing community within it. Such frustration was expressed by students who stated that 'it's a shame' (Carl, Open Academy Student, Interview) that the Academy is in this position, or, more pointedly, 'it's a joke' (Darren, Open Academy Student, Interview). The tentative student identities, which were described as developing in Chapter Six, here become seen to be crushed.

In positioning the initiative within the wider institution, Ryan, a Skills Advisor, argues that it is not right for the Open Academy, nor education more broadly, to be at the top of the agenda for the senior management within the prison:

I don't think it should be, realistically, the top priority. There are so many more important things that need to come before we can focus

on people's education. For people that are leaving soon, I would like them to gain an education and have prospects. But I would also like people to be able to walk around the whole prison feeling safe before that.

(Ryan, Skills Advisor, Interview)

Ryan here problematises the relationship between the provision of education, safety and the impact of the inconsistent provision of initiatives. As has been demonstrated above, students and peer managers reported increased levels of frustration and disillusionment with the system that was increasingly seen as operating with less legitimacy. All of this has important implications for the meaning and creation of safe environments. However, taking place within a deeply troubled institution at a time where fundamental issues of personal safety were manifesting daily, Ryan argues that education must be recognised as further down the priority list. This fundamental tension reflects a central problematic positioning of educational initiatives in a broken, unsafe system, which is returned to in the following chapter.

7.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the development of the 'Closed Academy' and explored the elements of the wider institution which have shaped the trajectory of the Open Academy in becoming such. It has highlighted the issues of restricted access to students and how this grew to become the overarching picture of the Academy. When this disappointing reality for students was not reflected in public narratives of the initiative, this increased students' frustration and the loss of legitimacy. The chapter looked outwards to the features of staff roles across the prison and elements of 'institutional inertia' to support a situated understanding of the institutional pressures on the Academy. Finally, by reflecting on the implications of the 'Closed Academy', the final section brought the discussion back to impact for students, peer managers and the fundamental issue of safety within and across the prison.

Chapter Eight

Learning from the learning culture of the Open Academy and HMP Swaleside

8.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to draw together the analysis presented in the previous chapters in order to situate the findings of this study explicitly within the theoretical framework of a learning cultures approach. As has been described throughout this thesis, the conceptualisation of ‘learning cultures’ which is applied here reflects the analysis of Hodkinson, James, Biesta and colleagues through the Transforming Learning Cultures in Further Education project (cf. Hodkinson and James, 2007; James and Biesta, 2007). Taking into consideration the fact that all learning cultures are necessarily unique, despite shared characteristics, while also recognising the unique nature of every prison institution, this chapter reflects upon the positioning of the learning culture in the Open Academy within this analytical structure.

This is not to claim that this study reproduced previous research into learning cultures in education; indeed, there were important methodological distinctions between the current study and the wider learning cultures literature. However, by positioning the current findings explicitly within this framework, this chapter seeks to contribute to that body of literature. It looks to do this by developing a ‘situated’ perspective of the Open Academy as a unique learning site that sits within a number of fields: the prison, Further Education, and the numerous fields which operate within and through the individuals and structures making up the Open Academy at HMP Swaleside. In doing so, this chapter facilitates an amalgamation of the largely disparate fields of the learning cultures literature and that of the sociology of prisons, centred on three core conceptual frames. The first two – that of *synergy versus conflict* and *learning of practice/practices of learning* – seek to develop ideas central to the learning cultures literature in making sense of the rise and fall of the Open Academy, while the third

focuses on the *lessons for prison learning* that can be drawn from the findings of the substantive chapters.

8.2 Understanding the interplay of key cultural features within the Open Academy

Features that have impacted the cultural formation of the learning environment in the Open Academy have been shown in previous chapters to range from staff attitudes and institutionally structured priorities to the previous educational experiences of students. This section works to pull together an understanding of the interplay of such factors in order to critically describe the learning culture of the situated Open Academy. In order to do so this section will apply the framework developed by James and Biesta (2007) in their iteration of learning cultures in Further Education colleges. Their framework for distinguishing learning cultures across sites has provided a useful theoretical backdrop to the current study. Of particular focus here will be what Hodgkinson et al. (2007) identified as a 'rough continuum' of types of learning culture (p. 66); those whereby the features operating within it converge and are *synergistic*, and those which are defined by *conflict*. Cultures defined as synergistic are those in which many factors influencing it are 'pulling in similar directions', whereas cultures defined by conflict are those framed by divergence and difference and have a 'problematic' and detrimental effect on learning (cf. Hodgkinson et al., 2007: 66). Between these polarised points are any assortment of converging and divergent relationships which combine to make each unique learning culture what it is. The findings discussed in previous chapters, and outlined briefly above, show a multitude of interacting features which fit variously across this spectrum; this can be particularly identified within the discussion of *autonomy*, *course status*, *staff attitudes* and *safety*. Here, these features will be considered within this framework to draw together the picture that has begun to describe the learning culture at both the 'zoom' (Biesta, 2011: 203) of the Open Academy and the wider prison.

8.2.1 Autonomy, Inclusion and Exclusion

The relationship between the practices of education and the opportunity to exercise, and be treated as agents of, autonomy have resonated throughout this thesis. The frustration of autonomy is a central feature of the very essence of imprisonment and one of Sykes's initial 'pains' of imprisonment (Sykes, 1958), which some authors have rightly argued can be mitigated through the provision of education (cf. Warr, 2016). However, as Chapter Four demonstrated, when education is experienced as being enforced – as was reported by many residents across the prison when reflecting on the practice of education delivery across the prison estate – it can also work to *reinforce* the experience of such oppressive structures.

The Open Academy was in part able to respond to this frustration by providing a space which allowed for autonomy to be exercised by centralising a peer led structure in the shaping of the model. This 'push factor' (Hughes, 2012), a force within the regime of the prison which created a motivation to join the Open Academy, encouraged students into the route of distance learning and the Open Academy Self-Study programme through the choices that could be exercised not only in the subject and level of the course, but also *how* it was to be studied.

The development of the 'oasis' of the Academy also appeared to be due in part to the nature of the peer support model and how it was implemented. The prevalence of peer supported and peer led models are increasing across the prison estate, with authors arguing that this is somewhat driven by the cost-effectiveness of diverting prison staff resources to other areas (Devilley et al., 2005; Fletcher and Batty, 2012). However, the many benefits of the model were clearly articulated by students and peer managers, as was reflected upon in Chapters Five and Six. The ability of the peer managers to create an emotionally safe learning environment through their shared and first-hand experiences also reflects findings reported elsewhere within the literature (Devilley et al., 2005; HMIP, 2016a). Thus, a sector-wide push towards the increased use of peer mentors, coupled with students' and potential students'

motivations, and supported by the nature of the educational opportunities within the space, led to a convergence of cultural forces moving in the direction of *autonomy*.

However, the development of a synergistic culture, despite potentially leading to effective learning, is not necessarily an inherently positive process. As Hodkinson et al. (2007) observed, 'in most synergistic sites, that very synergy was constructed at a cost to some students, through subtle processes of exclusion' (p. 69). This can be clearly seen in the processes through which the criteria for inclusion to the Academy were created and maintained by both the peer mentors and the students themselves. By permitting the right 'type' of student – the hard worker who is there for the 'right' reasons – the boundaries of the learning community of the Academy were able to be shaped into permitting the *right type* of autonomous student into the community. The protectionism which accompanied the policing of these boundaries led to some conflict. This was most notably observed when the holders of restricted powers – the peer managers – required the additional support of the wing-based officers to reinforce these boundaries. Although this level of policing at the boundary of the learning community was upheld through the efforts of peer managers and students, ultimately the powers of policing the *right type* of autonomous student fell to the actors of the prison institution: wing-based officers and senior decision-makers.

8.2.2 Synergy, Conflict and Status

The prison-wide narratives explored in Chapter Four made it clear that the levels and variety of subjects centrally available within the educational provision of the prison did not meet the aspirational needs of many current or potential students. The absence of such provision, while inherently negative, was undoubtedly a feature of the learning culture at Swaleside which created the conditions for students to embrace the opportunity of the Open Academy. Indeed, the flexibility of that learning space – supporting both formal distance-learning and informal studies – met this deficit in a way that even the most well-resourced prison Education Department could not. Further, as the level of the courses available at the Open Academy had been established externally, via providers including the Open University, the educational

provision there offered a certain degree of perceived or felt *status* which again served to create a synergistic element to the initiative. Symbolically, it mattered deeply to the students of the Open Academy that they were engaging with nationally recognised courses provided by bodies external to the prison. This signalling effect of the courses has been demonstrated to have been a significant feature of the mechanism whereby the Open Academy functions when 'at its best'. This permeated through the production of studenthood identities developed through the Self-Study practices, increasing its perceived status amongst students of the Academy. Indeed, students did not always distinguish between the courses that were being studied through formal distance learning and those that were informalised through Self-Study, with the Open Academy space being referred to by many as *The OU Room* (Fieldnotes, June 2016).

Thus, this aspect of the unique learning culture developing at Swaleside also produced *status conflict*, evident in the tension between students' perceptions of informal Self-Study practices and the status that these courses held outside the Open Academy. Despite this spectrum between formal and informal courses and study through which the Open Academy made access to Open University resources available to a wide audience, this was not an analysis shared by others outside the prison. This can be compared to the culture observed by Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003) within a GNVQ business studies learning site, where the high status which the students accorded to their course of study conflicted heavily with that of potential employers, and their assumption that it would lead directly to a good job 'conflicted with the structural positioning and content of the course' (Hodkinson et al., 2003: p. 70). Like students interviewed by Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003), the status of these Self-Study courses formed an 'affirmation' to those students, that they could outwardly project, that they were 'no longer 'dossers and tossers' but legitimate learners 'constructing a good future for themselves' (p. 429).

8.2.3 Synergy and conflict in staff attitudes

The complexity of staff-prisoner relationships in the shaping of a learning culture has arisen repeatedly throughout this thesis. First addressed in Chapter Four at a prison-wide level, the complexities became yet more nuanced at the level of the Academy and the wing-based relationships shaping its operation. It is clear that these relationships are simultaneously structural, relational and personal. However, attitudes to education and innovations have been demonstrated to play an important role in the shaping of these relationships, around the Open Academy and the work of the Skills Advisors, for example. Grounded within these prisoner experiences, Chapter Seven proposed a typology reflecting the roles that staff can play in the support of prisoner educational trajectories.

The Open Academy came into being because it was driven through the energies of staff determined to promote and embed educational initiatives across the prison. These *crusaders* came from both the departments responsible for this agenda and from the uniformed frontline staff at officer grade. From the conception and development of the initiative to fighting for it when it was being threatened by wider forces around the prison, these crusaders were fundamental to the existence and continuation of the Academy. However, one of these such wider forces was the 'status quo' being driven by the perceived *apathy* of many other members of staff both within and beyond the wing. This conflict was deep and enduring and had both symbolic and very tangible consequences for the students within the Open Academy and ultimately the Open Academy itself.

8.2.4 Conflicting meanings of safety

The challenge of conceptualising and practically applying an understanding of the role of safety in the provision of education and the development of learning cultures has resonated throughout this thesis. Most visibly within the culture across the breadth of the prison, the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* data in Chapter Four highlighted that the enduring and growing issues of physical safety inhibited the practices of the

Education Department and fed into the tenor of the prison-wide learning culture. The inability for the prison-wide survey to suitably capture the meaning which prison residents ascribe to 'safety' in the context of a learning culture appeared in part to be due to the survey's focus on emotional and intellectual safety. In the context of Swaleside – which is also referred to by prison residents across the secure estate as 'Stabside' or 'Stab-city' (Hatton, 2018) – an environment where physical safety continued to dominate the daily concerns of students and potential students (HMIP, 2016), exploring other forms of safety became understandably less significant.

The Open Academy provided a response to this widespread perceived threat to safety on some levels. For individuals who did not feel safe leaving the wing, the Academy provided a space for meaningful purposeful activity. Further, the peer led space and the informal model of the Self-Study programme acted in synergy to create within the Academy a space of intellectual and emotional safety where tentative studenthood identities could safely be rehearsed.

However, the *physical* safety of students of the Academy operated in deep conflict to the culture of the remainder of the wing and the wider prison. This was thrown into stark light both during the riot mentioned elsewhere in this thesis and when a member of the Academy was stabbed just outside the entrance to the study room. The core point here is that in a prison and on a wing that is fundamentally *unsafe*, we must always consider the ethical implications of promoting a space where vulnerabilities (academic, emotional or otherwise) are encouraged.

This has important implications for the consideration of the role that innovative initiatives such as the Open Academy, and education more widely, can and should play in the development and maintenance of safety in a deeply troubled prison estate. This study has highlighted the importance of the situated culture of an initiative in understanding its development and the role that it can play. Understanding the myriad priorities of a prison is necessary to position such an initiative. However, as demonstrated in Chapter Seven, the fact that students experienced the Academy to be 'not a priority' within the prison produced a sense of injustice in them. This can in

turn disrupt an otherwise settled community, which taps into wider debates on the problems with perceived 'procedural injustice' (see Jackson, Tyler, Bradford et al., 2010, for a deeper discussion of the potential implications of perceived 'injustice' for the legitimacy of prison regimes). However, as Ryan argued in the previous chapter: 'There are so many more important things that need to come before we can focus on people's education... I would also like people to be able to walk around the whole prison feeling safe.' Thus, when positioned in a system with restricted and restrictive resources – and a great range of pressing priorities to meet within them – the question of whether education *should be* a priority is problematic in relation to fundamental issues of safety.

8.3 Learning of practices & practices of learning

In the application of a cultural theory of learning, the analysis engaged in throughout this thesis sought to move beyond a description of the culture of the Open Academy and looked to understand how these cultural features intertwine to determine the learning which is made possible through the culture. As such, the purpose of this section is to discuss the *learning of practices*, and the *practices of learning* which together shape the picture of how the culture impacted upon those within it (James and Biesta, 2007). These concepts will be briefly outlined here. Firstly, the *learning of practices* is related to 'the kinds of change, shaping, development or socialisation that people undergo in a learning culture [which] includes *learning to be something or someone*, and *learning to become something or someone*' (p. 86, emphasis added). Secondly, *practices of learning* relate to 'what definition of learning prevails and are enacted in the learning culture'; that is, 'what sorts of learning are promoted, permitted, inhibited or ruled out' (James and Biesta, 2007: 86). Both of these notions are important when trying to make sense of the other features of learning cultures, particularly in terms of the ways in which such cultures *directly* influence types of change in those operating within them. It is this element of the research which seeks to move beyond a description of the learning culture and situate it firmly within a *cultural theory of learning*. The significance of this to the current approach is due to

the understanding that, 'if learning is culturally constructed, so is the view about what counts as good learning' (p. 36). The authors state that the learning cultures that they studied varied on a number of dimensions: the extent to which they are *immersing*; *intentional* in their attempts to change people; attuned to a *specific vocational field*; and *transforming* for the people within them (p. 86). Of particular relevance to the current data and analysis, and therefore discussed in detail below, is the extent to which the Open Academy was home to both an *immersive* and *transformative* learning culture.

Within the Open Academy, the diversity of the subjects being studied, the mode of study, and the separation for many from the explicit vocational field of study, meant that the learning culture therein was perhaps less of a positive 'immersive' space than it could have otherwise been. However, it did provide, at points in time, immersive spaces in the development and rehearsal of *studenthood*. This was particularly so when seen in relation to the ways in which distance and higher-level learning generally functions around the prison estate; that is, in isolation, behind the closed and locked door of one's cell. Conversely, the 'informal' and identity-orienting interactions were also key to the attraction of the Open Academy and where it operated at its best. This development of socialisation is a cultural feature which underpins the benefits and mechanisms of the Academy.

However, a perhaps more pertinent cultural immersion was that which accompanied the processes of the 'Closed Academy'. That is, when it was operating well, the Open Academy formed an 'oasis' distinct from the rest of the prison in the minds and social lives of the students, and the emotional geography of the prison. However, when it was transitioning from the Open Academy to the Closed Academy, it became another symbolic mechanism of the broader oppressive prison apparatus, reinforcing restrictions on routes to agentic decision-making. This ultimately immersed students further in their counter-authority 'prisoner' identities rather than nurturing their tentative and emergent 'student' identities.

Despite the potentially negative flipside of the ‘immersive’ elements of the Academy’s learning culture, the ‘kinds of change, shaping, development or socialisation’ (James & Biesta, 2007:86) that students described as occurring through their association with the initiative were nothing less than *transformative* in a number of ways, as outlined in Chapter Six.

The potential for such transformative experiences are shaped heavily by the learning culture of a particular site, which in turn determines both the learning that is *possible* and that which is *hindered* within it. As James and Biesta (2007) note above, central to this is the ‘definition of learning [that] prevails’ and ‘what sorts of learning are promoted, permitted, inhibited or ruled out’. In these terms, it was clear that ‘learning’ was *not* defined in this specific learning culture by the acquisition of internally, or externally-accredited qualifications. As discussed in Chapter Six, simply engaging with the high-status level of the Open University courses that made up the resources of the Academy, with signalling power inside and outside the prison walls, appeared to represent a core practice of learning, irrespective of whether or not students were formally enrolled or if the course was ever finished. Indeed, it was this very flexibility of the learning on offer that defined its value, particularly for emergent students. Students who valued more informal learning saw success as something beyond that of the completion of courses; both for those involved in Self-Study (i.e. simply reading the study materials) and those distance learners who were using the space. Here then, the defining features of ‘success’ within the space were not determined by academic progress in the formalised and linear sense; rather, this was determined by the individual students themselves. This was explicitly so in the case of the Self-Study students, but also by those who took pride in different features of the status of studenthood, such as the number of disciplines they touched upon, how long they had been studying, and how comfortable they were with taking notes.

8.4 Lessons for prison-based educational innovations from a learning cultures viewpoint

The above elements of this chapter situated the current study explicitly within a framework of learning cultures. Through this it demonstrated the utility of the application of this conceptual structure to understanding the Open Academy. The current section now reverses the focus in order to demonstrate the potential implications of the findings from the current study to educational innovations in prisons.

8.4.1 Understand the *cultural educational infrastructure* of the prison

An argument that has developed throughout this thesis is that in order to understand the Open Academy, indeed any innovation, it is not enough to simply look inwardly at the processes operating as part of it. A situated understanding of the cultural forces which frame an innovation – and will necessarily be operating within and through it – can at best help support an institution in facilitating an initiative. However, as described throughout this thesis, the particular features and forces, and the way in which they interact, will remain unique to the initiative and the setting and temporal placement of it. Here, the term *cultural educational infrastructure* is brought in as a way of understanding this framework.

Moving away from an understanding of physical infrastructure, this concept is here used to refer to the ‘softer’ features and elements that have arisen (in addition to the basic infrastructure) throughout this thesis as examples of elements that can support or hinder an educational initiative. It refers to the network of individuals, communication channels, behaviours and support available to those who can play the roles of *crusaders* or *allies*; or support peer mentors within a system to reach their full potential without becoming overworked and stressed (cf. HMIP, 2016a).

As the learning cultures approach adopted throughout this work denotes, understanding the strengths and weaknesses of this cultural educational infrastructure in an institution can lead to an understanding of the *practices of learning* that will arise within it; that is the *types* of learning that are encouraged and made possible, and those that are discouraged, hindered or made impossible. As a pertinent example, Liebling et al. (2010) rightly state that staff-prisoner relationships are at ‘the heart of all things that successful prisons should be aiming to do’ (p. xv). However, as Chapter Seven showed, such relationships are built upon attitudes and perceptions which are embedded in far wider structural and cultural constructs.

The positioning of peer support structures, such as that underpinning the model of the Open Academy, can go some way to supporting an inclusive and empowering educational infrastructure. However, as can be inferred by the case study of the Open Academy, and as demonstrated by HMIP (2016a), the *structures of support* for these roles are vital.

8.4.2 Be cautious of the perils of innovation, hope and broken promises

This thesis leads to a conclusory implication that innovation is not *inherently* a good thing, even when the practices it supports are positive. Chapter Five reflected on the experiences of a number of students who reported positive educational opportunities being halted prematurely due to the unpredictability of the prison system, including Ozzie’s experience of the PICTA programme and Christopher’s disrupted GCSE studies. This also operated at the level of the Open Academy whereby students were removed from the initiative as a response to the prison’s riot and also through the numerous processes which, when combined, formed the ‘Closed Academy’ as discussed in Chapter Seven. A significant theme echoing throughout the narratives forming the centrepiece of this research was thus that of *broken promises*. This is not unique to the Open Academy. In reference to a prison-university partnership initiative entitled Learning Together, Evans (2017, as cited in Bennallick, 2017) refers to the ‘torture of hope’. He first became involved in the project whilst serving a prison sentence and argued that for people in prison to even engage in such an educational initiative is ‘a

bestowing of trust on an unfathomable scale.’ Innovators working in this environment must therefore recognise the risks that students are taking to become involved. As shown in Chapter Seven, the implications of the *broken promises* leading to the ‘Closed Academy’ can be hugely damaging to student identities and developing learning communities. However, this is certainly not to argue that innovative practice should not be encouraged in a prison environment and indeed this study indicates that innovation facilitated hope and confidence in numerous ways, as discussed throughout Chapter Six.

8.4.3 Recognise that rehearsing studenthood within prison brings its own rewards

The Open Academy served several educational purposes and needs as has been discussed throughout this thesis. The Self-Study practices were particularly interesting in the way in which this was able to respond to the particular needs, positions and experiences of students, some of whom had experienced significant educational trauma related to their previous educational experiences; such needs therefore appear to have been better suited to a peer support model, which was made possible by the Self-Study programme. The synergy between what was being sought by students – a safe space to explore the experiences of being a student in an ostensibly supportive, comfortable environment (if one sets aside for the moment, the multifarious issues of safety, exclusion, and violence that *also* vied for space within this learning culture) – and what was provided wherever possible by the peer support, operated effectively for these students. The construction of the space, and the structure of the Self-Study approach, was experienced as suitably formal for those that sought it, yet was experienced as informal for those who were looking for less formalised approaches to becoming a student than distance learning offered. Support was also, progressively, provided by peers as personal confidence and community cohesion grew. This was particularly significant for those with particularly traumatic previous experience who benefited from the space to rehearse tentative identities in a supportive environment.

However, of those who were enrolled on formalised distance learning courses, many students reported that they rarely used the space to conduct their own studying practices, such as writing essays, reading core course textbooks or taking notes. This conflicts with the initial prison intentions for the space and the expectations and perceptions from others on the wing about what happens within it, creating an element of division in the cultural framing of the Academy. However, this ultimately supported the picture of what the Academy was providing for the students within it, which was more complex than simply a space outside of their cells to study. Rather, it formed a space wherein students, distance learners and Self-Study students alike, could rehearse their identities of studenthood. This space to rehearse studenthood, away from many practices of the studying itself, became a vital feature of the use and function of the Open Academy.

It is thus through the framework provided by the legitimacy and status of these courses that the Open Academy provided a space to rehearse the type of studenthood which transcends disciplines, levels and even qualifications in a way that not only challenges the dominant approach to education adopted in prisons, but also challenges wider target-driven approaches to education in the community, which largely converge around one or more of these structures. Other prison-based learning communities which have been asserted in the literature in England and Wales and beyond, have coalesced largely around discipline and level, particularly where they reflect taught higher-education programmes (cf. Duguid and Pawson, 1998; Reuss, 1997) but also where they have developed in a self-directed way through distance learning students themselves (cf. Hughes, 2012; Pike, 2014). The Open Academy experience suggests that for these students, the experience of *coming together as students* was a sufficient criterion in shaping the learning community within it.

8.4.2 Engaging with legitimate external bodies

The role of external organisations in the Open Academy has been central since the initial donation which framed it. The significance of pressure from external organisations was also demonstrated in Auty et al.'s (2016) study with eight prisons. In this project, prisons set targets for an initiative in collaboration with an external facilitator. There was also an attached structure that brought external bodies in under a short timeline, planned in advance. Here, senior managers and other educational facilitators described such external scrutiny as a 'spark' that allowed the project to stay 'at the top of the pile' (p. 46), or in the language of students throughout the current study, *a priority*. Such a structured approach to draw on external accountability was not yet sufficiently built into the practice of the Open Academy, but could have supported the frameworks of accountability which appeared to be missing. One approach which could support this idea of accountability is the development of a 'board' made up of representatives who work with interested or affiliated organisations. In this case, it could be comprised of representatives from the Open University, Prisoners' Education Trust, Novus and other key stakeholders who would meet regularly throughout the year. This could support those working on the day-to-day functioning of the Academy and also provide an impetus for others within the prison to work with the peer management and help make the Open Academy a suitable priority.

8.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has returned to the findings presented throughout the earlier analysis chapters – Four to Seven – and brought them together under an explicit application of the frameworks developed by James and Biesta (2007) as part of their theory of learning cultures. Through an analysis placing these features on the 'rough continuum' (Hodkinson et al., 2007: 66) between synergy and conflict, the chapter has shown the key tensions in the development of the learning space when situated within the wider prison. It went on to consider some of the *learning of practices* and *practices of*

learning taking place within the Open Academy, therefore outlining some of the ways the culture of the learning site *changed* those operating within it. Through this, the chapter offered a contribution to the education literature, specifically through this unique application to a prison-based learning site. It then went on to explore some key lessons that this study of the Open Academy can bring to the wider prison estate, particularly in relation to the areas of concern when seeking to embed educational innovations.

Chapter Nine

Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

Throughout this thesis, I have sought to develop a picture of the learning culture which was emerging within the Open Academy, as set within the wider culture of HMP Swaleside. I strove to centralise the voices and experiences of the men who, both as peer managers and as students, have worked to shape the Academy into the uniquely positioned space and set of practices that it became. This has been built upon a wider understanding of the experiences across the breadth of the prison, captured through a mixed quantitative and qualitative survey. This study is the first to explore the practice and positioning of the Open Academy in HMP Swaleside and is the first prison-based study to be explicitly framed by the understanding of learning cultures developed by Hodkinson, James, Biesta and colleagues (Hodkinson and James, 2007; James and Biesta, 2007). Yet, in doing so, it builds upon a number of studies that have recognised the significance of institutional culture in the experience and practice of prison-based education (cf. Farley and Pike, 2018; Hughes, 2012; Pike, 2014), recognised the role that educational communities can have in influencing a wider institutional culture (cf. Hughes, 2012; Pike, 2014) and research that has brought together perspectives from the study of education and those of the prison (cf. Hughes, 2012, Reuss, 1997). This conclusory chapter addresses the key findings of the study and reflects on how they can be built upon and applied in both practice and future research.

9.2 Revisiting the key findings of the thesis

This exploration of the learning culture of the Open Academy and the relationship to wider features of HMP Swaleside was led by a number of guiding research questions. These were as follows:

- What factors framed the experience of the learning culture of the Open Academy and that across the prison?
- Are experiences of a learning culture most closely bound to individuals, relationships, physical environment or other contributing factors?
- How fixed, or how permeable, are the boundaries of cultures of learning within and across this prison?
- What role can formal and informal higher-level and distance learners play in the development of a learning culture in prison?

With these questions in mind, the following overview outlines the key findings from the study.

The previous chapters have drawn out a range of cultural features and forces that influence the overall learning culture of the prison research site. These have included those which operate at the micro, meso and macro levels, and have interacted with a number of fields of cultural influence. For example, **Chapter Four** began the analysis at the meso, prison-wide level. Yet the results which arose suggested ways in which macro fields of influence were operating through the institution. The more negative experience of the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* dimensions of non-white survey respondents demonstrates an implication of the field of race operating within and through the prison. Relational elements and prisoner perceptions of staff emerged as significant and complex in the ways in which they shaped the prison-wide learning culture. Relational expectations were mitigated through shifts from previous experience (such as with reduced expectations of gym staff) and through an understanding of the pressures facing staff (such as with the presentation of 'empathy from below' (Saint, 2012). The narratives rehearsed across the institution began to shape the understanding of the dominant features of the culture which reverberated through the thesis. These included the problematic relationship between practices of education and the exercise of autonomy; the restrictive nature of the available

provision; the meaning and experience of restricted 'access' and the multifaceted experience and implications of 'safety.'

In **Chapter Five**, the attention was narrowed down to a different 'level of zoom' (Biesta, 2011: 203) beginning at the micro, individual level and widening to begin to encompass the Open Academy itself. By looking back into the educational histories and the learning careers of the Academy students we saw a mixed picture of educational trauma, vulnerabilities and aspiration. Repeated through educational and criminal justice institutions, the themes of *interruption*, *exclusion* and *unfulfilled potential* were denoted as shaping the positions of students. Through this understanding, the evolving educational practices of the Academy, and the *meanings* attributed to these practices, began to become apparent; the ways in which formality and informality of practice intertwined provided a flexibility that met a variety of student needs, both their vulnerabilities and aspirations.

The core findings of **Chapter Six** were centred on the Open Academy as viewed through the lens of appreciative inquiry; that is, when it was operating 'at its best' (cf. Liebling, 1999). Through this lens, we were able to see the ways in which the space was constructed *in opposition to* the 'madness' of the prison surrounding it, providing a calm, relaxed 'oasis'. The interrelationship between students' individual identities and the use of the space created a platform for the rehearsal of 'studenthood', whether that be emergent or better established in the earlier identity of the students. Again we saw the impact of wider fields operating through the space. For example, the significance of race identified in Chapter Four extended into these micro, meso and macro-level features of individual learning journeys. This was seen in the sociological awakening of Mackenzie who described his racial identity as underpinning his motivations for study and shaping his future intentions with his newly uncovered sense of self and society. The shaping of a tentative learning community was found in the relational elements of shared experience, camaraderie and inspirational interactions which transcended disciplinary boundaries. Significantly, it was the status and role of higher-level and distance learning, both formal and informal, which underpinned these conceptions of studenthood. Thus the way that higher-level and

distance learners and courses can influence a learning culture was wider than simply the formal course, or the individual learners. Their existence played a significant cultural role in shaping what studenthood looked like in a way that was accessible even to those who, through the Self-Study programme, were not formally enrolled in a distance learning programme.

Finally, **Chapter Seven** showed the limitations in the picture presented in Chapter Six. As restrictions to access increased, students became increasingly frustrated. Exacerbated by what students interpreted as the appropriation (and indeed, the *misappropriation*) of the narrative in terms of the external presentation of the Academy, students found that their experience of the Open Academy became one that reinforced the more oppressive powers of the prison, rather than challenged it. Central to the understanding of this was the analysis of the roles that staff across the prison played in the promotion of education more widely, which denoted the perception of an overwhelming *apathy* towards education and educational innovations. The chapter thus positioned the Academy firmly within the strong, deeply embedded cultural forces functioning at the wider prison level, forces led by cultural features such as staff disillusionment. The implications of the initiative's eventual shaping as the 'Closed Academy' reinforced the student experience of the 'absence of care', reported across the institution in Chapter Four, and worked to dismantle the tentatively developing identities of studenthood described in the previous chapter.

Further, as explored through the discussion in **Chapter Eight** of the culturally significant features of the Open Academy, the learning culture can be described as one that is problematically positioned on the 'rough continuum' between synergy and conflict (Hodkinson et al., 2007: p. 68). When the focus has 'zoom[ed] in' (Biesta, 2011: 203) to the space of the Academy itself, the above features operate with varying levels of synergy. The expectations, motivations, intentions and practices of the Academy converge for many of the students when they are *within* the space. However, in order to 'follow the learning' (Biesta, 2011: 203) this study required looking immediately outside the doors of the Academy and onto the wing and the prison within which it is situated. The features of the culture operating here were often in deep and direct

conflict to the community which was developing within the space of the Academy itself. These conflicts have been shown to fundamentally undermine elements of the potential of the Academy, as well as the individual and community identities being constructed within it. The *cultural bleed*, operating through the strength of the cultural features moving through porous boundaries, is therefore one which has more powerful implications when it flows in one direction (that is, from the prison into the Academy) rather than the other (from the Academy into the prison).

This thesis has highlighted a number of features of the wider prison culture which could work to either support or inhibit the flourishing of an educational initiative. These, it is argued here, form features of a wider *cultural educational infrastructure* of the prison. The above discussion argues that the strength of the cultural features developed through an initiative such as the Open Academy are dependent on the strength of the cultural educational infrastructure which supports it; the extent to which the features that shape it are operating synergistically. Therefore, to understand the role that such an initiative can, and should, play in the promotion of a wider system of safety or autonomy, for example, we must look to increase the synergy between the cultural features.

9.3 Implications and recommendations for practice

In order to articulate some practicable implications arising from this research, this section will first reflect upon some of the lessons outlined in section 8.4 above before moving onto additional recommendations for practice.

The *cultural educational infrastructure* of a prison necessarily frames any educational innovation within a prison site. Situating an innovation such that it complements existing relationships, attitudes and other cultural forces can support the successful embedding of an educational initiative. As discussed above, peer support structures can support an inclusive and empowering educational infrastructure, yet strong structures of support for peer workers are vital.

Innovations in prison should not be seen as inherently a good thing. Disruption, broken promises and an inability to complete a project that one has started can further ingrain previous educational trauma which many in prison have experienced. Thus, careful consideration should be paid to the longevity and sustainability of any new educational initiative and support for students should be in place in case of it coming to an early end.

External organisations can play a significant role in supporting the embedding of in-prison initiatives, particularly those which may be outside the traditional structures of education in prison such as the Open Academy. Such initiatives should consider structures which promote accountability for those involved in the initiative, including the 'board' of representatives discussed in section 8.4.2 above. Bodies, including charities and providers, with a broad interest in prison education outcomes should consider taking on these roles.

A central strength of the Academy which was valued by students and mentors alike was the centrality of the peer management structure. The prisoner-led spaces, and the 'oasis' that peer supporters were uniquely positioned to shape, have been shown to be key in the resultant development of studenthood for existing distance learners and emergent learners. The use of higher and further educational resources was fundamentally influential in determining the overarching functions – motivational, symbolic and transportive – of the Open Academy. Prisons across the sector could build from these basic frameworks.

However, it is vital that such peer roles are recognised as part of a wider cultural educational infrastructure, one which values their unique position and recognises the particular challenges inherent in managing such a role whilst also holding the status of 'prisoner'. This infrastructure needs to work closely with staff from around the prison at different levels of authority, to work with the cultural features which may be functioning in opposition to those of a developing learning space.

There is a balance to be struck in the positioning of officers in a peer led space like the Open Academy. On the one hand, the autonomy it permits for prisoners has been demonstrated to be central to its attraction and function. However, as was shown in Chapter Seven, members of staff, particularly officers, can play variable roles in the support of these initiatives. Those who are able to relate to the experiences of students due to their own engagement in further and higher education or distance learning can be experienced as *facilitators*. The resources making up the Open Academy were available for prison staff to access. However, during the course of the study, no staff members took up this opportunity. Discussions with officers around the prison suggest that although in theory they are interested in using the resources of the Open Academy, they are not interested in staying within the prison after the end of their shift to do this. One way of addressing this could be to promote staff groups on particular courses and promote them taking books back home with them. Additional activities that could take place within the Academy, such as cross-discipline academic reading groups, which could be open to those prisoner and staff students who choose to attend, could also be useful in promoting cohesion and synergy across this particular cultural division.

This research has been concluded during a period of extensive change in the commissioning of prison education, notably following the recommendations of the Coates review (2016). April 2019 will see the beginning of a new structure for prison education commissioning with a system incorporating a regional Prison Education Framework alongside a Dynamic Purchasing System whereby providers outside the main regional structure can be selected to work with individual prisons. Significantly, this provides more 'autonomy' to prison governors to tailor the educational provision within their institution to the needs of those residing in their prison. Although this is likely to provide a widely welcomed sense of flexibility in education commissioning, this time of change can also bring with it uncertainty as to future directions. The implications of this research as described above should be considered by prison governors exploring new provision and educational innovations in their institutions,

9.4 Future research directions

Future research could respond to the findings above firstly by qualitatively exploring the staff perspective and position in learning cultures more directly. This would be particularly interesting if intersected with features that arose as significant in the development of the learning culture in this study but was unable to be explored to its fullest, most significantly macro cultural structures such as race and class. Further, extended longitudinal research would be of interest in continuing to explore cultural changes over time and further validate the study's findings in understanding which features operate most strongly under which circumstances.

This study has been the second to use the *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* to develop a quantitative measure of some indicative features of the experience of the learning culture in a prison. This survey was deemed to be the most appropriate tool as when it was created by Auty et al. (2016), it denoted the first attempt to quantitatively explore such phenomena in a prison. Selecting this research tool also provided an opportunity for the current study to support elements of the survey's scale development (cf. Clark and Watson, 1995). This can occur through an iterative process whereby qualitative features explored throughout this study can support an understanding of the scales it seeks to measure. The next steps for the survey are to continue honing the dimensions in light of the findings of this study. A particular emphasis should be on the role and conceptualisation of 'safety' as this emerged as central to the prison-based experience of a learning culture, yet the quantitative survey is not yet suitably capturing this multi-layered experience. This, alongside the wider data collected for this study, will support the scale development as future research could, and should, work towards further validation of the scale. The *Rehabilitative Cultures Survey* has the potential to provide a practical tool to support prisons to working across their institutions to create an environment that promotes rehabilitation. This can be a particularly useful tool in the frameworks of accountability that the new education policy agenda is moving towards (as discussed in Chapter One). As well as providing in-depth analyses of a single prison and tracking change in prisons over time, the tool could become a useful mechanism for exploring the

differences in learning cultures *between* prisons as well as over time, as with the MQPL and SQL surveys.

Finally, the current climate across the prison estate is framed by persistent staffing shortages, violence, overcrowding and a high churn of new and inexperienced officer recruits. It is vital that research continues to explore the relationship between these features and institutional cultures of learning. The need for sustained and continued research engagement in this area is made all the more pressing by the current upheaval of funding structures for the commissioning of education provision in prisons. The role that education *should* play in the current environment has been shown to pose complex and multifaceted questions laden with numerous dilemmas. Future research should remain committed to asking and seeking answers to these important questions.

Bibliography

- Anderson, J.R., Reder, L.M. and Simon, H.A. (1996). Situated learning and education. *Educational Researcher*, 25(4), 5-11.
- Anderson, J.R., Reder, L.M. and Simon, H.A. (1997). Rejoinder: Situative versus Cognitive Perspectives: Form versus Substance. *Educational Researcher*, 26(1), 18-21.
- Anderson, S. and Cains, C. (2011). *The Social Care Needs of Short-Sentence Prisoners*. Revolving Doors.
- Aos, S., Miller, M., and Drake, E. (2006). *Evidence-based Adult Corrections Programs: What works and what does not*. Olympia, Washington: Washington State Institute for Public Policy.
- Aresti, A. and Darke, S. (2016). Practicing convict criminology: Lessons learned from British academic activism. *Critical Criminology*. 24(4), 533-547.
- Armstrong, R., and Ludlow, A. (2016). Educational partnerships between universities and prisons: how learning together can be individually, socially and institutionally transformative. *Prison Service Journal*, 225, 9-17.
- Auty, K., Taylor, C., Bennallick, M., and Champion, N. (2016). *Involve, Improve, Inspire: Evaluation of the effectiveness of promoting Learner Voice in eight custodial establishments in England in developing a rehabilitative culture*. London: Prisoners' Education Trust.
- Baer, L. D., & Ravneberg, B. (2008). The outside and inside in Norwegian and English prisons. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 90(2), 205-216.
- Barker, D., Quennerstedt, M., & Annerstedt, C. (2015). Inter-student interactions and student learning in health and physical education: A post-Vygotskian analysis. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 20(4), 409-426.
- Bathmaker, A. M. (2013). Defining 'knowledge' in vocational education qualifications in England: an analysis of key stakeholders and their constructions of knowledge, purposes and content. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 65(1), 87-107.
- Bayliss, P. (2003). Learning behind bars: time to liberate prison education. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 35(2), 157-172.
- Bazeley, P. (2009). Analysing Mixed Methods, In Andrew, S. and Halcomb, E.J. (eds) *Mixed Methods Research for Nursing and the Health Sciences*, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell.
- BBC (2016). Birmingham, Bedford and Lewes prison riots followed 'low staff warnings'. *BBC News* [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-38364167> [Accessed Aug 13 2018].

- Belenky, M. F. and Stanton, A. V. (2000). Inequality, development and connected knowing. In Mezirow and Associates (ed.) *Learning as transformation: critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bénatouïl, T. (1999). A tale of two sociologies: The critical and the pragmatic stance in contemporary French sociology. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2(3), 379-396.
- Bennallick, M. (2017). *Learning Together conference: building communities through collaborative learning*. Prisoners Education Trust. [online] Available at: <https://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/case-studies/learning-together-conference-building-communities-through-collaborative-learning> [Accessed March 17 2018].
- Bennett, J., Crewe, B., & Wahidin, A. (2007). *Understanding prison staff*. Willan.
- Biesta, G. (2010). Learner, student, speaker: Why it matters how we call those we teach. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 42(5-6), 540-552.
- Biesta, G. (2011). From learning cultures to educational cultures: Values and judgements in educational research and educational improvement. *International Journal of Early Childhood*, 43(3), 199-210.
- Billett, S. (1996). Situated learning: Bridging sociocultural and cognitive theorising. *Learning and instruction*, 6(3), 263-280.
- Billett, S. (2002). 'Critiquing workplace learning discourse: participation and continuity at work, *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 34(1), 56-67.
- Birmingham Live (2018). Government steps in to take over 'appalling' Birmingham Prison. [online] Available at: <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/government-steps-take-over-appalling-15048593> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2018].
- Bloomer, M., & Hodkinson, P. (2000). Learning careers: continuity and change in young people's dispositions to learning. *British Educational Research Journal*, 26(5), 583-597.
- Bosworth, M. and Kellezi, B. (2013). Developing a Measure of Quality of Life in Detention, *Prison Service Journal*, 205: 10-15.
- Bourdieu, P. (1986). 'The forms of capital, translated by R. Nice, in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, edited by J.G. Richardson. New York: Greenwood Press, 241 – 58.
- Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social space and symbolic power. *Sociological theory*, 7(1), 14-25.
- Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. C. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture* (Vol. 4). London: Sage.

- Bozick, R., Steele, J., Davis, L., & Turner, S. (2018). Does providing inmates with education improve postrelease outcomes? A meta-analysis of correctional education programs in the United States. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 1-40.
- Braggins, J and Talbot, J. (2005). *Wings of Learning: the role of the prison officer in supporting prisoner education*, The Centre for Social Justice.
- Braggins, J., & Talbot, J. (2003). *Time to learn: Prisoners' views on prison education*. Prison Reform Trust.
- Brookfield, S. (1986). *Understanding and facilitating adult learning: A comprehensive analysis of principles and effective practices*. UK: McGraw-Hill Education.
- Brosens, D., Croux, F., & De Donder, L. (2018). Barriers to prisoner participation in educational courses: Insights from a remand prison in Belgium. *International Review of Education*, 1-20.
- Brown, J. S., Collins, A., & Duguid, P. (1989). Situated cognition and the culture of learning. *Educational researcher*, 18(1), 32-42.
- Brunton- Smith, I and Hopkins, K. (2014). The impact of experience in prison on the employment status of longer-sentenced prisoners after release: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners, *Ministry of Justice Analytical Series*, London: Ministry of Justice.
- Bulman, M. (2018). Liverpool jail 'worst inspectors have ever seen' after no improvements made since last watchdog report. *The Independent*. [online] Available at: <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/liverpool-prison-jail-worst-ever-justice-committee-watchdog-report-inspectorate-a8212206.html> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2018].
- Butler, M., & Drake, D. H. (2007). Reconsidering respect: Its role in Her Majesty's prison service. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice*, 46(2), 115-127.
- Byrne, B. (2004). Qualitative Interviewing in C. Seale (ed) *Researching Society and Culture*. London: SAGE publications
- Carrabine, E. (2005). Prison riots, social order and the problem of legitimacy. *British Journal of Criminology*, 45(6), 896-913.
- Caulfield, L., Wilson, D. and Wilkinson, D. (2009). *Continuing Positive Change in Prison and the Community: An Analysis of the Long-term and Wider Impact of the Good Vibrations Project*. Report.
- Champion and Edgar, (2013). *Through the Gateway: How Computers can Transform Rehabilitation*. Prison Reform Trust and Prisoners' Education Trust.
- Champion, N. (2015). *The Future of Prison Education Contracts: delivering better Outcomes*. Prisoner learning Alliance.

- Champion, N. (2017). *Coates: One year on*. [online] Available at: <https://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/news/coates-one-year-on> [Accessed 10 May 2018].
- Champion, N. and Aguiar, J. (2013). *Involve, Improve, Inspire: A Prisoner Learner Voice Toolkit*. Prisoners' Education Trust
- Champion, N. and Noble, J., (2016). *What is Prison Education for? A theory of change exploring the value of learning in prison*. Prisoners' Education Trust.
- Cheek (2003). The practice and politics of funded qualitative research. In N. Denzin and Y. Lincoln (eds) *Strategies of Qualitative Inquiry* (3rd ed) (pp.45-74). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Christle, C. A., Jolivette, K., and Nelson, C. M. (2005). Breaking the school to prison pipeline: Identifying school risk and protective factors for youth delinquency. *Exceptionality*, 13(2), 69-88.
- Cisco, (2011). *From Prison to Jobs*, [online] Available at: https://www.cisco.com/c/dam/en_us/training-events/netacad/WLC/pdf/cavendishUK.pdf [Accessed 24 Aug 2018].
- Clark, L.A. & Watson, D. (1995). Constructing validity: Basic issues in objective scale development. *Psychological Assessment*. 7 (3), 309–319.
- Clark, M., & Zukas, M. (2013). A Bourdieusian approach to understanding employability: becoming a 'fish in water'. *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 65(2), 208-219.
- Coates, S. (2016). *Unlocking Potential: A review of education in prison*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- Cobb, P. and Bowers, J. (1999). Cognitive and Situated Learning Perspectives in Theory and Practice, *Educational Researcher*, 28(2), 4-15.
- Cohen, S. and Taylor, L. (1972). *Psychological Survival: The Experience of Long-Term Imprisonment*. Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- Colley, H., James, D., Diment, K., & Tedder, M. (2003). Learning as becoming in vocational education and training: class, gender and the role of vocational habitus. *Journal of vocational education and training*, 55(4), 471-498.
- Condry, R. (2007). *Families shamed: The consequences of crime for relatives of serious offenders*. Cullompton, UK: Willan.
- Contu, A. and Willmott, H. (2003). Re-Embedding Situatedness: The Importance of power relations in learning theory, *Organization Science*. 14(3), 283-296.
- Council of Europe (1989). *Education in Prison: Recommendation No. R (89) 12*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

- Council of Europe (2006). *European Prison Rules*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Cox, T., Griffiths, A. and Thomson, L. (1997). *The Assessment and Management of Work-Related Stress in Prison Staff*. Nottingham: Centre for Organisational Health and Development.
- Creese, B. (2016). An assessment of the English and maths skills levels of prisoners in England. *London Review of Education*, 14(3), 13-30.
- Crewe, B. (2009). *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation, and Social Life in an English Prison*. Clarendon Studies in Criminology, OUP: Oxford.
- Crewe, B., Liebling, A., and Hulley, S. (2011). Staff culture, use of authority and prisoner quality of life in public and private sector prisons. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology*, 44(1), 94-115.
- Crewe, B., Liebling, A., and Hulley, S. (2015). Staff-Prisoner Relationships, Staff Professionalism, and the Use of Authority in Public-and Private-Sector Prisons. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 40(2), 309-344.
- Crewe, B., Warr, J., Bennett, P., & Smith, A. (2014). The emotional geography of prison life. *Theoretical Criminology*, 18(1), 56-74.
- Czerniawski, G., (2015). A race to the bottom- prison education and the English and Welsh policy context. *Journal of Education Policy*, 31(2), 198-212.
- Davies, P. (2011). Doing Interviews in Prison. In Davies, P, Francis, P & Jupp, V (Eds), *Doing Criminological Research* (pp. 161-178). London: SAGE.
- Davis, L. M., Bozick, R., Steele, J. L., Saunders, J., Miles, J.N.V., (2013). *A Meta-Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults*, RAND.
- Deakin, J. and Spencer, J. (2011). 'Sensitive Survey Research: An Oxymoron?' In Davies, P, Francis, P & Jupp, V (Eds), *Doing Criminological Research* (pp. 139-160). London: SAGE publications.
- Dearden, C. and Becker, S. (2000). *Growing up Caring: Vulnerability and Transition to Adulthood – Young Carers' Experiences*. Leicester: Youth Work Press.
- Dearden, C., & Becker, S. (2004). *Young Carers in the UK: the 2004 report*. Carers UK and the Children's Society.
- Department for Education, (2018). *Permanent and Fixed Exclusions in England: 2016 to 2017*. Department for Education and the Office for National Statistics.
- Devilly, G. J., Sorbello, L., Eccleston, L., & Ward, T. (2005). Prison-based peer-education schemes. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 10(2), 219-240.
- Digard, L. (2010). When legitimacy is denied: Offender perceptions of the prison recall system. *Probation Journal*, 57(1), 43-61.

- Drake, D. H., & Harvey, J. (2014). Performing the role of ethnographer: processing and managing the emotional dimensions of prison research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 17(5), 489-501.
- Duguid, S. (1997). Cognitive Dissidents Bite the Dust—The Demise of University Education in Canada's Prisons in *Journal of Correctional Education*, 48(2), 56-68.
- Duguid, S. (2000). *Can Prisons Work?: The Prisoner as Object and Subject in Modern Corrections*. University of Toronto Press.
- Duguid, S., & Pawson, R. (1998). Education, change, and transformation: The prison experience. *Evaluation Review*, 22(4), 470-495.
- Duwe, G., & Clark, V. (2014). The effects of prison-based educational programming on recidivism and employment. *The Prison Journal*, 94(4), 454-478.
- Earle, R. (2014). Insider and Out: Making Sense of a Prison Experience and a Research Experience. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(4), 429- 438.
- Ecclestone, K. (2007a) Commitment, compliance and comfort zones: the effects of formative assessment on vocational education students' learning careers. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*. 14(3), 315-333.
- Economic and Social Research Council, (2015). *ESRC Framework for research ethics Updated January 2015*.
- Edgar, K., & Martin, C. (2001). *Conflicts and violence in prison*. Economic and Social Research Council.
- Ellison, M., Szifris, K., Horan, R., & Fox, C. (2017). A Rapid Evidence Assessment of the effectiveness of prison education in reducing recidivism and increasing employment. *Probation Journal*, 64(2), 108-128.
- Eser, S. (2014). *The responsible man: a study in two private prisons*. PhD. University of Oxford.
- Farley, H., & Pike, A. (2018). Research on the inside: overcoming obstacles to completing a postgraduate degree in prison. *Postgraduate Education in Higher Education*, 1-24.
- Feilzer, M. (2010). Doing Mixed Methods Research Pragmatically: Implications for the Rediscovery of Pragmatism as a Research Paradigm, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 4(1): 6-16.
- Fielding, N. G., & Thomas, H. (2008). Qualitative interviewing, In *Researching Social Life*, (pp 123-144), London: SAGE.
- Fine, M., Torre, M.E., Boudin, K., Bowen, I., Clark, J., Hylton, D., Martinez, M., 'Missy', Rivera, M., Roberts, R.A., Smart, P. and Upegui, D. (2004), Participatory Action Research: From Within and Beyond Prison Bars, In Weis, L., & Fine, M. (2004). *Working method: Research and social justice*. Routledge.

- Fischer, J., Jenkins, N., Bloor, M., Neale, J., & Berney, L. (2007). *Drug user involvement in treatment decisions*. Report for Joseph Rowntree Foundation.
- Fletcher, D. R., & Batty, E. (2012). *Offender peer interventions: What do we know*. Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research.
- Forster, W and Forster, B. (1996). England and Wales: The State of Prison Education, 47(2) *Journal of Correctional Education*: 101-105.
- Friere, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin.
- Gaes, G. (2008). The impact of prison education programs on post-release outcomes. *Reentry Roundtable on Education, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, March, 31*.
- Gallacher, J., Crossan, B., Field, J., & Merrill, B. (2002). Learning careers and the social space: Exploring the fragile identities of adult returners in the new further education. *International journal of lifelong education*, 21(6), 493-509.
- Gastil, J. (2004). Adult civic education through the National Issues Forums: Developing democratic habits and dispositions through public deliberation. *Adult education quarterly*, 54(4), 308-328.
- Giordano, P. C., Cernkovich, S. A., & Rudolph, J. L. (2002). Gender, crime, and desistance: Toward a theory of cognitive transformation. *American journal of sociology*, 107(4), 990-1064.
- Goffman, E. (1961). *On the characteristics of total institutions*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Goodman, P. (2008). "It's just Black, White, or Hispanic": an observational study of racializing moves in California's segregated prison reception centers. *Law & Society Review*, 42(4), 735-770.
- GOV.UK. (2016). *Biggest shake-up of prison system announced as part of Queen's Speech*. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/biggest-shake-up-of-prison-system-announced-as-part-of-queens-speech> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2018].
- Gove, M. (2015). *The treasure in the heart of man - making prisons work*. [online] Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-treasure-in-the-heart-of-man-making-prisons-work> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2018]
- Graham, K. (2014). Does school prepare men for prison?. *City*, 18(6), 824-836.
- Greeno, J.G. (1997). On claims that answer the wrong questions, *Educational Researcher*, 26(1), 5-17.
- Grierson, J. (2018). Prisons inspector condemns 'appalling' suicide rate at Nottingham jail. *The Guardian*. [online] Available at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/may/16/prisons-inspector-condemns-appalling-suicide-rate-at-nottingham-jail> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2018].

- Haggis, T. (2004). Meaning, identity and 'motivation': expanding what matters in understanding learning in higher education?. *Studies in Higher Education*, 29(3), 335-352.
- Hammersley, M., & Atkinson, P. (2007). *Ethnography: Principles in practice*. London: Routledge.
- Hancock, P., & Jewkes, Y. (2011). Architectures of incarceration: The spatial pains of imprisonment. *Punishment & Society*, 13(5), 611-629.
- Harvey, J. (2008). An embedded multimethod approach to prison research. In R. D. King and E. Wincup (Eds) *Doing research on crime and justice* (pp.487-500). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, L. (2000). New realities: The relationship between higher education and employment. *Tertiary Education and Management*, 6(1): 3-17.
- Hatton, B. (2018). Swaleside? It's called Stab City' Insiders life the lid on life behind bars at Sheppey's notorious jail', *KentLive* [online] Available at: <https://www.kentlive.news/news/swaleside-its-called-stab-city-1350303>
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2010). *The practice of qualitative research*. London: Sage.
- HM Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills (2018). *The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2017/18*. London: HMIC. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ofsted-annual-report-201718-education-childrens-services-and-skills/the-annual-report-of-her-majestys-chief-inspector-of-education-childrens-services-and-skills-201718#FES-prisons-YOIs> (accessed 4.1.19).
- HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons (2014). *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Swaleside*. London: HMIP.
- HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons (2015). *Annual Report 2014/15*. London: HMIP.
- HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons (2016). *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Swaleside*. London: HMIP.
- HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons, (2016a). *Life in prison: Peer support: A findings paper*. London: HMIP.
- HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons, (2016b). *Annual Report 2015/16*. London: HMIP.
- HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons (2017). *Report on an unannounced inspection of HMP Birmingham*. London: HMIP.

- HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons. (2018). *Annual Report 2017/18*. London: HMIP.
- HM Government (2005). *Reducing Reoffending Through Skills and Employment*. London: HMSO.
- HM Prison and Probation Service (2017). *Sheppey Cluster (Swaleside) Prison information*. [online] Available at: <http://www.justice.gov.uk/contacts/prison-finder/sheppey-cluster-swaleside>.
- Hodkinson, P. (2005). Learning as cultural and relational: Moving past some troubling dualisms. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 35(1), 107-119.
- Hodkinson, P., & Bloomer, M. (2002). Learning careers: Conceptualising lifelong work-based learning. *Working to learn: Transforming learning in the workplace*, 29-43.
- Hodkinson, P., & James, D. (2003). Transforming learning cultures in further education. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 55(4), 389-406.
- Hodkinson, P., Biesta, G., & James, D. (2004, September). Towards a cultural theory of college-based learning. In *Manchester Annual Conference of the British Educational Research Association*.
- Hodkinson, P., Biesta, G. and James, D. (2007) 'Understanding Learning Culturally: Overcoming the Dualism Between Social and Individual Views of Learning', *Vocations and Learning*, 1, 27-47.
- Hodkinson, P., Biesta, G., & James, D. (2007a). Understanding learning cultures. *Educational Review*, 59(4), 415-427.
- Hodkinson, P., Biesta, G., & James, D. (2008). Understanding Learning Culturally: Overcoming the Dualism Between Social and Individual Views of Learning. *Vocations and Learning*, 1(1), 27-47.
- Hopkins, K (2012). *The pre-custody employment, training and education status of newly selected prisoners. Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners*. London: Ministry of Justice.
- Hopkins, K. (2014). Presentation delivered to the Prisoner Learning Alliance quarterly meeting, August 2014.
- Howard League for Penal Reform (2016). *Prison officer numbers fall again as major recruitment drive fails* [online] Available at: <https://howardleague.org/news/8896/> [Accessed 18 June 2017].
- Hughes, E. (2000). 'An Inside View: Prisoners' Letters on Education' in Wilson, D. and Reuss, A. (eds) (2000) *Prison(er) Education: stories of change and transformation*, Waterside Press. Winchester. 138-157.

- Hughes, E. (2007). *Thinking Inside the Box: British Prisoner-Students' Experiences of Distance Learning*, PhD. Birmingham City University.
- Hughes, E. (2012). *Education in Prison: Studying Through Distance Learning*. Ashgate Publishing Company: Surrey.
- Hughes, E. C. (1945). Dilemmas and contradictions of status. *American journal of Sociology*, 50(5), 353-359.
- Hulley, S., Crewe, B., & Wright, S. (2016). Re-examining the problems of long-term imprisonment. *British Journal of Criminology*, 56(4), 769-792.
- Hulley, S., Liebling, A., & Crewe, B. (2012). Respect in prisons: Prisoners' experiences of respect in public and private sector prisons. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 12(1), 3-23.
- Hurry J., Brazier L., Parker M. and Wilson A. (2006). Rapid Evidence Assessment of Interventions that Promote Employment for Offenders: Research Report No 747. London: DFES.
- Hurry, J., Rogers, L., Simonot, M., & Wilson, A. (2012). *Inside Education: The aspirations and realities of prison education for under 25s in the London area*. A report for Sir John Cass's Foundation.
- Independent Monitoring Board, (2012). *HMP Swaleside Annual Report 2011/12*.
- Irwin, J. (1970). *The Felon*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Irwin, J., & Cressey, D. R. (1962). Thieves, convicts and the inmate culture. *Social problems*, 10(2), 142-155.
- Jackson, J., Tyler, T.R., Bradford, B., Taylor, M. and Shiner, M. (2010) Legitimacy and procedural justice in prisons. *Prison Service Journal*, 191, 4-10.
- Jacobson, J., & Hough, J. M. (2010). *Unjust Deserts: imprisonment for public protection*. London: Prison Reform Trust.
- James, D., & Biesta, G. (2007). *Improving learning cultures in further education*. Routledge.
- Jewkes, Y. (2005). Men Behind Bars: "Doing" Masculinity as an Adaptation to Imprisonment. *Men and Masculinities*, 8(1), 44-63.
- Jewkes, Y. (2012). Autoethnography and Emotion as Intellectual Resources: Doing Prison Research Differently. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(1), 63-75.
- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, 33(7), 14-26.
- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J. and Turner, L. A. (2007), Towards a Definition of Mixed Methods Research, *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(2): 112-133.

- Kaplan, B. J., Wilson, B. N., Dewey, D., & Crawford, S. G. (1998). DCD may not be a discrete disorder. *Human movement science*, 17(4-5), 471-490.
- Kilpatrick, S., Jones, T., & Barrett, M. (2003). *Defining learning communities*. Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia. Launceston: Tasmania.
- Knowles, M. (1973), *The Adult Learner: A Neglected Species*. London: Gulf Publishing Division.
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press.
- Liebling, A. (2000). Prison officers, policing and the use of discretion. *Theoretical Criminology*, 4(3), 333-357.
- Liebling, A. (2001). Whose side are we on? Theory, practice and allegiances in prisons research. *British Journal of Criminology*, 41(3), 472-484.
- Liebling, A. (2012). What is 'MQPL'? Solving puzzles about the prison. *Prison Service Journal*, 202: 3-5.
- Liebling, A. (2015). Description at the edge? I-It/I-Thou relations and action in prisons research. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, 4(1), 18-32.
- Liebling, A. and Arnold, H. (2004). *Prisons and their Moral Performance*, Oxford University Press: Oxford.
- Liebling, A., (1999). Doing Research in Prison: Breaking the Silence, *Theoretical Criminology*, 3(2), 147-173.
- Liebling, A., (2001). Whose Side Are We On?: Theory, Practice and Allegiances in Prisons Research, *Brit. J. Criminology*, 41, 472-484.
- Liebling, A., Hulley, S., Crewe, B. (2012). 'Conceptualising and Measuring the Quality of Prison Life'. In Gadd, D., Kerstedt S., Messner, S.F., *The Sage handbook of criminological research methods*, 358-372. London: SAGE.
- Liebling, A., Price, D., & Shefer, G. (2010). *The Prison Officer*. Collumpton: Willan.
- Macaulay, A. C., Commanda, L. E., Freeman, W. L., Gibson, N., McCabe, M. L., Robbins, C. M., & Twohig, P. L. (1999). Participatory research maximises community and lay involvement. *British Medical Journal*, 319 (7212), 774-778.
- MacKenzie DL (2006) *What Works in Corrections: Reducing the Criminal Activities of Offenders and Delinquents*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Manning, K. (2000). *Rituals, ceremonies, and cultural meaning in higher education*. Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

- Maruna, S. (2010). 'Mixed Method Research in Criminology: Why Not Go Both Ways?' in Piquero, A. and Weisberd, D. (eds) 2010, *Handbook of Quantitative Criminology*, New York: Springer.
- Maruna, S., & Matravers, A. (2007). N= 1: Criminology and the person. *Theoretical Criminology*, 11(4), 427-442.
- Maton, K. (2005). A question of autonomy: Bourdieu's field approach and higher education policy. *Journal of education policy*, 20(6), 687-704.
- Mayes, J.T., Dineen, F., Mckendree, J. and Lee, J. (2001). 'Learning from watching others learn', in C. Steeples and C. Jones (Eds) *Networked Learning: Perspectives and Issues* (London, Springer).
- McCulloch, T. (2015). Beyond compliance: participation, co-production and change in justice sanctions. *European Journal of Probation*, 7(1), 40-57.
- Meek, R. (2013). *Sport in prison: Exploring the role of physical activity in correctional settings*. London: Routledge.
- Meek, R., Champion, N., & Klier, S. (2012). *Fit for release: How sports-based learning can help prisoners engage in education, gain employment and desist from crime*. Prisoners' Education Trust.
- Merriam, S. (2001). Something Old, Something New: Adult Learning Theory for the Twenty-First Century, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, 89, 93-96.
- Merriam, S. B. (2001). Andragogy and self-directed learning: Pillars of adult learning theory. *New directions for adult and continuing education*, 2001(89), 3-14.
- Merriam, S. B. (2004). The role of cognitive development in Mezirow's transformational learning theory. *Adult education quarterly*, 55(1), 60-68.
- Merriam, S., Caffarella, R. S. and Baumgartner, L. M. (2007). *Learning in Adulthood, A Comprehensive Guide*. (3rd ed), San Francisco, Jossey- Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult education*, 28(2), 100-110.
- Mezirow, J. (1990). *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood*. San Fransisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1991). Transformation Theory and Cultural Context: A Reply to Clark and Wilson, *Adult Education Quarterly*, 41(3): 188-192.
- Mezirow, J. (1991a). *Transformative dimensions of adult learning*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1995). 'Transformation Theory of Adult Learning', in M.R. Welton (eds) *In Defence of the Lifeworld*. New York: Jossey-Bass.
- Mezirow, J. (1997). Transformative Learning: Theory to Practice, *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*. 74: 5-12.

- Ministry of Justice, (2015). *Justice Data Lab Re-offending Analysis: Prisoners' Education Trust*. London. Open Government.
- Ministry of Justice, (2018). *Justice Data Lab Experimental Statistics: Employment and benefits outcomes*. London. Open Government.
- Ministry of Justice (2018a). *Annual Prison Performance Ratings 2017/18*. London: HM Stationary Office.
- Ministry of Justice (2018b). *Education and Employment Strategy*. London: HM Stationary Office.
- Ministry of Justice and the Office for National Statistics (2018). *Prison Population Projections 2018 to 2023*, London.
- Ministry of Justice (2019). *Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to December 2018 Assaults and Self-harm to September 2018*, London.
- Moos, R.H. (1975). *Evaluating treatment environments: A social ecological approach*. New York, NY: John Wiley.
- Moran, D. (2012). "Doing time" in carceral space: Timespace and carceral geography. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 94(4), 305-316.
- Moran, D., & Jewkes, Y. (2015). Linking the carceral and the punitive state: A review of research on prison architecture, design, technology and the lived experience of carceral space. In *Annales de géographie*, 2, 163-184.
- Moran, D., Turner, J., & Jewkes, Y. (2016). Becoming big things: Building events and the architectural geographies of incarceration in England and Wales. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41(4), 416-428.
- Nichols, H. (2016). *An inquiry into adult male prisoners' experiences of education*. PhD. University of Hull.
- Nichols, H. E. (2017). Encouragement, Discouragement and Connection: The Role of Relationships in Prison Education Experiences. *Prison Service Journal*.
- Nielsen, M. (2010). Pains and possibilities in prison: on the use of emotions and positioning in ethnographic research. *Acta sociologica*, 53(4), 307-321.
- Oliver, D. G., Serovich, J. M., & Mason, T. L. (2005). Constraints and opportunities with interview transcription: Towards reflection in qualitative research. *Social forces*, 84(2), 1273-1289.
- Ortlipp, M., (2008). Keeping and Using Reflective Journals in the Qualitative Research Process. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 695-705.
- Owen, B., Wells, J. and Pollock, J. (2017). *In search of Safety: Confronting inequality in women's imprisonment*. University of California Press: California.

- Paavola, S., Lipponen, L. and Hakkarainen, K. (2004). Models of innovative knowledge communities and three metaphors of learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 74(4), 557-576.
- Patenaude, A. (2004). No Promises, But I'm Willing to Listen and Tell What I Hear: Conducting qualitative research among prison inmates and staff. *The Prison Journal*, 84(4): 69-91.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative interviewing: Qualitative research and evaluation methods, 3rd edition*. London: Sage.
- Peim, N. and Hodkinson, P. (2007). Contexts, cultures, learning: contemporary understandings. *Educational Review*, 59(4), 387-397.
- Perkins, R. L. (2011). The construction of 'learning cultures': an ethnographically-informed case study of a UK conservatoire. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK.
- Perkins, R. (2013). Learning cultures and the conservatoire: An ethnographically-informed case study. *Music Education Research*, 15(2), 196-213.
- Phillips, C. (2012). *The multicultural prison: Ethnicity, masculinity, and social relations among prisoners*. Oxford University Press.
- Phillips C., Earle R. (2010). Reading difference differently? Identity, epistemology and prison ethnography. *British Journal of Criminology*, 50(2), 360-378.
- Piacentini, L. (2013). 'Integrity, always integrity': Laura Piacentini argues for the importance of personal and researcher integrity in prison research. *Criminal Justice Matters*, 91(1), 21-21.
- Pike, A. (2014). *Prison-based transformative learning and its role in life after release*. PhD. Open University.
- Pike, A., & Adams, A. (2012). Digital exclusion or learning exclusion? An ethnographic study of adult male distance learners in English prisons. *Research in Learning Technology*, 20(4).
- Prison Reform Trust, (2015). *Bromley Briefings* [online] Available at: <http://www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Bromley%20Briefings/Factfile%20Autumn%202015.pdf>
- Prisoner Learning Alliance, (2018). *Briefing on decision to not extend in-custody national Careers Service (NCS) Contracts*, Prisoners' Education Trust.
- Prisoner Learning Alliance, (2013). *Smart Rehabilitation: Learning how to get better Outcomes*. Prisoners' Education Trust.
- Prisoners' Education Trust, (2014), *HMP Swaleside: Learning at its heart*. [online] Available at: <https://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/hmp-swaleside-learning-at-its-heart> [Accessed 23 Dec 2016]

- Prisoners' Education Trust, (2017). *Annual Report and Financial Statements, year ended 31 December 2016*. Prisoners' Education Trust. [online] Available at: <https://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/data/Documents/Governance%20and%20finance/PET%20Annual%20Accounts%202016.pdf> [Accessed 3 Jan 2018]
- Prisoners' Education Trust, (2018). *Education commissioning*. [online] Available at: <https://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/education-contracts> [Accessed 7 Aug. 2018].
- Quennerstedt, M., Annerstedt, C., Barker, D., Karlefors, I., Larsson, H., Redelius, K., & Öhman, M. (2014). What did they learn in school today? A method for exploring aspects of learning in physical education. *European Physical Education Review, 20*(2), 282-302.
- Reay, D. (2004). 'It's all becoming a habitus': beyond the habitual use of habitus in educational research. *British Journal of Sociology of Education, 25*(4), 431–444.
- Reiter, K. (2014). Making windows in walls: Strategies for prison research. *Qualitative Inquiry, 20*(4), 417-428.
- Reuss, A. (1997). *Higher education & personal change in prisoners*. PhD. University of Leeds.
- Reuss, A. (1999). Prison (er) education. *The Howard Journal of Criminal Justice, 38*(2), 113-127.
- Ricciardelli, R., Maier, K., & Hannah-Moffat, K. (2015). Strategic masculinities: Vulnerabilities, risk and the production of prison masculinities. *Theoretical Criminology, 19*(4), 491-513.
- Ross, M. W., Diamond, P. M., Liebling, A., & Saylor, W. G. (2008). Measurement of prison social climate: A comparison of an inmate measure in England and the USA. *Punishment & Society, 10*(4), 447-474.
- Rowe, A. (2014). Situating the Self in Prison Research: Power, Identity, and Epistemology. *Qualitative Inquiry 20*(4), 404-416.
- Rudd, T., Colligan, F., & Naik, R. (2006) *Learner Voice: A handbook from Futurelab*. Bristol: Futurelab.
- Saint, L. (2012). Reading subjects: passbooks, literature and apartheid. *Social Dynamics, 38*(1), 117-133.
- Schmidt, B. E. (2013). User Voice and the Prison Council Model: A Summary of Key Findings from an Ethnographic Exploration of Participatory Governance in Three English Prisons. *Prison Service Journal, 209*, 12-17.
- Schweber, C. (1984). Beauty marks and blemishes: The coed prison as a microcosm of integrated society. *The Prison Journal, 64*(1), 3-14.

- Sfard, A. (1998). On two metaphors for learning and the dangers of choosing just one. *Educational Researcher*, 27(2), 4-13.
- Shaw, D. (2018). Nottingham Prison in 'dangerous state' says chief inspector of prisons. *BBC News*. [online] Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-nottinghamshire-42737672> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2018]
- Simon, J. (2001) 'Entitlement to cruelty: Neo-liberalism and the punitive mentality in the United States', in Stenson, K. and Sullivan, R. (eds) *Crime Risk and Justice*. Cullompton: Willan Publishing: 125–143.
- Skills Funding Agency (2012) Delivery of the Offenders' Learning and Skills Service Phase 4 (OLASS 4) 2012/13. London: Ministry of Justice National Offender Management Service.
- Social Exclusion Unit, (2002). *Reducing re-offending by ex-prisoners*. London. Crown,
- Sparks, R., Bottoms, A. E., & Hay, W. (1996). *Prisons and the Problem of Order*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Stabell, E. M. (2018). *Being talented—becoming a musician: a qualitative study of learning cultures in three junior conservatoires*. (Doctoral dissertation). Norges musikkhøgskole.
- Sykes, G. (1958). *The society of captives*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Talbot, J. (2008). *Prisoners' voices: Experiences of the criminal justice system by prisoners with learning disabilities and difficulties*. Prison Reform Trust.
- Tamariz, L., Palacio, A., Robert, M., & Marcus, E. N. (2013). Improving the informed consent process for research subjects with low literacy: a systematic review. *Journal of general internal medicine*, 28(1), 121-126.
- Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. (2011). Making sense of Cronbach's alpha. *International journal of medical education*, 2, 53.
- Taylor, C. (2014). *Brain Cells: Listening to prisoner learners*. Prisoners' Education Trust.
- Taylor, E. W. (1998). The Theory and Practice of Transformative Learning: A Critical Review. *Information Series No. 374*. [Online] Available at: <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED423422> [Accessed 23 Feb 2017]
- Taylor, E. W. (2007). An update of transformative learning theory: a critical review of the empirical research (1999-2005), *International Journal of Lifelong Learning*, 26(2), 173-191.
- Taylor, K. (2000). 'Teaching with developmental intention'. In: Mezirow, J. a. A. (ed.) *Learning as transformation: critical perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.

- The Howard League. (2018). *The Howard League | Prison watch*. [online] Available at: <https://howardleague.org/prisons-information/prison-watch/> [Accessed 12 Aug. 2018].
- The Open University, (2018). *Supporting Students in Secure Environments*. [online] Available at: <http://www.open.ac.uk/secure-environments/> [Accessed 4 April 2018].
- Thompson, R. (2011). Reclaiming the disengaged? A Bourdieuan analysis of work-based learning for young people in England. *Critical Studies in Education*, 52(1), 15-28.
- Tracy, S. J. (2010). Qualitative quality: Eight “big-tent” criteria for excellent qualitative research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 16(10), 837-851.
- Travis, A. (2018). Prisons inspector slates HMP Bedford as 'abject failure' over standards. *The Guardian*. [online] Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/sep/27/prisons-inspector-slates-hmp-bedford-as-abject-failure-over-standards> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2018].
- Turner, J. (2016). *The prison boundary: Between society and carceral space*. Springer.
- University of Birmingham, (2016, Sept 13). *£60m 'transformational' library opens at University of Birmingham* [online] Available at: <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/24m-learning-commons-opens-its-doors/>.
- University of Manchester, (2012, Sept 26). *£24m Learning Commons opens its doors* [online] Available at: <https://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/news/24m-learning-commons-opens-its-doors/> [Accessed 13 Aug. 2018].
- de Viggiani, N. (2012). Trying to be something you are not: Masculine performances within a prison setting. *Men and Masculinities*, 15(3), 271-291.
- Wacquant, L. (2002). The curious eclipse of prison ethnography in the age of mass incarceration. *Ethnography*, 3(4), 371-397.
- Wahidin, A. (2002). Reconfiguring older bodies in the prison time machine. *Journal of Aging and Identity*, 7(3), 177-193.
- Wahlberg, M., & Gleeson, D. (2003). 'Doing the business': paradox and irony in vocational education—GNVQ business studies as a case in point. *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 55(4), 423-446.
- Wald, J., & Losen, D. J. (2003). Defining and redirecting a school-to-prison pipeline. *New directions for youth development*, 2003(99), 9-15.
- Walmsley, R. (2013). *World Prison Population List (10th Ed)*, International Centre for Prison Studies.

- Ward, G., & Quennerstedt, M. (2015). Knowing in primary physical education in the UK: Negotiating movement culture. *Sport, Education and Society*, 20(5), 588-603.
- Warr, J. (2016). Transformative dialogues (re) privileging the informal in prison education. *Prison Service Journal*, 225, 18-25.
- Watts, R. J. (1981). *The pragmalinguistic analysis of narrative texts: narrative co-operation in Charles Dickens's "Hard times"* (Vol. 3). Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Webster, R. (2016). *Unlocking potential - Coates prison education review published*. [Blog] Russell Webster. Available at: <http://www.russellwebster.com/unlocking-potential-coates-prison-education-review-published/> [Accessed 10 Aug. 2018].
- Welch, K. (2017). School-to-Prison Pipeline. *The Encyclopedia of Juvenile Delinquency and Justice*, 1-5.
- Wenger, E. (1998). Communities of practice: Learning as a social system. *Systems thinker*, 9(5), 2-3.
- Wenger, E. (2010). Communities of practice and social learning systems: the career of a concept. In *Social learning systems and communities of practice* (pp. 179-198). Springer, London.
- Williams, K. (2012). Rethinking 'learning' in higher education: Viewing the student as social actor. *Journal of critical Realism*, 11(3), 296-323.
- Williams, K., Papadopoulou, V. and Booth, N. (2012). Prisoners' childhood and family backgrounds: Results from the Surveying Prisoner Crime Reduction (SPCR) longitudinal cohort study of prisoners. Ministry of Justice.
- Wilson, A. (2005). There is no escape from third-space theory. *Situated Literacies: Theorising Reading and Writing in Context*, 54.
- Wilson, B. G., Ludwig-Hardman, S., Thornam, C. L., & Dunlap, J. C. (2004). Bounded community: Designing and facilitating learning communities in formal courses. *The International Review of Research in Open and Distributed Learning*, 5(3).
- Wilson, D. (2000). 'Introduction', in Wilson, D. and Reuss, A. (ed) (2000) *Prison(er) Education: stories of change and transformation*, Waterside Press. Winchester.
- Wilson, D. (2001). 'Valuing prisoner education,' Prison Report, No. 54, 18-19.
- Wilson, D. and Reuss, A. (eds) (2000). *Prison(er) Education: stories of change and transformation*, Waterside Press. Winchester.
- Wright, K.N. (1985). Developing the Prison Environment Inventory. *Journal of research in Crime and Delinquency*, 22(2) 257-277.

- Wright, S., Crewe, B., & Hulley, S. (2017). Suppression, denial, sublimation: Defending against the initial pains of very long life sentences. *Theoretical criminology*, 21(2), 225-246.
- Young S, Gudjonsson G, Wells J, Asherson P, Theobald D, Oliver B, Scott C, Mooney A. (2009) Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and critical incidents in a Scottish prison population. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 46(3):265-269.
- Young S, Gudjonsson GH, Misch P, Collins P, Carter P, Redfern J, Goodwin E. (2010). Prevalence of ADHD symptoms among youth in a secure facility: The consistency and accuracy of self- and informant-report ratings. *Journal of Forensic Psychiatry and Psychology*, 21(2):238-246.
- Young, S. J., Adamou, M., Bolea, B., Gudjonsson, G., Müller, U., Pitts, M. & Asherson, P. (2011). The identification and management of ADHD offenders within the criminal justice system: a consensus statement from the UK Adult ADHD Network and criminal justice agencies. *BMC psychiatry*, 11(1), 32.

Appendix I

Rehabilitative Cultures Survey: Prisoner Survey



Prisoners'
Education
TRUST

Cultures of Learning

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, please read this sheet, as it will explain what the research is, why it is being done and what it will involve for you.

I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have, either in person or through my contact information overleaf.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research explores cultures of learning in prison. It is looking to see what types of learning happens across this prison. It is also interested in exploring cultures that are conducive to learning within the prison; what they look like and who is part of them.

This study aims to add to current knowledge of the impact of learning cultures and learning in prison and has potential to impact policy in this area.

Who is involved in the project?

This research is an independent study and is not influenced by, or associated with, the prison or the education provider. I am an independent researcher from Royal Holloway, University of London. The research is part-funded by the Prisoners' Education Trust, but remains independent from their day to day work. Any answers you give will not affect your relationship with Prisoners' Education Trust.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

This survey will ask questions about your experiences and perceptions of the prison, and learning within the prison. I am asking many staff and prisoners from across the prison to complete such surveys. Once you have completed your survey and returned it to a member of the research team, your personal information will be removed from your answers.

Do I have to take part?

No, taking part is completely voluntary. You can decide not to be part of the study and you can withdraw at any point without having to give a reason. You can also choose not to answer any questions if you would prefer not to. After the interview you have a month to contact me if you decide to withdraw then.

Deciding not to take part, at any point, will not affect your time in this prison or your relationship with Prisoners' Education Trust.

Will my involvement be confidential?

Yes. All the information you give will be anonymised so that anybody reading reports of the research will not know it has been given by you. Your signed consent form will be kept separately from your interview.

However, I must inform a member of prison staff if:

1. you disclose details of any potential offence within this prison, which could lead to an adjudication. So, you should not mention anybody's name during this discussion;
2. you disclose details of any offence for which you have not yet been arrested, charged or convicted;
3. something you have disclosed leads us to believe, that either your health and safety, or the health and safety of others around you, is at immediate risk;
4. something you have disclosed leads us to believe that there is a threat to security.

In these situations, I will inform a member of prison staff, who may take the matter further.

Researcher Details:

Primary Researcher Morwenna Bernallick
Academic Supervisor Dr. Rosie Meek
Prisoners' Education Trust Nina Champion

If you have any requests for information, complaints or queries regarding this research, please speak to a Skills Advisor or a member of the education department.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

Your Consent 

Please write **your initials** in the boxes to indicate that you agree with the following statements:

I have read the information sheet about this study;

I have had the opportunity to ask questions;

I have received satisfactory answers to any questions;

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my parole, standard of care, rights or privileges being affected;

I am aware of where I can get support, if required, at any point in this research process;

I agree to take part in this study.

Signed _____

Name _____

Date _____

Please note: This consent form will be stored separately from the responses you provide.

Prisoner questionnaire

Section 1: About you

1. Which prison are you in?

2. What is your age?

3. What is your ethnic group? (Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group)

White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British Irish Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Any other White background (please give details)

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean White and Black African White and Asian

Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background (please give details)

Asian/Asian British: Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Chinese

Any other Asian background (please give details)

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African Caribbean

Any other Black/African/Caribbean background (please give details)

Other ethnic group: Arab Any other ethnic group (please give details)

4. What was your age when you left full-time education?

5. What wing do you live on?

How long have you been on this wing?

6. What qualifications did you have before coming to prison?

None

GCSE/s

A Level/s

HNC/Diploma/BTEC/NVQ3

Degree

Post Graduate

Professional qualifications

Other qualifications (please give details)

7. What is your main daytime activity in this prison? (Please tick one)

Education only

Education and work

Work only

Open Academy on A Wing

Induction course

Drug Rehab course

Sick (no work)

Unemployed

Retired

Offending Behaviour course

Other activity (please give details)

8. Which of these places do you visit at least once a week?

Library

Gym

Chaplaincy

9. Have you started or completed any learning or training activities whilst in this prison?

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Formal courses in education | <input type="checkbox"/> | Peer mentoring course | <input type="checkbox"/> | I have had a peer mentor | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vocational courses | <input type="checkbox"/> | Informal learning | <input type="checkbox"/> | Helped teach other prisoners | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Distance learning including Open University | <input type="checkbox"/> | Attended college on ROTL | <input type="checkbox"/> | (e.g. Toe by Toe, classroom assistant) | |

Other learning (please give details)

10. If you have not been involved in learning (some form of education and/or training) whilst in this prison, please tell us why? (Please tick all which are relevant).

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I did not know what learning was available | <input type="checkbox"/> | I could not get funding | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| No subjects available that I want to study | <input type="checkbox"/> | Work pays more than education | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Waiting lists for courses too long | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

Other reasons (please give details)

Section 2: About how well this prison supports learning.

For each question below, please tick the response that best describes how you feel in this prison.	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I feel that I have a say in the learning on offer in this prison	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. The prison officers on my wing take an interest in my learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. The learning opportunities in this prison help me see where I can go in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. There are learning opportunities available in this prison that suit my needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. In this prison learning most often takes place in a traditional classroom environment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I have no control over my learning in this prison	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. During my time in this prison, prison officers have taken a personal interest in me and my learning opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Learner reps have helped motivate me to change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For each question below, please tick the response that best describes how you feel in this prison.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	---------------------------	----------	-------------------

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 9. The learning opportunities in this prison are engaging and interesting | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10. In this prison, prisoners are often encouraged away from learning into jobs that pay more | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11. In this prison decisions are made about my learning that I cannot influence | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12. I have been encouraged by prison officers on my wing to pursue learning | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13. Prison officers in this prison encourage prisoners to 'spread the word' about learning to other prisoners | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14. The educational opportunities in this prison are linked to future careers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15. Bullying behaviour is not tolerated by education staff in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16. My learning needs are being addressed in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. My experience with education staff has put me off learning in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Education staff encourage prisoners to 'spread the word' about learning to other prisoners | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Learners are unable to have an impact on the curriculum in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. In this prison, learning mostly happens in the education department | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. I am being encouraged to take responsibility for my learning in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. In this prison, the learning opportunities outside of 'education' are meaningful | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. Prison officers do not engage in discussions with prisoners about education | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. Information on learning opportunities often spreads to prisoners by word of mouth from prison officers | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

For each question below, please tick the response that best describes how you feel in this prison.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	---------------------------	----------	-------------------

- | | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 25. The learning spaces in this prison are made to be comfortable | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. What education staff do with prisoners in this prison improves lives | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. Every effort is made by this prison to give prisoners a say in how education and learning could be improved here | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28. Educational achievements are not recognised by prison officers in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. Learning is not promoted in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. Education staff have encouraged me to have my say on learning opportunities in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. What gym staff do with prisoners in this prison improves lives | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 32. I know what to expect when I am in a learning space in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 33. The learning opportunities in this prison offer me the chance to change | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 34. There are prison officers on my wing who want to do the best for me | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35. Education feels 'out of reach' in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 36. Education is an important part of my sentence plan | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 37. What prison officers do with prisoners in this prison improves lives | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 38. In this prison, learner reps are seen by other prisoners as positive role models | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 39. Education staff engage with prisoners in a positive way outside of class | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 40. Education staff involve prisoners in coming up with and applying solutions | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 41. What workshop instructors do with prisoners in this prison improves lives | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

For each question below, please tick the response that best describes how you feel in this prison.

Strongly agree

Agree

Neither agree or disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

42. Learning activities help me become a better person in this prison
43. Learner reps can be relied upon to give advice on learning opportunities in this prison
44. It feels like learners are part of a community in this prison
45. Becoming involved in education helps prisoners cope with day to day life in this prison
46. Education staff often feedback to prisoners the outcomes of concerns or suggestions they make
47. Staff and prisoners on my wing generally get on well
48. Learning from peer mentors is good for prisoners who do not want to engage in formal education
49. I feel recognised as a person of value in this prison
50. Relationships between prisoners are generally good in this prison

51. Overall, on a scale of 1 to 10 (1 = lowest and 10 = highest), put a circle around the number you think this prison deserves for how well it promotes learning:

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

52. What three things could be done to make this a better place for learning?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

53. How do you feel about working together with prison staff to shape education?

54. How do you think the staff here could better listen to your opinions and ideas?

55. Any other comments?

56. Tick here if you have had help filling in this survey

Please put this questionnaire in the envelope provided.
Seal the envelope and hand it to a Skills Advisor who will return it to the main researcher.

Thank you for taking part in the survey.

Appendix II

Rehabilitative Cultures Survey: Staff Survey



Cultures of Learning

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, please read this sheet, as it will explain what the research is, why it is being done and what it will involve for you.

I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have, either in person or through my contact information overleaf.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research explores cultures of learning in prison. It is looking to see what types of learning happens across this prison. It is also interested in exploring cultures that are conducive to learning within the prison; what they look like and who is part of them.

This study aims to add to current knowledge of the impact of learning cultures and learning in prison and has potential to impact policy in this area.

Who is involved in the project?

This research is an independent study and is not influenced by, or associated with, the prison or the education provider. I am an independent researcher from Royal Holloway, University of London. The research is part-funded by the Prisoners' Education Trust, but remains independent from their day to day work. Any answers you give will not affect your relationship with Prisoners' Education Trust.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

This survey will ask questions about your experiences and perceptions of the prison, and learning within the prison. I am asking many staff and prisoners from across the prison to complete such surveys. Once you have completed your survey and returned it to a member of the research team, your personal information will be removed from your answers.

Do I have to take part?

No, taking part is completely voluntary. You can decide not to be part of the study and you can withdraw at any point without having to give a reason. You can also choose not to answer any questions if you would prefer not to. After the interview you have a month to contact me if you decide to withdraw then.

Deciding not to take part, at any point, will not affect your time in this prison or your relationship with Prisoners' Education Trust.

Will my involvement be confidential?

Yes. All the information you give will be anonymised so that anybody reading reports of the research will not know it has been given by you. Your signed consent form will be kept separately from your interview.

However, I must inform a member of prison staff if:

1. you disclose details of any potential offence within this prison, which could lead to an adjudication. So, you should not mention anybody's name during this discussion;
2. you disclose details of any offence for which you have not yet been arrested, charged or convicted;
3. something you have disclosed leads us to believe, that either your health and safety, or the health and safety of others around you, is at immediate risk;
4. something you have disclosed leads us to believe that there is a threat to security.

In these situations, I will inform a member of prison staff, who may take the matter further.

Researcher Details:

Primary Researcher Morwenna Bernallick

Academic Supervisor Dr. Rosie Meek

Prisoners' Education Trust Nina Champion

If you have any requests for information, complaints or queries regarding this research, please speak to a Skills Advisor or a member of the education department.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet

Your Consent 

Please write **your initials** in the boxes to indicate that you agree with the following statements:

I have read the information sheet about this study;

I have had the opportunity to ask questions;

I have received satisfactory answers to any questions;

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time;

I am aware of where I can get support, if required, at any point in this research process;

I agree to take part in this study.

Signed _____

Name _____

Date _____

Please note: This consent form will be stored separately from the responses you provide.

Prison staff questionnaire

Section 1: About you

1. Which prison are you working in?

2. What is your current job/grade?

Prison Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	Chaplaincy	<input type="checkbox"/>	Workshop instructor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Senior Officer	<input type="checkbox"/>	In-reach mental health team	<input type="checkbox"/>	CARATs/Drugs worker	<input type="checkbox"/>
PEI	<input type="checkbox"/>	Probation staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Operational Support Grade	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governor grade	<input type="checkbox"/>	Psychology staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Administration	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health Care staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	Education staff	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Other job/grade (please give details)

3. What is your age?

4. What is your ethnic group? (Choose one option that best describes your ethnic group)

White: English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British Irish Gypsy or Irish Traveller

Any other White background (please give details)

Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups: White and Black Caribbean White and Black African White and Asian

Any other Mixed/Multiple ethnic background (please give details)

Asian/Asian British: Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Chinese

Any other Asian background (please give details)

Black/African/Caribbean/Black British: African Caribbean

Any other Black/African/Caribbean background (please give details)

Other ethnic group: Arab Any other ethnic group (please give details)

5. What is your gender? Male Female Transgender

6. How long have you worked in prisons?

7. How long have you worked for this prison?

Section 2: How you feel about the culture of this prison.

For each question below, please tick the response that best describes how you feel in this prison.	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. In this prison, learner reps are seen by other prisoners as positive role models	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I feel unsure of how to support prison learners and so avoid this kind of work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Discussions often take place between staff and prisoners about education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. It is helpful to involve prisoners when trying to come up with and implement ways to improve learning in this prison	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Promoting learning is part of my job	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Educational achievements are recognised in this prison	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Prisoners find the learning opportunities in this prison interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Staff agree on the ground rules for prisoners in places of learning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Education is 'out of reach' for prisoners in this prison	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. The learning opportunities in this prison are meaningful for prisoners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Education is an important part of this prison's 'rehabilitative culture'	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Opportunities for prisoners to be involved in decision making about their learning gives too much power to prisoners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. The educational opportunities in this prison offer prisoners a chance to change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I feel unsure of how to work in partnership with prisoners so generally avoid this kind of work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Learner reps can be relied upon to give advice on learning opportunities to other prisoners in this prison	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

For each question below, please tick the response that best describes how you feel in this prison.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	---------------------------	----------	-------------------

- | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 16. Prison officers should have more say in the learning opportunities for prisoners in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 17. Sometimes I act as an advocate for prisoner learners | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 18. Prison officers need more training to support learners in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 19. Engaging in learning can help most prisoners in their rehabilitation | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 20. In this prison learning often takes place in a traditional classroom environment | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 21. It is not worth putting in extra effort to promote learning in this prison as it would go unrecognised | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 22. I enjoy helping prisoner learners work towards their goals and targets | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 23. The opportunities for prisoners to be involved in decision making about their learning is just about pleasing prisoners | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 24. Prison officers should be involved in the learning opportunities for prisoners in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25. Learners act as role models for other prisoners | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 26. Prison officers should have a larger role in promoting learning in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 27. Effort is made by this prison to give prisoners a say in how learning could be improved here | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 28. I am aware of opportunities for prisoners to be involved in decision making about their learning in this prison | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 29. I feel equipped to deal with learners from a variety of different backgrounds | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 30. Involving prisoners in decision making strengthens staff-prisoner relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 31. The most satisfying part of my job involves having contact with prisoners | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

For each question below, please tick the response that best describes how you feel in this prison.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree or disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
----------------	-------	---------------------------	----------	-------------------

- 32. Learning is celebrated in this prison
- 33. Information on the learning opportunities often spreads to prisoners by word of mouth from other learners, learner reps and peer mentors
- 34. Wing staff are encouraged to 'spread the word' to prisoners about learning
- 35. It feels like prison learners are part of a community in this prison

36. How would you rate the quality of your working life in this prison? (1 = lowest 10 = highest). Please put a circle around the number you choose.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

37. What are the 3 most satisfying things for you about working in this prison?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

38. How would you describe the culture of this prison?

39. What three things could be done to improve the culture of this prison?

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

40. Any other comments?

Please put this questionnaire in the envelope provided. Seal the envelope and hand it to a member of the research team. Thank you very much for taking part in the survey.

Appendix III

Survey Dimension Items List and Means

Prisoner Survey dimension Item list and mean scores

Empowering: 10 items

Survey Question	Mean Score
I feel that I have a say in the learning on offer in this prison	3.53
I have no control over my learning in this prison	3.16
In his prison decisions are made about my learning that I cannot influence	2.69
My learning needs are being addressed	3.25
I am being encouraged to take responsibility for my learning in this prison	2.94
Every effort is made by this prison to give prisoners a say in how education and learning could be improved in here	3.41
The learning opportunities in this prison offer me the chance to change	2.82
Learning activities help me to become a better person in this prison	2.69
Education staff often feedback to prisoners the outcomes of concerns or suggestions they make	2.98
I feel recognised as a person of value in this prison	3.31

Inclusive: 11 items

The prison officer on my wing take an interest in my learning	3.72
During my time in this prison, prisoner officers have taken a personal interest in me and my learning opportunities	3.8
I have been encouraged by prison officers on my wing to pursue learning	3.88
My experience with education staff has put me off learning in this prison	3.39
In this prison, the learning opportunities outside of education are meaningful	3.11
Educational achievements are not recognised by prison officers in this prison	2.69
There are prison officers on my wing who want to do the best for me	3.04
In this prison, learner reps ae seen by other prisoners as positive role models	2.61
Staff and prisoners on my wing generally get on well	2.45

Learner reps can be relied upon to give advice on learning opportunities in this prison	2.26
Relationships between prisoners are generally good in this prison	3.05

Aspirational: 9 items

The learning opportunities in this prison help me to see where I can go in the future	3.15
Learner reps have helped motivate me to change	3.1
Education staff encourage prisoners to 'spread the word' about learning to other prisoners	2.92
Prison officers do not engage in discussion with prisoners about education	2.44
Learning is not promoted in this prison	3.18
Education feels 'out of reach' in this prison	3.12
Education staff engage with prisoners in a positive way outside of class	2.81
It feels like learners are part of a community in his prison	2.83
Prison officers in this prison encourage prisoners to 'spread the word' about learning to other prisoners	3.91

Engaging/Relevant: 11 items

There are learning opportunities available in this prison that suit my needs	2.87
The learning opportunities in this prison are engaging and interesting	3.07
The educational opportunities in this prison are linked to future careers	3.19
Learners are unable to have an impact on the curriculum in this prison	2.72
In this prison, learning mostly happens in the Education Department	2.48
Information on learning opportunities often spreads to prisoners by word of mouth from prison officers	3.51
Education staff have encouraged me to have my say on learning opportunities in this prison	3.27
Education staff involve prisoners in coming up with and applying solutions	3
Education is an important part of my sentence plan	2.74
Becoming involved in education helps prisoners cope with day to day life in this prison	2.45
Learning from peer mentors is good for prisoners who do not want to engage in formal education	2.35

Safe: 5 items

In this prison learning most often takes place in a traditional classroom environment	2.39
In this prison, prisoners are often encouraged away from learning into jobs that pay more	2.86
Bullying behaviour is not tolerated by education staff in this prison	2.48
The learning spaces in this prison are made to be comfortable	2.76
I know what to expect when I am in a learning space in this prison	2.56

Changing Lives: 4 items

What education staff do with prisoners in this prison improves lives	2.81
What gym staff do with prisoners in this prison improves lives	2.60
What prison officers do with prisoners in his prison improves lives	3.50
What workshop instructors do with prisoners in this prison improves lives	3.20

Staff Survey dimension Item list and mean scores

Empowering: 8 items

Survey Question	Mean score
I feel unsure of how to support prison learners and so avoid this kind of work.	3.81
I enjoy helping prisoner learners work towards their goals and targets.	4.12
Promoting learning is part of my job.	4.02
I feel unsure of how to work in partnership with prisoners so generally avoid this kind of work.	4.02
Effort is made in this prison to give prisoners a say in how learning could be improved here.	3.03
The learning opportunities in this prison are meaningful for prisoners.	3.39
The most satisfying part of my job involves having contact with prisoners.	3.92
Sometimes I act as an advocate for prison learners.	3.05

Inclusive: 6 items

Educational achievements are recognised in this prison.	3.51
In this prison learner reps are seen by other prisoners as positive role models.	3.78
Learner reps can be relied upon to give advice on learning opportunities to other prisoners.	3.75
Prison officers should be involved in the learning opportunities for prisoners in this prison.	3.71
Prison officers should have more say in the learning opportunities for prisoners in this prison.	3.03
It is not worth putting in the extra effort to promote learning in this prison as it would go unrecognised.	3.81

Aspirational: 8 items

Learners act as role models for other prisoners.	3.93
Wing staff are encouraged to spread the word to prisoners about learning.	2.80

Discussions often take place between staff and prisoners about education.	3.49
Learning is celebrated in this prison.	3.14
Education is out of reach for prisoners in this prison.	4.03
It feels like prison learners are part of a community in this prison.	3.44
Engaging in learning can help most prisoners in their rehabilitation.	4.24
Involving prisoners in decision making strengthens staff-prisoner relationships.	3.92

Engaging/Relevant: 7 items

Prisoners find the learning opportunities in this prison interesting.	3.08
The educational opportunities in this prison offer prisoners a chance to change.	3.73
Information on the learning opportunities often spreads to prisoners by word of mouth from other learners, learner reps and peer mentors.	3.83
It is helpful to involve prisoners when trying to come up with and implement ways to improve learning in this prison.	4.17
Prison officers should have a larger role in promoting learning in this prison.	3.61
Prison officers need more training to support learners in this prison.	2.44
Education is an important part of this prisons rehabilitative culture	4.22

Safe: 3 items

In this prison learning often takes place in a traditional classroom environment.	2.26
I feel equipped to deal with learners from a variety of different backgrounds.	3.62
Staff agree on the ground rules for prisoners in places of learning.	3.42

Appendix IV

Skills Advisor Survey Administration Guide

Learning Cultures Research

Survey Administration: Key Points

Key Points

1) **Informed Consent**

People can only be involved in this research if they fully understand what being part of the research will involve, and then willingly agree to be part of it.

The Social Research Association defines informed consent as: '... A procedure for ensuring that research participants understand what is being done to them, the limits to their participation and awareness of any potential risks they incur' (Social Research Association, 2003:28).

How do we ensure informed consent?

- Information sheet- attached to every questionnaire
- Tell everybody about the information sheet
- Ask people to fill in the consent form
- Brief summary of the research
- Answer any questions
- Ask if they want to do it!

Notes:

2) Confidentiality

It is very important that confidentiality is maintained throughout. This means that no personal, or identifying, information will be seen by anybody except the primary researcher unless it has to be. Anything that could be identifying or personal information that is seen by the wider research team, must be kept confidential.

Any personal or identifying information will be removed from the research as soon as possible.

What is personal information?

- Name
- DOB
- Answers to survey
- Whether they decided to take part or not

Notes:

3) **Supporting respondents**

To make sure that we aren't forcing anybody to take part in the study, we must be careful to pick up on cues that mean they might not want to. But if we think that they may need some extra help in filling out the survey, we can go through it with them. It is important to offer this if we think it might help, so that we don't accidentally exclude people, such as those who cannot read or write well.

If we decide to help someone in this way, we must:

- Be confident that they want to
- Not make them feel uncomfortable in getting the extra support
- Not influence their answers
- Try to stay neutral in reading out questions

Notes:

4) **Key Phrases**

'I am working with an independent researcher to support a study into learning in prison'

'Anything you write is completely confidential'

'The study is not by the prison or education. Anything that you write will not be seen by anybody in the prison'

'The research is interested in your experiences of learning'

- NOT education!

'You do not have to have been involved in any education in the prison'

- This study sees learning as more than being in education

'I can take any questions you might have- if I can't answer them, I will pass them on to the researcher'

Appendix V

Indicative Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule: Open Academy Students

Thank you for agreeing to take part in an interview with me today. Before we start, let's go over the information sheet that you've already had.

- 1) Explain research
- 2) Consent and right to withdraw

Before we start, have you got any questions about the research or about what to expect today?

- Please can you tell me how long you've been in Swaleside?
 - Have you been in any other prisons before?
 - How long have you been on this wing?
 - Where were you before (prisons and other wings in this prison)?

Education before Swaleside

- Can you tell me about the education you have done before you came to Swaleside?
- In other prisons and outside?

Learning in Swaleside

- What learning have you been engaged in since you've been in Swaleside?
- What is it that you're doing now?
- How did you end up doing this?
- How did you find out about the programme?

Motivation

- What made you want to be involved in the learning that you are currently doing?
 - How did you find out about this opportunity?
 - How does this relate to anything that you may have studied or experienced before?
 - How does this fit into your future plans?

Experience

- What has been the best bits of your learning experience here in Swaleside?
- What has been the most challenging bits?

Environment

- Where do you feel most inspired to think about and work towards your goals?
 - Why here?
 - Who are you with when you're here?
 - What conversations do you have?
 - What resources are around you?
 - What does it look like?
 - What does it feel like?
- How is this different to other places in the prison?
- Can you describe how you feel when you're on your wing?

Relationships

- How is the relationship between staff and prisoners on your wing?
 - Have you seen any changes in this?

Communication of learning

- Who do you discuss your learning experiences with?
 - Sharing positive experiences?
 - Sharing negative experiences and challenges?
- Around the prison, who do you hear talking about these type of learning experiences?
 - Can you give me an example of when you've had a conversation with somebody about your learning?

Future

- Do you have a plan for the future/next steps out of prison?

Close

- Anything that I've missed about your learning experiences in this prison that you want to tell me?

Appendix VI

Interview Participant Information Sheet



Research Study: Learning Cultures in Prisons

You are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, please read this information sheet- it explains the purpose of the study and what will happen if you choose to take part.

I will be happy to answer any questions that you may have, either in person or through my contact information overleaf.

What is the purpose of the study?

This research explores learning in prison. It seeks to understand cultures and spaces that are helpful in supporting learning within this prison. It aims to add to current knowledge of creating learning cultures in prison and has the potential to impact future policy in this area.

Who is involved in the study?

This research is an independent study jointly funded by Royal Holloway, University of London and Prisoners' Education Trust (PET). Although PET are part-funding the research, the study is separate from their day to day work and your relationship with them will not be affected by your taking part or not.

Do I have to take part?

No. Taking part is completely voluntary. You are free to choose not to participate and you can withdraw at any point without giving a reason. You can also choose not to answer individual questions if you choose. After the interview you have a month to contact me if you then decide to withdraw.

What will happen if I decide to take part?

If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. I will ask you some questions about your experiences in this prison. Please note, these questions may be personal. This may last between 30 minutes and an hour. It will take place in a private room within the prison. During the interview, a Dictaphone will be used to make an audio recording of the interview and I may take notes. After the interview, the recording will be transcribed and anything that personally identifies you will be edited or removed from the notes.

Deciding not to take part, at any point, will not affect your sentence or your relationship with Prisoners' Education Trust

Will my involvement be confidential?

Yes. Your responses to questions will be kept confidential and stored securely according to the principles of the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used in reports and other publications, but you will not be named and you will not be identifiable. Some of what you say might appear as a quotation in our reports, but reference to names and places will be anonymised.

However, I must inform a member of prison staff if:

1. You disclose details of any potential offence within this prison, which could lead to an adjudication. So, you should not mention anybody's name during this discussion;
2. You disclose details of any offence for which you have not yet been arrested, charged or convicted;
3. Something you have said leads us to believe, that either your health and safety, or the health and safety of others around you, is at immediate risk;
4. Something you have said leads us to believe that there is a threat to security.

In these situations, I will inform a member of prison staff, who may take the matter further.

Researcher Details:

Primary Researcher

Morwenna Bernallick
Contact: Freepost, Prisoners Education Trust

Academic Supervisor

Prof. Rosie Meek

Prisoners' Education Trust Supervisor

Nina Champion

If you have any requests for information, complaints or queries regarding this research, please inform Morwenna Bernallick, Malcolm Whitelaw or a Skills Advisor.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet. Please keep this for your information and be in touch with any questions.

Appendix VII

Interview Participant Consent Form



Research Study: Learning Cultures in Prisons

Please write **your initials** in the boxes to indicate that you agree with the following statements:

- I have read the information sheet about this study
- I have had the opportunity to ask questions
- I have received satisfactory answers to any questions
- I understand that my participation in the study is entirely voluntary and I can choose not to answer any question
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason
- I consent to the use of audio-recording equipment
- I am aware of where I can get support, if required, at any point in this research process.
- I agree to participate in this study.

Signed.....

Name

Date

Please note: This Consent form will be stored separately from the responses you provide.

Appendix VIII

NOMS Research Approval Letter



National Offender Management Service
National Research Committee
Email: National.Research@noms.gsi.gov.uk

12 February 2016

Confirmation of Approval – NOMS Research

Ref: 2016-010

Title: Exploring learning cultures in prison

Dear Ms Bernallick,

Thank you for submitting the amended and additional documents, and for addressing the outstanding issues raised in our previous correspondence. After careful consideration your application to conduct research within HMP Swaleside has been **approved** by the Kent and Sussex Regional Forensic Psychology Service.

The approval being granted relates to this current specific piece of research, and prior to gathering any further data in the future you would need to submit a further research application at that time.

Please note that you should contact the Governor at HMP Swaleside to seek final approval prior to starting your research.

Also, please ensure that you obtain clearances from the establishment for the audio recording device and encrypted USB before entering the prison with these items.

If you have any further questions please do not hesitate to contact.

Yours sincerely

Jayne Corson
Trainee Psychologist
Kent and Sussex Regional Forensic Psychology Service
Psychology Service
Public Sector Prisons
Author

Louisa Sutcliffe (Supervisor)
Registered Forensic Psychologist
Kent and Sussex Regional Forensic
Public Sector Prisons
Supervisor