

Rhythms and Routines: sounding order in a local men's prison through aural ethnography

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
University of Leicester

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January 2019

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The prison soundscape is characterised by bangs, clangs, jangles and shouts reverberating around the stark environment (Hassine 1996). Wener (2012) argues the impact of these noises is enhanced by their inescapability, but what significance this has for the relationships and wellbeing of those who live and work in these spaces, has been historically ignored. This thesis, the first to focus specifically on sound in prison, answers these questions, and that of how tackling the neglect of aural experience in prisons literature might form a better understanding of prison social life. To answer this a novel method of research, Aural Ethnography (ethnography privileging aural experience), was developed and utilised to study a local men's prison in England. Thorough immersion into the prison's soundscape, over an extended period, allowed for an understanding of how these inescapable sounds shaped the everyday life of the prison.

Using sound as a theoretical framework to explore prison life resulted in original insights and novel contributions to the prison literature on power, emotion, space, time, and order. The potency of prison spaces reverberated in the soundscape beyond the bounds of immediate interaction, amplifying the impact of jangling keys and clanging gates. This partially disentangles power from the rhythms and routines that comprise the order of a predictably structured day. At HMP Midtown, the soundscape functioned as a site for both gauging and affecting the emotional climate of prison spaces. A steady day – maintained through a delicate and ongoing community effort (Sparks *et al* 1996) – was a source of reassurance and security. It was the ontological security offered by a predictably ordered regime which provided much of the impetus for cooperating and contributing to the steady rhythms of the everyday. Sound amplified the strategies employed to navigate the prison environment, and the desire to emerge unscathed.

Acknowledgements

My endless gratitude to the men and women of HMP Midtown, who taught me more than I can ever commit to paper and whose warmth, generosity and welcome made my fieldwork amongst the happiest times of my life so far as well as the most intellectually enriching. I sincerely hope I do you some justice.

I owe a huge number of thanks to an awful lot of people. Thank you to my supervisors: Prof. Yvonne Jewkes, Dr Jennifer Fleetwood, Prof. Jo Phoenix, Dr Sam King and Dr Wendy Fitzgibbon. Thank you also to my examiners Prof. Richard Sparks and Dr Kate Gooch.

Thank you Jennifer for teaching me about the kind of teacher I want to be and patiently illustrating the necessity of diplomacy, I'm still learning. Jo, thank you for teaching me about the kind of academic I want to become – and for teaching me that diplomacy can be somewhat overrated. For your support to the bitter end, thank you Sam, you are a gent. Thanks also to Jo Phoenix, for bringing emergency alcohol and moral support – you may move away but you are never shaking us neighbours. Thanks for putting up with our endless chats too PJ. I have received a lot of kindness from the broader academic community over these last few years too, and various people need a damn good thanking: The Leicester crewe: Amy Clarke, Isobel Barrett, Jo Smith, Claire Davis and the indefatigably supportive Laura Nevay; wishing you as many unicorns as you can handle. PROF! Ben Crewe – thank you for being so very patient with drafts, references, guidance and advice* (*this in no way indicates I have finished hitting you up, sorry in advance). Thanks to Prof. Fergus McNeill for similarly gargantuan feats of kindness and patience. For your collegiality, support and making space for me; thank you to the Cambridge council of ladies: Prof. Alison Liebling, Alice Ievins, Anna Schiele, Bethany Schmidt, Borah Kant, Julie Laursen, Kirstine Szifris and Martha Morey.

Props to the staff of the David Wilson library at the University of Leicester, particularly the inter-lending team who never once told me what a pain I was. Thank you to our social sciences librarian Dr William J.B Farrell for putting up with my madcap enthusiasms. Also, thanks are due to Thomas Moore and Radislow Pajor for explaining how to contribute to the data repository with kindness and enthusiasm and with directions even one such as I could understand!

Thanks to my Mum for never giving up on me, I promise those years pulling pints and cleaning up the bodily fluids of strangers were not a complete waste of time (chapter forthcoming). And last, but by no means least: My endless, heartfelt gratitude Jason Warr, without you I would never have found the courage to go back to school. My biggest champion, my constant support, my dearest love and my best friend, thank you.

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1. “Just landed” *** SOUND 1

<https://leicester.figshare.com/search?q=10.25392%2Fleicester.data.7628846&searchMode=1>¹

“I think the other sort of sound that I suppose comes as a shock, surprise, is you know when you’re on the wings? Particularly when the men are locked up, banged up as the phrase is, and if there’s a delay in unlocking or something like that you know you get a lot of people kicking and banging at their doors. And y’know, I think when you initially come it comes as a shock, it’s that sense of that proper old Victorian asylum type conditions almost, of people behind iron doors you know? Kicking and screaming and shouting and banging” (Diane, resettlement worker).

Years before returning to education, I signed up for a rare opportunity to visit HMP Wandsworth as part of a library-training initiative. I felt the disorientating effect of lingering at the central control point, in the eye of the swirling soundscape²; the well-known ‘central star’. Disembodied shouts, screams, laughter joined with bangs, clangs and jangles to dizzying and unnerving effect. I could hear far beyond my line of vision. The alien soundscape evoked emotion that exceeded my attempts to understand it. Exploration of the literature prompted frustration at the lack of reference to what had struck me as a significant aspect of the prison environment. As I dove deeper in to these largely uncharted territories it became increasingly apparent that this absence reflected a cultural bias towards the visual, a bias which sensory sociology attempts to redress (Simmel 1907; Vannini *et al* 2013). Ultimately, while attempting to better elucidate more ‘intangible’ aspects of social life, these efforts are bedevilled by the same cultural limitations as work before them (Coleman 2017). I was faced with a dual challenge, how to incorporate a means of redressing this methodologically while at the same time articulating a field of enquiry with no direct precedent. This is the first empirical study of sound in prison, and the first to deploy sound as methodology in prisons research.

¹ This links to figshare (<https://leicester.figshare.com/>) The University of Leicester repository. The doi: 10.25392/leicester.data.7628846

² “Soundscape” refers to the aural components of a physical environment. The definition provided by the British Standards Institute includes dimensions of experience (expectation, memory, emotion) which do not reflect sound as it is heard, but rather as it is interpreted within particular spatial contexts (BSI 2014).

While Carrabine (2004) bemoans the failure to bridge foci on daily life inside, and on the wider social, political and economic contexts which shape the penal landscape, various facets of prison have received extensive treatment from prison scholars. Within this literature there is a rich vein of prison ethnographies; studies of the lived realities of prison life for those who experience it. While there are exceptions, much of this work focuses solely on prisoner life, an approach I sought to avoid (e.g. Clemmer 1940; Crewe 2009). This project takes the established traditions of prison ethnography as its point of departure, extending this to address the lack of attention sound has received. Prisoner accounts echo a notable consistency in referring to this aspect of prison life (e.g. Berkman 1912; Hassine 1996), but there was little in the prison literature, or outside of it to offer guidance on how study of such a neglected area should proceed. For all its novelty this work sits firmly within prisons literature, looking at the whole prison community as a means of exploring the significance of sound. In doing so it draws on work from a range of fields and disciplines. This project actively reflects the nature of criminology as a field which derives an approach to crime and punishment from its positioning at the nexus of various other disciplines (Downes, cited in Young 2003). Ideas from sociology, anthropology, sound studies, cultural studies, psychology, carceral geography, literary criticism and sociology are merged with criminology to explore the significance of the prison soundscape to those who live and work within it.

Sound in methodology

Sound is a complex phenomenon, bound with social processes of meaning-making. This project works on the basis of a more nuanced and complex understanding of what constitutes sound than a merely physiological understanding. Sound is understood as both intrinsically subjective - as a consideration of what constitutes “noisy” illustrates - and inextricably bound with social processes of construction. Scrutinising who gets to define what constitutes “noisy” and who has the power to do something about it raises questions about whether sound has a political component, bound up with space and the social relations which lend it form and function (Lefebvre 2004; Keiser 2012). Sound, then, is an intricate process of meaning-making, transmitting packages of information which construct social spaces and direct social behaviour. Sound is a phenomenon unbounded by divisions governing other aspects of social life in that it traverses space and time, straddling imagination and experience. This understanding of sound echoes the potency of the auditory imagination and its utility for exploring the meaning and

enactment of space and social relations (Elliot 1933; Ihde 2007). “Auditory imagination” refers to the process of attaching meaning to sound. In literature this is used to refer to feeling evoked by patterns of sound beneath the text (Kitchen 1991). In philosophy this is used to refer to auditory aspects of human mental life, though I extend it to account for the ways in which people engage in mutual meaning-making within the soundscape (Ihde 2007).

Sound exists both out there, a measurable objective phenomenon, and within; in the imagination and the world of memory and expectation with which that is bound (BSI 2014). This is particularly potent in prison, where the impact of the soundscape is enhanced by lack of control over exposure (Wener 2012), and where its unique specificity is compounded by the totemic significance of the space. In the context of the prison, sound is implicated in processes of order; a means of remaking the social significance of prison spaces. Elvis – an older, local prisoner serving the latest in a string of sentences and with whom I often chatted - supports this interpretation of the impact of the soundscape when he says: “*The first thing I noticed when I came to prison, sounded like a jungle*”. This definition of sound emphasises the importance of a methodological approach which faithfully reflects the subjective complexities of interaction with the prison soundscape.

The novel focus of the project dictated the development of a corresponding methodology to better capture this uncharted and under-acknowledged aspect of prison life. My MSc dissertation was based on a pilot study to assess the feasibility of incorporating sound into more traditional approaches to prison ethnography; an aural ethnography of prison. I adapted that method for this project, underpinned by 29 ethnographically-informed interviews within a local men’s prison – HMP Midtown - where I spent over seven months. I was granted a great amount of latitude, drew keys and was permitted to spend a night there. I spoke to most people passing through the prison spaces during this time; staff, visitors and prisoners. Sacrificing breadth for depth echoed the observation that: “*Every prison’s different inside, it’s got its ways, attitudes...*” (Jack), and that there are as many prisons as people to experience them (Sykes 1958). Having served previous sentences both at Midtown and a number of other prisons, Jack, a prisoner participant was well-placed to advise. As time went on the necessity of becoming intimately familiar with the prison soundscape as a means of understanding social interactions with it reinforced the validity of this approach. The use of sensory methods framed my research

question: What significance does sound have for the relationships and wellbeing of those who live and work at HMP Midtown?

Incorporating sound in to method emphasised the impossibility of answering these questions in discrete ways. Sound announces these interwoven aspects of social experience, with order emerging from fieldnotes and interviews as a unifying theme. Human experience of the social world is neither tidy, monolithic nor compartmentalised and to present it as such would have been to burden representation of what these people disclosed with an inauthentic neatness. Incorporating sound into ethnography drew me as a researcher further in to the field, allowing me to share a common point of reference with the community. I remained an outsider, but in the broader sense of an acoustic community – a group of people for whom sound has particular importance – I was brought within (Truax 2001).

Sound at HMP Midtown

HMP Midtown is a small, regency-era prison in the city centre of the community from which it draws just under two thirds of its prisoners. An unusually small prison with a population hovering around 300 (one hundred more than the prison was designed to hold), Midtown is characterised by the domination of one, main wing in which most of the community live and work. Serving the courts of the town city and county, it also has a resettlement function for those approaching the end of their sentence. As with other local prisons, Midtown was subject to high rates of “churn”³ with an average stay of 46 days⁴ (No.1⁵). In addition, this population comprised a complex range of needs and sentence conditions. The prison contained a substance misuse treatment unit and was subject to the increasingly unpredictable vagaries of recall, resettlement and uncertain sentence length (PRT 2018). Many prisoners were on a merry-go-round of release and return with the matrices of vulnerabilities this entailed (e.g. substance misuse, disrupted family life, unemployment, homelessness, petty crime) (MoJ 2018). A number left and returned repeatedly during my stay, rubbing shoulders with bewildered first timers. While ostensibly ‘local’, these prisoners served portions of their sentence alongside others who

³ Prison term referring to the measure of how fast a prison population turns over

⁴ These figures were checked against the latest HMIP inspection, and IMB reports but have been excluded in order to conceal the identity of the prison, those who contributed to this research and are associated with it

⁵ The Prison Governor – the person responsible for running the prison – is often referred to as “the No.1”

had been recalled, were lifers passing through or who were serving indefinite sentences of IPP⁶ or HMP⁷, but who were on appeal, parole or pre-hearing hold.

The layout and population of Midtown proved ideal for the project. Sharing the same space with most of the prison meant we had the same point of reference, while the diversity of the population and their experience provided a rich pool of insight to draw from. The small size of the prison enabled me to develop good relationships. It proved easier to demonstrate my observance of security protocol in an environment where I was interacting with the same, smaller pool of uniformed and managerial staff. While spending most of my time on the wing allowed me to introduce the project in a more considered and ethical way with the prisoner population who could listen to my conversations with others and to whom I was accessible to answer questions as well as for the various other purposes to which I was put.

Midtown was unusual in its size, and also in the degree of sense of community which could be discerned by its members. Both staff and prisoners likened the prison to a “*council estate*” in the sense that many of its residents had grown up in the same area (Tommy, Officer Rose, Lugs). As Ket, an officer, described the prison:

“It’s a community in there. Most definitely... it’s not totally separate from the outside it’s just a different... obviously it’s more restricted in there than what you can do outside. But that community in there, them prisoners, yeah, they’ve got to do what they’ve got to do to live, and to earn, to hustle, to get by. Yeah, that’s what it is. You talking about prisoners or you talking about staff?... well no, I s’pose from the hustling side of it... yeah it’s all the same, yeah, you know you stick together, you’ve got each other’s back. You know, you try and help and support one another yeah, it’s the same... And to be quite honest I’ve never looked on it like that, I’ve always kind of separated the two.”

The size of the prison also created a particularly intense, or “challenging” environment (HMP Midtown visitors’ pamphlet). One officer’s description described Midtown in contrast to other prisons:

⁶ Indeterminate sentence for public protection. Introduced by the Criminal Justice Act 2003 and abolished in 2012.

⁷ Juvenile life sentence, also indeterminate works the same way as a discretionary life sentence in terms of parole.

“This place is more intense... than most... It’s more concentrated, imagine it’s like a squash... This is undiluted, yeah tension on the wing. You go to some wings in some prisons and you can make a pint out of a little bit.. like that.. and it’s relaxed, it’s okay, I can deal with a fourteen-hour shift on there, it’s fine, it’s not a problem. You do a morning on there, or a couple of hours in the morning, and your head’s just battered just because of the noise, constant buzz, constant dum de dum de dum de dum. You know? Constant, constant, like trains going past you all the time. It’s that intensity. Full on. Unless you’re ready for that, you know, you’re going to find it really difficult” (Derek, Officer).

When asked to describe the soundscape staff frequently responded by talking about the effects *“we take it with us, definitely”*, their coping strategies *“you learn to numb it out”*, or their inability to share it with those in their personal lives *“you couldn’t describe it to your best mate...”* (No.2)⁸. Prisoners often responded with descriptions of the prison soundscape: *“a jungle”, “chaos”, “a madhouse”, “a cattle market”, “controlled mayhem.”* (fieldnotes)⁹

Themes and focus

This research contributes to and extends understanding of prison life in a number of ways. Addressing the research questions to explore sound and the social world in HMP Midtown raises implications for how social processes bound up with order and its maintenance are understood. Order refers both to the imposition of predictable routines which mark and shape the prison day – the regime¹⁰ - and the arrangements of community members in relation to one another which demarcate particular roles within these routines. Within the prison institution, which works on the basis of strict constraints on time, movement and activity for all its members, the problem of order – on which the structure of the prison day depends – is of particular significance. This importance extends not only to the smooth running of discernible daily patterns of activity, but in the power which underpins the ability of some (prison staff) to impose these patterns on

⁸ The deputy governor - junior only to the governor and acting up in their absence - is commonly referred to as “the No.2”

⁹ Quotes are taken from interviews and fieldnotes, staff members are indicated with reference to their role, prisoners indicated by an absence of one. Where no individual is quoted the text is taken from my fieldnotes and relates either to people in conversation – indicated - or my observations from the time.

¹⁰ The prison day is characterised by strict adherence to a prescribed itinerary referred to as the “regime”

others (prisoners). Henri Lefebvre (2004) maintains that rhythms of daily life have an audible component. Careful listening reveals the nature of social organisation on which these depend. Combining these ideas with contributions from the fields of anthropology, philosophy and sound studies underpin this understanding of sound as intrinsically social. In the context of the prison, sound is bound up with processes of order, power and its navigations and contestations which form the stuff of daily life inside. In allowing for textured distinction between the sounds of daily rhythms of prison life, and the meaning ascribed to them by individuals, listening to the prison soundscape allowed for a distinction between power and the maintenance of order with which it is bound. The soundscape offered a means of re-exploring those processes of order maintenance central to prison life. Listening in the prison provided a means of investigating the ways in which sound is bound up with social relations, prison spaces and doing time.

Sound map

Having successfully navigated various preliminary ethical procedures, gatehouse and “traka”¹¹, I hesitantly entered the prison, slowly orientating myself within an alien environment of disorientating sounds and spaces. Security forbids providing a map; a challenge partially overcome by drawing on the soundscape as a means of orientating the reader to the spaces and social world of HMP Midtown (Amnesty International 2016; Weizman 2017). The following is a description of the sounds encountered in the process of entering the prison taken from fieldnotes, as a means of orientating the reader in the absence of a conventional map.

I enter the prison through a series of concentric circles. The outer ring is largely traversed by staff and sanctioned vehicles. Mumbled conversation is carried on the wind, though it is quiet here. Prisoners barely seen here other than briefly on the way in or out through reception, escorted to and from legal visits and the solitary gardening orderly. Calm, voices across concrete, separated from the bustle outside but metres away from busy traffic.

I sit on the wall, breaching the convention of always “coming/going through” and listen to the thrum of living from the ghostly figures at windows. A million radios, tellys, voices. I hear the bang of doors below. The thump of pulsing dance

¹¹ Traka is the system for monitoring allocation of keys. This works on fingerprint and pin technology.

escapes from the gym. Footsteps and keys on metal stairs hugging the buildings. Bass, conversation, shifting light as people move within. Whitney "I wanna dance with somebody" makes me curious about the source of these sounds, the listeners to this music. Chats, trading, bartering, bantering.

In through second circle, footfall dampened on carpet tiles, jovial voices, movement accompanied by jangling keys. Comings and goings through clunking doors. Metal on metal below feet as staff move through the main body of the prison. Offices separated by plaster board partitions which do not reach floor or ceiling, bleeding sounds of laughter, sneezes, radio. Keys, jangle of chain, thunk as lock bites, clunk of lock, creak of gate, lock and unlock has a rhythm. Entry invisible from vantage point upstairs, I begin to discern difference in footsteps. Staff more measured, heavier, boots and stride. Admin workers faster pace, IMB (walking through for monthly meeting) skipping, purposeful step. Rhythm of walk affects the jangle. Entering bit by bit, disorientating doors that lead to unexpected places, or nowhere...

I walk to education and skills, male voices out of windows drift over the concrete as I go, whistling for attention, rushed bartering, burn promised. I lurk guiltily, listening to industrious chatter. Walk back and forth unsure of purpose or destination, then travel up to seek out peace to think in the chapel. I let myself in. I cannot see through the frosted or stained glass of the grubby chapel windows. Sounds merge, direction unclear, planes, building works, sirens, reminders of life outside but curiously dislocated. I hear loud music, clunking of gates. More gates opening and closing all around, laughter, violins? "Will you still love me tomorrow?" strains across the way. Contrasts with serene quiet within. Just my biro on paper, clock ticking...

Emerge to see a new officer being shown around and overhear they are headed to the first night centre. I follow, positioning myself in a corner by the gates connecting the centre to the main wing, so I can hear but cannot see. Officer shouting instructions. Shouted conversations, gates, laughter, men's voices, intrusive whistling, rattling. Background hum of radios and tellys, prisoner shouting: "I smell weed", "I smell ganja". Banging on cell doors, piercing high pitch alarm. Officer sashays past, rustle of uniform fabric, chink, chink, chink of

chains. Sense mass movement. Footsteps. Whistling. Faster. More banging. Doors. Throat clearing. Clanks overhead. Bang, bang, bang, shout. Volume drops, thrum, chunter of radios and tellys as things settle.

I ask to accompany staff to visits, walking over the forecourt with them. The prisoners are brought in first and seated at predetermined tables. They wait. Some for much longer than others depending on punctuality of their visitors and how process of entry through security and visits' waiting area has gone. The noise builds to uncomfortable levels. I choose a spot away from intimate, personal exchanges between family, lovers, friends. Women and children as well as men but listening closely reveals constraints of situation. Restrictive rules of conduct, contact, clothing and time. Only children communicate with no sign of restraint, running, laughing, tears and tantrums. All emotion is here, the squelch of lingering kisses, harsh words hissed under breath, a couple argues. There are tears and reassuring embraces. "Finish up your minutes please". Emotion soup. Feels too intrusive here. Private, family intimacy on partial display. When the last have left, the room feels like after hours at a club when all the punters have gone, and the lights go up.

The further in the louder it becomes. Everyone is out but there is plenty of purpose as morning "domestics"¹² offers a small window to accomplish tasks; meds, apps, bin emptying, showers, sleepy faces and bed hair as more emerge, yawning in cell doorways. The regime unfolds in tides of sound. Rhythms within rhythms. Bang, bang, bang. Shouting to work, education, exercise. Crescendos of dawdling, toing and froing. The chaotic din reveals its secrets by degree.

I follow officer to reception. An oasis of calm after the main wing, the prison population being small enough to allow for offering attention to each new arrival, assessing their needs, doing the paperwork, counting money and belongings... sets of rhythms, routines, practices.

Road map

Alongside less conventional means of introduction, the layout of the project required a more familiar means of signposting the contents. These are loosely divided in to three

¹² A brief, daily, period in the regime designated for various chores and errands around the wing such as bin emptying.

sections. The first introduces the project and its context within the literature. The second details the theoretical and practical implications of the methodology before proceeding to offer an account of how the method was employed in the field. The third section lays out the thematic analysis of interview and fieldnote data. The thesis concludes with a consideration of how this contributes to the broader conversation.

In “Power, Sound and the Prison” I apply the theoretical framework of sound to consider the implications of this for how we understand prisons literature. If an absence of accounting for aural experience is important for understanding the prison, what problems does this present for the way the prison is currently explored in the literature? I draw on a wide range of fields and ideas to explore the implications presented by widening the theoretical lens to incorporate sound. I consider how bringing sound in challenges the ways in which power in the prison is thought about as well as what the implications are of addressing this absence in the literature for considering practices of power in the prison. Articulating power works to challenge the way order is thought about, when sound is used as a theoretical ear. I go on to consider how accounting for aural aspects of social experience makes room for a consideration of emotion within the rhythms and rituals of the prison. If sound announces the ways in which experiences of power are not fixed in time and space, unlike order, which comprises a sequential process of navigation and maintenance, this raises questions about how temporal and spatial experience is considered within the prison context. Having explored the ways in which applying the theoretical frame of aural aspects of social experience amplifies gaps in the prison literature, I move on to consider how these challenges are echoed in the research design.

The methodology section is divided into two parts. The first – “Sound in the scaffolding: research design” - details the theoretical underpinnings of my methodological approach and how this informed the research design. Here I detail the way in which sound is used within the project, what this does for production of knowledge and for unsettling assumptions about how we know. I lay out the practical details of the method and detail the ways in which sound informed an iterative approach to fieldwork, transcription and analysis. Having detailed the theoretical framework providing the scaffolding for the project, I move on to discuss the ways in which the design was put in to practice.

In “Method in practice” I explore the challenges adopting a novel method present for putting these ideas in to practice in the field. I consider the significance of my identity to

relationship-building within the field, and how incorporating sound in to method went some way to compensating for the limitations of that. Exploring the soundscape requires a familiarity with the environment. I discuss this process, and the way in which this was integral to the project before concluding with a consideration of the ways in which sound informed my ethnographic approach. Having addressed how this particular definition and use of sound were put in to practice, as well as the impact of this on working in the field, I move on to the third section; the analysis.

“Power, order, time and space” introduces the analysis section, providing a bridge between methods, practice and results. This brief chapter frames the following section and lays out the main themes identified in the process of analysing interviews and fieldnotes. Order and the means of survival it presented form the overarching theme of the thesis, and this requires an elaboration of the particular ways in which order is understood within the context of the project. I go on to briefly outline the approach adopted to analysis before introducing the following three chapters.

In “Jingle Jangle” I detail the ways in which experiences of power and the prison were mediated by sound and what this reveals about prison life at Midtown. This chapter is concerned with how accounting for aural experience changes how we understand power in the context of the prison. Sound is bound with iterations and navigations of order and power in prison relationships. The potency of the prison echoes in the soundscape; imbued with particular meanings by the physical context with which it is associated. Sound is implicated in processes of adaptation and institutionalisation (Clemmer 1940; Goffman 1961) and the ways in which power is done to those within the prison through the imposition of order. In illuminating dimensions of experience relating to action, structure and agency sound allows for a more nuanced understanding of power and the ways in which its potential is articulated through the soundscape, on occasion independently of actors’ intention. Sound was central to practices of surveillance and sousveillance illuminating the partial, fluctuating and contingent nature of power in the prison. This works to disentangle power from processes of order and the work its maintenance necessitates. The concluding section illuminates the ways in which understanding of how sound is interwoven with processes of power is hampered by the inadequacies of descriptive language which work to obscure these aspects of jail craft. If sound widens our understanding of how power operates and is experienced beyond individual interaction, what does this mean for how we think about order?

“The Hustle and Bustle” explores how sound adds complexity and dimension to associations between power, order and daily life. Daily life in Midtown was characterised by the soundscape which both shaped and reflected it, the most notable aspect of this was the large bell which sounds particular points of the regime. Sound, however, also worked to illuminate the ways in which the rhythms of order as depicted by the official regime are complicated and complimented by orders and rhythms deriving from the variegated activities of daily life. Lefebvre’s (2004) rhythmanalysis offers a means of exploring sound as a source of knowledge. A good day had a sound, as did a bad one. Investigating prison life in this way illuminates generally underarticulated aspects of jailcraft. Listening to the rhythms of daily activity at HMP Midtown, reveals the extent to which the emotional climate and the means by which it prompts the development of strategies of survival is discerned aurally (Liebling *et al* 2010).

Sound offered a means of reassessing relationships between power and order. Both staff and prisoners at Midtown reported the comfort and ontological security deriving from a predictable routine (Giddens 1984). Members of the community derived comfort and compulsion to cooperate from the sense of mechanical solidarity deriving from contributing to the rhythms of a good day. In this sense depictions of order and its relation to power and authority were complicated and partially challenged by the inclusion of sound. Considering how aural aspects of social life lend texture to experiences of power and order, prompted consideration of the wider associations between these experiences and those of time and space. How accounting for sound lends texture to spatial and temporal dimensions of power and order forms the focus of the following chapter.

“Warp and Weft” explores how a focus on sound reconfigures understanding of how time and space are experienced both within the prison and beyond it. The experience of “doing time” is too often presented as a linear, singular experience. Sound illustrates the ways in which this offers an incomplete and inaccurate account of how time is experienced in prison spaces and beyond, by both prisoners and staff. In so doing, the multiple dimensions of spatial experience are also lent additional texture. While carceral geography acknowledges the ways in which time and space are mutually constituted, too often the focus on the physical environment and the way this is rendered through expressions of identity neglect the fundamentally social nature of space and its constitution (Lefebvre 1991; Moran 2013a). An account of how sound is interwoven with experiences of time and space adds additional understanding to the nature of order and

how it is maintained, navigated and contested in temporal and spatial dimensions of the prison.

The concluding chapter, “Coda”, offers a synopsis of the main themes arising from research findings. I go on to examine the contribution this research makes to wider conversations and how it extends current literature. I consider how the project’s limitations manifest and how these might be mitigated. I then consider the future potential for research to expand and explore on the findings of research at HMP Midtown, before briefly revisiting the introduction as a means of bringing the thesis to a close.

2. Sound and the prison

The very contestability of social science suggests that its objects of knowledge are not simple reflections of naturally occurring events, but that social science creates its own objects by a process of theoretical and... practical relevances and reflections (Garland and Young 1983:2).

The absence of ‘earlids’ amplifies the intrusiveness and inescapable nature of noise within spaces of confinement, deepening the centrality of sound to prison life (Carpenter and McLuhan 1960; Wener 2012). Within the acoustic community of prison, sound reinforces and reflects the function of carceral space, embodying the values and meanings comprising the punishment of the incarcerated body. Clanging gates, jangling keys, banging and shouting summon the prison soundscape in the auditory imagination (see chapter 1) and heighten the impact of exposure to it. There is a wealth of literature on prisons, but conventions in prison scholarship impose particular frameworks on how the prison can be thought of - an effect amplified by the exclusion of sound. Daniel Levitin (2007) explains how soundscapes echo the complex and unique configurations of our physical environment. How does this inform understanding of what it means to be ‘banged up’ in the ‘clink’ or a ‘screw’ in the ‘slammer’? Sound allows for the conceptualisation of prison spaces in a way which more closely echo the complexity of human experience, increasing the accuracy of its depiction. The auditory imagination eases transition between perception and imagination as well as time and space (Elliot 1933; Ihde 1976). The enduring neglect of this aspect of prison experience has implications for how we understand the prison. Situating sound within the prisons literature announces its value.

Daily life in prison is constructed around the problem of order (Sparks *et al* 1996). Examining order is made more difficult by conceptualising order as a straightforward corollary of power. “Power, sound and the prison” explores how attending to sound extends understanding of how power is experienced. In illustrating how memory revisits experience, sound reveals dimensions of power beyond the relational, unbounded by time and space. This has the effect of disarticulating power from order within prison spaces and in so doing amplifying understanding of how these shape experience of everyday life inside. “Power, sound and surveillance” goes on to explore how sound adds to

understanding of practices of power in the prison environment, and its nature as fluid, contested and partial (albeit fundamentally unequal).

Order is composed of processes of structure and predictability within the present. “Order, sound and survival” details how listening to the prison social world allows for a consideration of the link between order and surviving daily life. In “Emotion, identity sound and space” sound is used to explore the role of the emotional climate in processes of order maintenance and disruption. Identity performance, I argue, has an aural component which both contributes to and undermines the sense of order in prison spaces. The last section - “Time, space and sound in the prison” – addresses the impact of these readings of power, order and emotion on how time and space are experienced in prison, and what this means for the power of prison as a place. Having explored the problems arising from neglecting sound in prisons literature, I conclude by briefly introducing the following chapter which is concerned with how these ideas translate to research design.

2.1 Power, sound and the prison

Listening to prison spaces prompts examination of how power is exercised and experienced in this most particular of places. Despite extensive treatment, considerations of power in prison tend to focus on its relational aspects. Listening to the soundscape broadens the field of inquiry beyond the scope of human interaction to include wider social experience.

Defining Power

Who wields power, how and in what ways and circumstances are central to the pursuit of understanding the social world (e.g. Russell 1938; Hearn 2012; Bosch 2016). Rarely is this clearer than in the prison where stark power relations form the stuff of life (Crewe and Liebling 2015). The prison – a “total institution” - contains an enclosed, formally regulated community, an intrinsically social space in which power features in particularly pronounced ways (Goffman 1961; Crewe 2009). It is little wonder that power forms such a consistent and sustained focus of attention for prison scholars (e.g. Carlen 1982; Sparks *et al* 1996; Carrabine 2004; Sim 2009). Often the focus is on capturing the texture and character of power-laden transactions which imposes a particular emphasis on its relational dimensions (e.g. Hepburn 1985; Carrabine 2004; Crewe 2011). At its most basic, power is understood as the ability to influence people or events. In prison, this “influence” is often aligned with the power to punish and is felt with corresponding

disparity and intensity (Garland and Young 1983). In daily prison life asymmetrical power relations are complicated by the ebb and flow of action and agency and are multidirectional, multifarious and fluid:

“What we normally encounter in social life... is a variegated multiplicity of centres of power, with their powers waxing and waning in a web of relations with shifting combinations and alliances” (Hearn 2012: 9).

In this description conceptions of power as forms of social relations are underscored (Foucault 1980; Wrong 2002). Sound is a means of articulating power, as well as eliciting memory (Schafer 1994; Toop 2010). The jingle jangle of keys can impose fear and anxiety or invoke potent memories. This presents treatments of power in the context of prisons literature with a problem; if power is experienced beyond temporal and spatial bounds, it must also lie beyond immediate relational exchange. For Morriss (2002:13), power is “a concept referring to an ability, capacity or dispositional property”; a “dispositional concept”. Morriss opens up understandings of power to realms of social relations beyond their immediate bounds; the wider world of structures, institutions and spaces. Sound allows for a conception of power which reverberates with these wider definitions. Power exists in potential as well as in action, a potential Morriss (2002: 14) likens to a bottle of whisky – its potency remaining unchanged whether or not it is opened and drunk. This extends the notion of power to include relations beyond the interpersonal, but by implication rather than exposition. This lends credence to the notion of power as more than a mere quantitative phenomenon as Giddens classifies it, the capacity to effect, to “make some difference” (Giddens 1984: 14).

Morriss’ conception of power echoes with that of Carrabine’s use of “translation” – an idea adopted from Callon and Latour (1981: 279) – to capture the complex mechanisms by which power is negotiated and conferred between actors and forces (Carrabine 2004: 30). Crucially, Carrabine argues, translation allows for an understanding of how power is mediated and transferred in ways which both addresses what he identifies as an “asymmetry”¹³ of prison microsociology and more faithfully captures its contingency. This goes further to addressing the elusive qualities of power and its operations,

¹³ Carrabine uses “asymmetry” in two senses when critiquing prison sociology, both in terms of the greater focus on prisoner experience and the ways in which prison sociology inadequately allows for movement between institutions and individuals; an “analytical bracketing” which obscures the nature of power as “constantly worked at” (Carrabine 2004: 30).

expanding on Hearn's definition above to include both "actors" and "forces". Despite asserting that "little attention has been given to the signification of power in prison sociology", Carrabine's (2004: 29) tantalising treatment of these aspects of power and its operations does not go far enough in explicating what these "forces" consist of. What is this 'property' and if we accept it extends beyond human relations, how is this disposition 'translated'? Attending to aural aspects of social experience accounts for this by rendering the means by which power is translated between people and environment audible. In addition to other aspects of power extensively explored elsewhere – such as the weight and tightness of restrictive and capriciously enforced practices (e.g. Crewe 2011a) – individuals in positions of power draw on the symbolic potency of the prison by evoking aural systems of signification. The impact on those subject to them is largely obscured from the practical consciousness of the relatively powerful in the course of their everyday rituals (Giddens 1984). The rigid adherence to rules around the locking of gates, the carrying of keys form part of everyday practice within the institution, they are not, nor can they be objectively reflected upon by their practitioners. This forms a key component of power maintenance; auditory signifiers of power resonate with the privilege on which it depends and with the social memory reconstituted in their hearing (Giddens 1979; Bourdieu 1992).

The clanging of gates, the jangling of keys form part of the maintenance of power relations within the prison by echoing and amplifying the meanings the soundscape is imbued with as well as the memories this invokes. Considering the operations of power in this way contributes additional dimensions to our understanding of how power works as well as what it is. Power can be thought of as a force which operates on and through social relations as well as between people and place. Mutable, negotiated, visible and obfuscated, the complex systems of signification on which it partially depends are amplified by attending to the ways in which it is sensorially as well as socially discernible.

Sound and agency in prison

Action and agency are interwoven with power in the degree to which action is possible against social, economic and political constraints; the freedom to act (Giddens 1984). A complex and contextually-variable concept, here agency encompasses those practices which make room for self-determination within prison spaces (King 2012). Conceptions of power which extend its qualities beyond quantitative dimensions complicate its association with agency. Engaging with auditory aspects of social experience carves out

space for a more nuanced consideration of agency and its manifestations beyond what might crudely be thought of as action. Sound, its uses, expressions or withdrawals carve out space for understanding how identity is reconstituted internally as well as externally. Auditory experience provides an additional explanatory mechanism for understanding how performative presentations of the self are conducted within the carceral constraints of the institution (Goffman 1959, 1961). Additionally, harnessing the auditory imagination accounts for the ways in which these processes are also maintained internally. This supports a reading of the “backstage self” which is both a less managed, more direct presentation of self and a private arena in which personal identity is reconstituted (Goffman 1959).

Agency, while limited within the stark conditions of the prison, can be used to partially offset constraints of the regime (Bosworth 1999; De Dardel 2013). In an environment of acute constraints, sound becomes more prominent as a means of exercising agency. Prison is defined as a total institution within which restrictions of speech and self-expression are key to the mortifications of self which strip the inhabitant of their autonomy (Goffman 1961). In such social circumstances the free exercise of voice, the unrestrained making of noise can constitute acts of rebellion (Labelle 2018). Cusick refers to sonic expressions of identity as “acoustical agency” a term Rice later adopts in relation to prison sound (Cusick 2013; Rice 2016). Sonic agency directly speaks to the centrality of sound to expressions of resistance and negotiation (Labelle 2018).

The private self and the social self, the structural and agentic converge in sound (Elliot 1933; Ihde 2001). Accounting for action within the soundscape demarcates the agentic individual within and against the prison system, lending flesh and bone to “pale and ghostly” agents (Archer 2010:225). Sound adds understanding of how subversion and contestation are ever-present through the flows of power both enhancing and detracting from its operation upon the imprisoned body. Acts of acoustic agency form part of a broader tapestry of mundane exercises of power and resistance which form the fabric of prison life (Uglevik 2014). People impact the experience of prison spaces though not in circumstances of their choosing. Listening to auditory aspects of social experience amplifies expressions of agency within the broader social symphony of daily prison life. Conceptions of acoustical agency are useful for theorising about the social functions of sound in the context of asymmetrical power relations. Additional focus on music and prison sociology anchor these ideas in lived experience. Within an environment in which movement and vision are severely restricted for many inhabitants, sound assumes

increased significance as a space for mediating power and knowledge (Herrity forthcoming). Sound is a means of exercising agency by extending experience beyond the door constituting both a source of knowledge and a means of “feeling” what is happening in other parts of the prison, where the gaze does not penetrate (Weizman 2017). Auditory information provides a means of surveilling the surveyors, as a site of *sousveillance* in which negotiated power relations flow in both directions (Fernback 2012). Attending to sound in prison emphasises both the vibrant mutability of power relations and the ways in which sensory resourcefulness works to contest and renegotiate them in carceral spaces.

Acoustical agency is harnessed as a means of being heard. If the prison soundscape signifies the power of the institution to those imprisoned within it (Wener 2012), it also functions as a site for exercising agency in making noise. Sound can be used in a multitude of ways to impact the social environment, from whistling to imposing an ‘ecology of fear’ (Goodman 2012). Music has been associated with psychological survival in the prison context; a means of remaking and expressing identity (Liebling et al. 2012; Herrity 2018a). Singing, whistling, making rhythm form part of a continuum of organised sound and indicate the significance of sound as an elastic medium for shoring up the self within constrained circumstances. Sound is a site for both constituting the agent and expressing agency by affecting the emotional climate. What we hear is a main emotional driver, and the means by which we are alerted to potential danger (Horowitz 2012). Altering auditory experience in the prison community has the potential to affect a significant number of people, a powerful means of asserting individuality and expressing self within an environment characterised by deprivation and constraint (Sykes 1958).

Power and the prison

Attending to aural dimensions of experience holds the potential to address what Carrabine (2004) interprets as a stubborn division between ‘micro’ prison sociology, and approaches which seek to explore structural aspects of prison and punishment. He asserts that:

“the microsociology of prison life is profoundly asymmetrical. In practically every account the analytical gaze is skewed toward prisoners. Whilst this can illuminate the pains, degradations and so forth experienced by the confined, it

tells us little about how the powerful are able to be powerful” (Carrabine 2004: 30).

Working with the prison community as a whole goes some way to addressing this issue though remains restricted to directly relational dimensions of power. The notion of penalty – which centres prison, and punishment, within the broader socio-political context which shapes its function and meaning (e.g. Garland 2013) – indicates this is insufficient remedy to address less tangible aspects of power. “Penalty... relays and condenses a whole series of social relations within the... terms of its own practice” (Garland and Young 1983:21). Conversely, this places the prison (as a facet of punishment) at the centre of social life, both reflecting and reinforcing societal norms (Durkheim 1895).

Apparatuses of punishment are partially constructed and sustained in the wider social imaginary (Durkheim 1900; Melossi 1998; Mathieson 2005a; Pratt; 2006; Carlen 2008; Lacey 2008; Tonry 2010). Experience of prison spaces consist not only of its physical dimensions, or of the daily activities which shape and reinforce its purpose, but also the ideas which lend these spaces meaning (Lefebvre 1991; Soja 1996). Sound overcomes these conventional parameters between dimensions of experience, fusing imagination and perception (Thompson 2004a). Traversing these murky points of convergence allows for a more fluid consideration of the wider social and emotional dimensions of punishment (Durkheim 1893, 1895). This places prison within the wider social world without imposing a restrictive social analytical framework. This open approach lifts the restrictive field of vision offered by the gaze, to explore how sound mediates these wider meanings of punishment to those inside. Exploring the role of sound allows for a fresh assessment of the contention that social interactions bridge micro and supra-structural aspects of social life (Dennis and Martin 2005).

Bringing sound in to treatments of power in prison adds nuance to Giddens’ conception of distinctions between structure and action which act as a means of bridging this dualism of human experience (Giddens 1986: 16). Incorporating awareness of how broader social memory of the potency of prison is mediated and invoked through auditory signifiers amplifies distinctions between individual and institution. The social order of the prison is audible through the organised sounds which mark and shape its routine (e.g. bell ringing, calls to shop, movement) but so are the individual frustrations and daily rituals

of its inhabitants (e.g. shouting, whistling) (Feld 1984). The interweaving rituals and routines of staff, prisoners and the prison form discernible parts and variations in the ‘hustle and bustle’ of daily prison life. Listening to the rhythms of the day similarly carves out space to examine the basis of social organisation of prison society. The comfort of routine is reinforced through rhythmic ritual and everyday practice, and these practices are partially audible (Giddens 1984; Lefebvre 2004). By allowing for an examination of how individuals contribute to the practices of routinization which the order of the institution depends on, sound adds to our understanding of the relationship between structure and action. Central to Giddens’ structuration theory is the understanding that knowledge of these rules, rituals and routines transcends time and space. Sound – the temporal sense (Toop 2010) – better elucidates the mechanisms of these taken-for-granted social practices and the means by which sound facilitates transcendence of time and space through the evocation of memory (e.g. Clark 1987). Sound offers both an explanation of how these realms of human experience converge and are distinct from one another, as well as expanding our understanding of how this translates to everyday prison life. Exploring sound as signification of power in the prison reveals how its dispositional aspects infuse its meanings as it transfers between people and place within the prison.

Listening to power in prison

Sound allows for a wider-ranging consideration of how those subject to power experience it. Much work exploring the various manifestations and expressions of power at the heart of prison life underscore the ways in which power “reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes...learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault 1980:39). Broad depictions of this power as relational narrow the ways in which its impact on the incarcerated body can be understood (e.g. Foucault 1977; Carlen 1982; Sim 1989; Crewe 2009; Uglevik 2014). Sound extends the field of inquiry beyond the peripheries of vision and through physical boundaries. Flows of power are more diffuse and variegated than can be captured without acknowledging and accounting for the significance of its sensory dimensions. Sound not only evokes physiological, affective and cognitive responses but is also directly linked to memory (Stansfeld 1992; Barrett *et al* 2010; Klatte *et al* 2013). Heard in this way the locking keys and slamming of doors are facets of prison life which

both mediate and exercise power through and independently of individual agents who operate them.

Noise – unwanted or unrestricted sound – is implicated in unequal power relations and their contestation. Schafer (1994) asserts that power is embodied in the freedom to make noise without censure. Who defines what is noise, as well as who enjoys respite from it are means of enforcing social relations and the disparities of power which characterise them (Keizer 2012). In the prison setting inhabitants have little control over their exposure to noise (Wener 2012). The impact of prolonged exposure to “banging doors... keys jangling, shouting and screaming” (Owens 2012:32) result in sound-induced feelings of fear and dread; what Steve Goodman terms “affective tonality”, a key component of producing an ecology of fear (Goodman 2012). Sound is used to exert power and control in a diverse range of settings from warfare to shopping malls and arcades where noise is used to impose cultural and spatial dominance (DeNora 2000; Cusick 2008; Walsh 2008).

Power within prison flows in complex currents between people, place, expectation and experience, but nevertheless informs particular relations on which the institution partially depends for stability. The form these relations take is specific to the prison, both in terms of its asymmetry and structure (e.g. additional sanction, systems of ‘punishment’, threat of movement (Goffman 1961; Sparks et al. 1996). Despite appearances, Sykes contends these relations are far less stark and unequivocal than they seem. Prison runs, he contends, on unofficial agreements of cooperation and compromise between prisoners and officers on which its order relies (Sykes 1958). Power in prison, Sykes contends, is not based on authority (which relies on legitimacy and duty for its operations) and comprises “something more than... outward forms and symbols” (Sykes 1958: 45). Rather, order relies on a system of informal and illicit agreements with the population which form a necessary corruption of authority (Sykes 1958). Liebling explores these practices in terms of their role in social governance; the exercise of ‘discretion’ (2000). Arnold echoes this in her discussion of consensus about what constitutes a “good” officer, and the nuanced application of informal accommodations which form a part of this (Arnold 2016). Considering these relational aspects of power alongside its symbolic forms allows for a more nuanced appreciation of how power is exercised, as well as sounding its absence. When significations of power are evoked without active intent on the part of the agent (in

this case the prison officer) how does this shape how power and place are being experienced by the community?

Listening to the daily ebb and flow of prison life renders the “dialectic of power” more audible (Crewe 2007). Outward appearance of compliance is not necessarily attributable to ‘good’ utilisation of power relations, any more than it is an unambiguous signal of normative assent but may rather constitute a pragmatic response to the relative powerlessness of imprisonment (Crewe 2007). As Crewe points out, in the final analysis prisons are coercive institutions which shapes much of the rationale behind compliance as making “virtue of necessity” (Crewe 2009: 224). Crewe echoes Garland’s diagnosis of shifting patterns in governance and corresponding changes in the way power is exercised in the prison, forcing behaviours of resistance further “backstage” beneath “public transcripts” of sanctioned behaviour (Garland 1997, Crewe 2007, 2009). While the prisoner-as-agent might face increasingly claustrophobic conditions from which to resist, Crewe makes valuable space for considering the multiplicity of forms this resistance might take (Crewe 2011a).

Sound renders these concealed responses audible, and in so doing broadens the scope for exploration. His agent though, buckles under the weight of the forces compelling order which he broadly characterises as leaving little room for imposing agentic meanings; coercion, orchestration of economic needs, legitimacy and dull compulsion (Crewe 2007, 2009). Crewe’s agent is ultimately squashed between scant opportunities for resistance and the imposition of the forces of order. Listening to order and its processes disentangles these processes sufficiently to extend more robustness to the agency enacted out of view, beyond sight but within hearing. Making room for auditory aspects of social experience also works to broaden considerations of the power the prison draws from beyond temporal and spatial restrictions imposed by the visual.

Prison, sound and the cultural imagination

Sound extends understanding of the cultural potency of the prison. This extends understanding of the role of conceptions punishment in particular configurations of society (Brown 2009). The prison can be thought of as a totem of the nation state (Kaufman and Bosworth 2013). The imposing presence of the prison on the historical and cultural landscape mirrors its physical form (Grover 2008). Prison buildings and their symbolic power resonate with wider cultural references, emphasising different dimensions of prison experience. Sound amplifies the imaginative as well as the physical

components of prison, uniting them with mundane aspects of daily lived experience rather than treating them as separate realms of inquiry.

The prison is retreating ever further from the city skyline in favour of secluded spaces out of public view (Johnson 2005) but continues to loom in the cultural imagination. Prisons cultural significance is echoed and amplified by the breadth of references to prison beyond the penal realm. Enduring fascination with ‘dark tourism’ and the popularity of former prisons as both sites of historical significance and popular interest attest to this (e.g. Welch 2015). Representations of social isolation and exclusion are deeply rooted in prison symbolism, finding numerous references in literature and art, from Dickinson to Dickens (Dickinson 1862; Dickens 1936; Smith 2011). Use of the prison as an evocative device underscores its unique place in the social imagination. In this context prison functions as a site for reaffirming cultural identity, sound a means of evoking imagination: “In my prison cell, And that auld triangle went jingle-jangle, All along the banks of the Royal Canal, Oh! To start the morning, the warden bawling...” (Behan 1954). Behan’s evocation of the triangle which woke Mountjoy prisoners illustrates the strong associations between sound, identity and belonging. In so doing he simultaneously evokes ideas about the prison, accounts of prison spaces and life within them, uniting them through sound. Exploring the role of sound in mutually reinforcing processes of culture, place and identity tells us about how we come to be who we are (e.g. Hudson 2006). The prison soundscape can be understood as reverberating with its cultural significance, sound a system of signification both of temporal and spatial meaning and the wider potency of the prison.

2.2 Power, sound and surveillance

Examining the way sound shapes experience broadens the field of inquiry to include interactions between people and space, as well as the broader significance of social meaning attached to the prison. Extending the field of inquiry correspondingly widens understanding of how power is experienced beyond immediate temporal and spatial boundaries. Listening allows for an appreciation of how culture informs the meaning we attach to sound, it also extends understanding of how those cultural meanings infuse social relations. Sound is equally neglected in regard to how power operates in the prison.

Listening to the panopticon

Navigations of power relationships have aural dimensions. Listening to the way these operate has potential to annunciate how they function. Foucault's panopticon - the architectural apparatus which organises the operation of power in prison through surveillance and self-regulation – is a metaphorical device for exploring how power works between the individual and the broader social body. Power is diffused through technologies of surveillance, prisoners constrained and regulated by the penal gaze which allows the governing of the many by the few (Foucault 1977). Aural experience has no place in Foucault's metaphor, but including sound accounts for the ways in which power operates in fluid and multidirectional currents. Sound extends beyond the parameters of walls and doors, offering a means for the few to monitor the many, a tool of *sousveillance* contesting, modifying and subverting the power of the watchers (Mathieson 1997; Fernback 2012) (for considerations of how this amplifies agency see p20-21). Sound offers a means of amplifying power's intangible, mutable qualities by accounting for how they are mediated through space, body and the imagination.

Quiet power

The absence of sound reveals additional facets of the workings of power in prison. While sound was omitted from Foucault's visual metaphor, it was central to Bentham's design which sought to impose silence as a means of imposing reflection and penitence upon the imprisoned (Bentham 1767). The omnipresence of sound does nothing to diminish the social potency of 'silence'. Enforced 'silence' is a recurring theme in prison organisation, serving to reinforce social separation and a sense of exclusion (Labelle 2011). Denying voice and muting dissent are integral to processes of social control (Mathieson 2005b). Cohen and Taylor (1981) reinforce the significance of this absence by considering the impact of the physical environment and the threat posed by its attendant sensory deprivations to psychological survival. In this respect their exploration of this fundamental aspect of imprisonment is frustrating, focused as it is on drawing from broader work on extreme environments rather than the way in which social relations are shaped by and reflect this three-way relationship between people, sound – and the sensory – and space (Cohen and Taylor 1981: 51-69).

In the criminal justice setting, where those subject to censure are rendered particularly vulnerable, 'mutedness' is a means of enforcing control on those found to offend against societal norms (Ardener 1978; Worrall 1987). Worrall uses this concept to illustrate the

ways in which those in authority fail to hear or listen to subordinate groups. This process of muting serves to reinforce the social order through constraints on self-expression. What does this mean for prison, where prisoners and staff are subject to the rules and rituals of the closed institution? (Goffman 1961). ‘Quiet’ has many meanings for prison staff; an uneventful shift in the absence of incident, peacefulness, safety, or an ominous indication that something has gone awry (Liebling *et al* 2010). Exploring the significance of sound in prison provides a means of explaining how power functions and is experienced in the everyday life of the prison.

Sound, power, order.

Listening in prison spaces articulates the complexities of power in operation and experience. The manner in which the prison embodies prevailing ideas about social order offers instruction about the wider social world and the organising principles around which it is maintained (Foucault 1977; Ignatieff 1977). Weber looked to organised sound – via the sociology of music – to explore his theory of rationalisation, arguing that the particular form of musical theory and composition echoed developments in social organisation (Weber 1904/1930). Attali (1977) similarly asserted that cultural practice – specifically music and arbitrary processes of its classification – provide a valuable lens for shifts in the political economy. Power imposes particular patterns of social life – the form of ordered routine – which audible experience provides a theoretical framework for exploring. How this understanding relates to the specific context of the prison requires unpicking. By amplifying practices of power, attending to the soundscape articulates divisions between it and those social practices with which it is frequently elided, particularly order.

‘Order’ is a complex term, obfuscating the various levels of practice which compose it. One of these relates to the portioning of time and activity, which are explored further in “time, space, order and sound in the prison” (p48). What sound does to illuminate distinctions between how these ideas manifest in practice, in different dimensions of prison life, and what significance they have for those within prison spaces is now considered.

2.3 Order, sound and survival

Hearing becomes particularly significant within the prison where the line of vision is so frequently constrained. Sound elucidates how power is navigated, exercised and resisted. This extends to practices of power in which sound features – as a range of practices in which the community are cajoled or coerced in to following the regime, order is commonly associated with power and the manner in which it is exercised. Theorising on the nature of power as it relates to auditory experience has implications for the way the relationship between power and order is understood. Power corresponds to a wider field of social experience than action, cause and effect. This acknowledgement complicates depictions of order as a direct corollary of an organised, well-managed regime of control (Carrabine 2004).

Aspects of social experience are overlooked in explorations of ‘the problem of order’. Order – the degree of predictable structure in the prison day – is more usually framed as a normative issue. What might listening as a means of examining the everyday rhythms of prison life do for how order is understood?

Listening to order

Order is a concept closely aligned with power; the power to influence and to impose control (Hearn 2012). Not unconnected, in the sense that much of social theory seeks to understand the role of power discourse in the practice of government (Hindess 1996), is the use of social theory in attempts to excavate conditions for prison order and its disruptions (e.g. Carrabine 2004). Liebling and Arnold (2004: 291) define prison order as: “the degree to which the prison environment is structured, stable, predictable and acceptable”. While their definition refers to the prison routine, there is a wider sense of order, indirectly alluded to within the prison context. Predictable routine depends on community members fulfilling designated roles, of adhering to patterns of formation in relation to one another. In this sense order also refers to prison social structure, hierarchy and the identities this imposes. In the sense that order refers to the predictable patterns of daily life, stability is a matter of balance and negotiation, correspondingly order is neither fixed nor unchanging but is rather a continual process of maintenance (Sparks *et al.* 1996). Listening to the ebb and flow of the regime reveals the ways in which order is constituted through everyday activity.

Solzhenitsyn's (1970) semi-autobiographical "One day in the life of Ivan Denisovich" opens with the jarring reveille which begins the prison day. Lived spaces are characterised by particular rhythms which impose effects on their inhabitants (Lefebvre 2004). It is noise which imposes shared patterns of activity, marking time for the routinized activities which shape daily life within the acoustic community of prison. Sound lends shape, form and substance to the rhythms of the prison day, inextricably intertwined with the order which characterises the daily regime. In prison spaces, sound is a means of mediating power, control and inclusion within its acoustic community. In providing a means for exploring the rhythms which characterise the regime routine, sound comprises a site for exploring the composition of order which characterise the prison day.

Solzhenitsyn's (1970) account usefully illustrates the significance of the prison soundscape, both for his central character and the institution for which it functioned as a means of enforcing the routines which characterise it. This description of the soundscape as a means of evoking carceral experience goes some way to addressing the divide between social life at the micro level and the interplay between this and structural aspects of social experience. Accounting for significations of power with prison by exploring the social significance of the soundscape, addresses these long-standing divisions between approaches (Giddens 1984; Carrabine 2004). Giddens illustrates the potential for understanding the composition of order in prison in a different way. Exploring sound presents us with the means of doing so:

"The maintaining of habits and routines is a crucial bulwark against threatening anxieties, yet by that very token it is a tensionful phenomenon in and of itself... The discipline of routine helps to constitute a 'formed framework' for existence by cultivating a sense of 'being' and its separation from 'non-being' which is elemental to ontological security" (Giddens 1991: 39).

Listening to order in this way emphasises associations between order and survival, though treatments of this association in the literature tend to reinforce divisions noted above rather than resolving them.

Order and survival

Sound offers a means of scrutinising the significance of the rhythms and routines of the prison day (Lefebvre 2004). In privileging the way these spaces are embodied, attending to the aural aspects of social experience also prompts a means of exploring processes of

their navigation and what this means for psychological survival. The way those imprisoned navigate and adapt to circumstances of incarceration is an enduring concern of prison sociology, exemplified in Cohen and Taylor's "Psychological survival" (1981). Aspects of adaptation identified by Cohen and Taylor resurface repeatedly in subsequent contributions to prison studies. Fears around the loss of identity; the threat to a coherent sense of self, which serving a prison sentence imposes remains amongst the most pressing concerns for study (Cohen and Taylor 1981; e.g. Jewkes 2005a; Crewe 2009). Cohen and Taylor's (1981) consideration of survival extends much further than this by considering the threats to the individual posed by the physical environment. Unusually they focus on the deprivations of the environment itself rather than the circumstances of incarceration it imposes. Sensory deprivation is identified as a potent facet of punishment, as are associated erosions of meaning in daily existence or "meaning deprivation" (Cohen and Taylor 1981). Scrutiny of their approach to exploring the stratagems and stresses that form the fabric of navigating survival emphasises the value of privileging sensory aspects of social experience in prison.

Cohen and Taylor's contributions to prison sociology articulate the connection between methodology and focus in ways which both enhance and diminish understanding of their subject. The extraordinary conditions with which their study is concerned – 35 inhabitants of the maximum-security wing at HMP Durham at the tail-end of the sixties – reduces the extent to which the particular pains and approaches to maintaining a semblance of self can be assumed to apply to the vast majority of those living within the prison estate. Cohen and Taylor usefully articulate the nuance of navigating time relative to other portions of the prison population. The "temporal vertigo" (Wright et.al 2017) those they worked with experienced when considering their anxieties around deterioration and survival partially arose from the specific circumstances of their sentences and the "abyss" confronting them when considering the length of time their sentences represented (Cohen and Taylor 1981). Given the relatively stable and stagnant nature of the population within this unit, and the considerable length of their sentences, it is reasonable to assume shifting sociality and anxiety of imminent release were less pressing concerns. The relative absence of these issues as sources of wariness partially account for the second challenge 'psychological survival' is presented with; the way in which their phenomenological methodology privileges the individualised navigation of prison spaces above a focus on prison social life.

The degree to which the challenges of ‘doing time’ are framed individualistically becomes clear when comparing their treatment to that of Sykes “deprivations” of imprisonment (Sykes 1958; Cohen and Taylor 1981). Time and its deteriorations, loss of identity, self-consciousness, the absence of friendship are all largely individualised challenges to psychological survival. Loss of goods and services, hetero[social] relationships, autonomy, liberty and security all directly derive their impact from the position of the individual relative to their wider social circumstances both in terms of relationships and status. Much of this distinction, as acknowledged above, can be accounted for by referring to the specific place and group of people with whom Cohen and Taylor worked. Unlike other prison spaces, the social life of prison within E-wing at HMP Durham lacked an easily identifiable audible component, though the distinction between the sensory experience of this part of the prison relative to the rest is worthy of greater attention. They explain:

“The atmosphere at HMP Durham maximum security wing differs from that in other parts of the prison. There are no long lines of prisoners moving in and out of the building. No sudden bursts of sound, no crowded rooms, no clanking machinery. This building is designed for no other purpose than successfully to contain its inmates. Its success is measured exclusively by its impregnability” (Cohen and Taylor 1981: 70).

Their phenomenological position imposes an individualised account of survival in prison. This dislocates the prisoner from prison society and in so doing both amplifies their social exclusion and prohibits exploration of points of social convergence as a site for navigating survival and the relationship of these relationships to order.

Much of prison sociology retains this focus on survival using more sociological and or/ethnographic approaches. Alison Liebling demonstrates this preoccupation explicitly when she says: “empirical work on the moral quality of life in prison suggests that some prisons are more survivable than others” (2011: 530). Uglevik (2014) focuses on the way in which prisoners harness incidental features of everyday living to evoke resistance and harness power, increasing the survivability of the prison sentence. Ben Crewe (2009) empirically demonstrates how prisoners navigate and express identity through the prism of prison power. Research exploring the experience of prison staff also returns to this theme, albeit through the occupational lens (e.g. Crawley 2004; Bierie 2010; Lambert et

al. 2012) or by exploring the relationship between staff approaches to their work and how this impacts prisoner experience (e.g. Tait 2011). While these works differ in focus and aim, associations between survival and prison order are often explicit (e.g. Liebling and Arnold 2004; Tait (2011). What becomes clearer upon closer scrutiny is that ‘order’ is used to refer to a number of related concepts which require further unpacking (I return to this below). Additionally, stubborn distinctions between staff and prisoners persist which obfuscate an understanding of the ways in which they co-exist within prison spaces. This works to limit the ways in which the nature of the prison environment, the ways in which it is shaped and affected by those living and working within it as well as its effects can be explored and understood.

The stuff of daily living in the prison is often presented as a means of diagnosing its disintegration – the problem of order/disorder - rather than as a means to understanding how prison social life is worked at (e.g. Sparks et al. 1996; Carrabine 2004). Preoccupations with the fragility of routine are echoed in the concerns of prison staff as Sykes illustrates:

“When the guards at the New Jersey State Prison were asked what topics should be of first importance in a proposed in-service training program, 98 per cent picked “What to do in the event of trouble.” The critical issue for the moment, however, is that the dominant position of the custodial staff is more fiction than reality” (Sykes 1958: 45).

While the significance of place in shaping both a particular moral context and sensory space are acknowledged (Cohen and Taylor 1981; Scott 2008) what this means for lived experience receives scant attention. Toch alludes to this: “The link between persons and environments holds a position in the social sciences similar to that of virtue in society. We love to preach and teach it, but we often ignore it in practice” (1991: 1). Accounting for the auditory aspects of social experience in prison carves out space to consider the impact of sustained sensory deprivation on that of meaning, and how individuals strive to compensate for this in daily life inside.

Rituals and the prison social world

Cohen and Taylor attest to the comforts of incorporating ritual in to daily life by anchoring the individual within social rituals of meaning (1981: 109). Rituals mark and reinforce the sense of order deriving from routine and as such lie at the heart of

institutional life (Goffman 1961). Attending to the sonic aspects of this facet of institutional life articulates their social significance. When church bells formed a focal point of social life, they served to reinforce power relations and social cohesion; delineating membership of the parish, and the parameters of local power (Corbin 1998). While relationships are acknowledged as lying at the heart of the moral quality of prison life there is strangely little focus on common experience of staff and prisoners as inhabitants of the same social world (Liebling and Arnold 2004). The stubbornness of this binary distinction, while being somewhat inevitable and of clear utility for examining particular aspects of prison life, obscures the collective significance of ritual and routine in prison society. Sound both features in this socially significant means of reinforcing collective identity and acts as a lens through which to explore the role of ritual in affecting social cohesion (Jackson 1968).

Prison relations are complicated by the proximity of staff to the most intimate features of human life (Goffman 1961): “The prison community is a place of shared existence” (Morris 2013:40). The emphasis Crawley (2004) places on the domestic nature of much prison work in conjunction with a broader focus on the prison social world and its relation to the outside reveals a resonance with ritualistic behaviour. Ritual behaviour refers to those routines which govern much of social life, demarcating purity and danger (Douglas 1966; Travers 1982). There is ritual power in performed conduct which reinforces the social meaning signified by these activities (Travers 1982). While holders of formally sanctioned and far-reaching power which prisoners are not, prison staff are similarly subject to processes of routine and order, and the ritual meaning they are invested with (Drake 2008). Reception/admission procedures provide a rich example of this. Goffman refers to admission in to prison as “trimming”; the “taking off” and “putting on” of the cultures and customs of the institution (Goffman 1961: 26). Rituals undertaken by staff - a number of which are designed to reduce the polluting potential of prison life seeping under the gates - also reinforce their status and identity (where they remove and put on the uniform for existence) (Crawley 2004). Many of these routines have aural components. Listening to them works to amplify their significance to the prison social world.

Attending to these aspects of daily prison life has profound implications for the way we understand prison as a total institution. Total institutions are characterised by the substantial degree of separation from the outside world (Goffman 1961). Goffman refers

to this distinction, this “encompassing” characteristic, as a symbolic one from which the total institution derives much of its identity and potency. While he clearly articulates the symbolic nature of this distinction, the point is obfuscated by its grounding in practice and place; within the “locked doors, high walls, barbed wire...” (Goffman 1961: 1). Subsequent extensions of Goffman’s work have criticised his failure to account for the degree to which cultures and communications traverse the prison walls (e.g. Moran 2014). Rather than presenting a remedy these criticisms reinforce this obfuscation of symbolic aspects of prison power by grounding the total institution in corporeal existence whether in place or on the body. These understandings are constrained by an overreliance on what they can see – imaginings of the symbolic are relegated to the restrictions of image. In contrast, listening to auditory aspects of the rituals and routines which form the stuff of prison life, emphasise their capacity for symbolic violence which transcends as well as traverses these realms of experience (Bourdieu 1992). The jangle of keys retains its potency far beyond the prison sentence as well as the prison walls.

Attending to these aspects of experience articulates distinctions between rituals and routines and the relations which shape the institutions which house them. This has implications for the way in which we listen to the function these rituals perform, and the impetus for their maintenance, and the ‘order’ with which they are associated.

Listening to legitimacy

A tendency to align accounts of prisoner compliance with routine as being a matter of compulsion necessarily places the exercise of authority at the centre of its logics. This results in a complex entanglement of order and power. Focussing on the ways authority is exercised reinforces the salience of legitimacy; the recognition of reasonableness, validity and acceptance of authority on these grounds. Too often this rather abstract concept is conflated with legitimation (Carrabine 2005) – the processes by which actions become accepted rules and standards. That an action is accepted does not necessarily signal assent, an observation echoed by Sparks et al:

“Whether prisoners too have an interest in the reproduction of the routine (either for the sake of ‘ontological security’ or more pragmatically for the reliable delivery of services they value, like food and visits) is a moot point. We suspect that very often they do, and hence co-operate more or less willingly in the running of routines” Sparks et al. (1996: 82).

Listening to the ritualistic rhythms of the prison day illuminates an additional dimension to processes of order maintenance in which power gives way to the comfort of predictability. Legitimacy has undergirded much of the most significant work in prisons literature for the last thirty years and remains one of its most enduring and influential ideas (e.g. Sparks *et al* 1996; Liebling and Arnold 2004; Kaufman 2013, 2015). While the particular notions of power and processes of legitimation which underpin legitimacy¹⁴ are not unproblematic (Beetham 1991; Harkin 2015), its utility for exploring the moral climate of prisons and conditions for disorder are illustrated by its durability. This has consequences for the way order and its maintenance are understood, as well as the extent to which we are inclined to acknowledge that legitimacy is inherently problematic (Carrabine 2005). Power lends prison order its form, and sets it in the fabric of prison life, but it is less pronounced in the interactions and activity which form its daily substance. Exploring the rhythms of everyday life reveal additional dimensions of experience in which power and authority are de-articulated from order and its maintenance.

The enduring legacy of the Woolf report has framed the way prison order is investigated by introducing an emphasis on its opposite with attendant fears of repeats of the Strangeways riot (Woolf 1991; Sparks *et al* 1996; Carrabine 2004). Several consequences arise from this approach to assessing order, one of which is the impression that order/disorder comprise a dichotomous relationship. Taking disorder as the focus of research, and as the pressing research question reinforces the sense in which order acts as a proxy for diagnosing its absence. Assumptions about the basis for order and the conditions for its breakdown underpin this framing; prisoners withdraw their cooperation from regimes they perceive as lacking legitimacy. Arguably prison is fundamentally comprised of a legitimacy deficit, which leads Carrabine to question why riots do not occur with far greater frequency (Colvin 1992; Carrabine 2004, 2005). Framing order in this way does much to illuminate the conditions for its breakdown; the lack of legitimate framing which contributes to disorganisation, disrupting daily life, the deprivations in prison which expose broader fault lines in distributive justice (Carrabine 2004). His identification of the need for greater distinction between taken-for-granted and accepted-

¹⁴ Rooted in political theory this conceptual framework loosely refers to the “variable conditions which render it more or less likely that prisoners will accept, however conditionally, the authority of their custodians” (Sparks and Bottoms 1995: 47)

as-legitimate is a fundamental problem with legitimacy when applied the “problem of order”, as much as it contributes to an understanding of the complex of circumstances in which major incidents of disorder arise (Carrabine 2005: 903).

Less satisfying is this account of the fatalistic basis for going along with the stultifying regime (Carrabine 2005). This binary treatment obscures the complexity of behaviours and activities which comprise minor disruptions to order, but, in forming tension with the regime contribute to the accommodations and competing rhythms which form a daily routine. Such binary treatments also run the risk of flattening the “immense political terrain... between quiescence and revolt” (Scott 1990: 199 in Crewe 2007: 257). Listening to order presents us with the capacity for listening to the notes unsounded, the spaces where authority is not exercised, and with them the potential for understanding order as comprising as much of an absence of imposed authority as a presence relied upon for its maintenance.

2.4 Emotion, identity, sound and space

By opening up a conceptual space for exploring the maintenance of order at the everyday level, sound reveals additional facets of social behaviour bound up with these processes. These facets of everyday life shape understanding of how prison spaces are experienced. Listening to the rhythms of everyday life inside reveals predictable patterns of the daily regime and the comfort and security it provides. Approaching sound in prison at an interactional level of analysis broadens the field of inquiry to include considerations of emotion and identity performance with respect to order and its maintenance.

Audible emotion

The role of emotion in the arena of criminal justice receives extensive treatment, but what is less clear is how emotion operates at the level of everyday life. Listening to prison life reveals the audible dimensions of order and the emotional states which characterise it. The emotionally-charged nature of crime and punishment has long been acknowledged as a means of mobilising public sentiment in the service of reaffirming cohesion and consensus (Loader 2011). The socio-political significance of the prison lays bare the

relationship between imprisonment, ideology and social emotion. If passion is the soul of punishment, prison lends it corporeal form. Debates around the justifications for prison and punishment necessarily involve a consideration of social emotion – shared societal feeling (Honderich 2005). The collective effervescence once generated by participation in religious ritual is now replaced by punitive sentiment in an increasingly pluralistic and secular age (Durkheim 1915). Discourses of crime and punishment are shot through with notions of repentance, atonement and retribution – concepts which ring with religiosity. The prison functions as a contemporary totem, anchoring rituals for delineating the sacred and profane (Feinberg 1965). But while prison and the punishment it signifies are widely recognised as particularly emotional arenas, considerably less attention is focused on the social emotion and its function within prison spaces.

Prevalence of particular tones within the field of communication alter the nature of those exchanges; different sounds initiate different response. How and why these responses are regulated and what this reveals about the prison environment raises questions about how emotion features within wider social life (Laws and Crewe 2015). Work on emotional contagion largely overlooks the aural dimension of shared feeling and its impact on collective sentiment, focusing instead on facial expression (e.g. Hatfield *et al* 1994). Emphasising the role of the auditory imagination in bridging the personal and public attenuates divisions between classifications of social/non-social emotions (e.g. Hareli and Parkinson 2008). In prison spaces, where the public and private realms of life are muddled and indistinct (Goffman 1961), distinctions between aspects of emotional experience and affect are correspondingly (and necessarily) ill-defined. Attending to sound has implications for how we understand associations between sound and feeling and their relationship with order and disruption. Understanding the sound ecology of prison life has implications for how we perceive social relations within carceral spaces to operate, and how they are inflected by the cultural imagination which lends them meaning. Sounds of prison are imbued with the emotions of punishment, resonating in the frequency with which they are depicted in cultural life (Goodale 2011). Extending this understanding to consider how emotions are conveyed within the place of punishment opens up space to explore how they affect the rhythms of daily prison life.

Feeling the soundscape

While sound is a neglected aspect of prison studies, it is strongly implicated in Crewe *et al's* (2014) depiction of prison's emotional geography. The idea that prison is not a

monolithic space but rather a collection of varied environments in which different dimensions of social interaction occur is underscored by a correspondingly diverse emotional landscape. Sound and noise provide an explanatory mechanism for how this emotional variability as well as a persistent sense of unease are mediated. The emotional climate corresponds to a soundscape which maps on to the specificities of the physical landscape (Herrity 2015; Hemsworth 2016). This is reflected in the contention that the unique architecture of environment conjures a correspondingly specific soundscape which shapes experience (Levine 2010).

Prisons are noisy places offering little control over exposure to noise (Wener 2012). If individuals hermetically seal themselves to protect against the damage of intrusive racket, this has implications for wellbeing and the nature of social relations (Simmel 1903). Prisoner accounts reinforce the assertion that sound plays a significant role in the prison experience, a source of shock upon introduction to the prison environment and reverberating in the memory long after the sound itself has dissipated (Hassine 1996; Hoskison 1998). Acknowledging the social significance of this aspect of experience invites inquiry about how elision between public and private spaces impacts on the backstage self. Considering sound within institutional life prompts consideration of the role of aural experience in mortification processes within the total institution (Goffman 1961).

Sounding identity

While the fluid and multifaceted nature of identity, its composition and performative aspects have been subject to extensive inquiry, aural aspects of identity performance have not (e.g. Goffman 1963; Hall 1995). Social identity – comprised of personal and structural attributes, normative assumptions and expectations - are remade through interactions with others, and the inner dialogue which hones the performance of self (Goffman 1959, 1963). DeNora's (2015) work on 'music asylums' explicitly unites Goffman's conceptions of identity with sound, detailing the way sound is used as a means of repairing identity and generating wellbeing. The transcendental qualities of sound allow for (figuratively) escaping the prison walls, undergirding what DeNora refers to as a technology, or scaffolding of the self (DeNora 1999; Harbert 2010). Sound provides a means of accessing collective memory, lent greater purchase in the prison environment by its disembodied qualities which detach it from constrictions of time and space (Morris; 2001; Morris 2001). Sound evokes memory which reunites the dislocated prisoner with

their former self and future possible selves, shoring up the self-narrative in “cascading reminiscence bumps” which reaffirm identity (Krumhansl and Zupnick 2013).

Prison noise is intrusive, characterised by banging and shouting, which limits the form and substance identity performance can take (Cohen and Spacapan 1984; Wilson 2002). Deprivations of goods and services result in a dearth of ‘fixed props’ with which to perform the self (Sykes 1958; Goffman 1959). Sound goes some way to addressing this absence of materials to make self with, forging an arena to contest and assert identity (e.g. Thompson 2004b). Sound constitutes a powerful resource for contesting power without violence; a potent tool for exercising agency in restricted circumstances (Cooper 2004). Immersive activities are an important means of marking time and providing respite from the prison environment, but mental escape is problematic within the physical constraints of imprisonment (Cohen and Taylor 1981). Sound unveils strategies of everyday survival inside.

Hearing identity, sounding survival

Focussing on sound raises questions about the psychological survival of prison. Cavendish (2014) suggests prison noise and its effects linger in the memory beyond the prison sentence. ‘Survival’ is a recurring theme in studies of the prison and its effects (e.g. Cohen and Taylor 1981; Toch 1992). Accounts of the impact of the prison sentence indicate the necessity of submitting to an involved process of adaptation to prison life (Harvey 2007). If, as Horowitz (2012) contends, sound shapes our sense of self, attending to the prison soundscape has rich potential for examining prison impact on wellbeing. This is further suggested by the prevalence of various conditions associated with sound sensitivity amongst those in prison (e.g. depression, learning difficulties, old age, psychosis (WHO 1999; Drever 2014; PRT 2015). Exposure to excessive noise is also linked to difficulty recovering from existing conditions affecting both physical and mental health (e.g. Stansfeld 1992; Munzel *et al*; 2014). Links between these aspects of wellbeing more powerfully sound an absence of inquiry about survival with respect to reconstitution of identity around the rules, rituals and meanings of prison life (Crewe 2009).

Maintaining the emotional self presents an additional challenge in prison where: “the most terrible thing about it is not that it breaks one’s heart – hearts are made to be broken – but that it turns one’s heart to stone” (Wilde 1897: 921). Sykes makes a similar observation drawing on Cooley’s conception of the ‘looking glass self’ (Cooley 1902;

Sykes 1958). This indicates the challenge of nurturing intimate instincts in the absence of opportunities to flex them. The difficulty of maintaining those aspects of self which find expression through intimacy and vulnerability, rely on memory and imagination (Frances 2013). Evocation of memory and imagination are heavily reliant on sound. Music is strongly linked with emotions both as an affective source of emotion and a means of elicitation (e.g. Sloboda 2005). The socially rooted nature of music, and by extension sound, links sound firmly to emotional expression as a means of identity construction (Hesmondhalgh 2008). Examining the connections between sound, emotions and identity unveils processes of identity work which are central to surviving prison life.

Absence of materials with which to refashion identity independent from the institution constitute the process of mortification of self – the stripping away of the pre-prison self and assimilation in to the prison (Goffman 1961). Goffman's charting of processes of institutionalisation build on Clemmer's (1940) identification of a series of practices through which prisoners become acculturated to the prison environment. Attending to the soundscape announces the pervasive relentlessness of these processes. The soundscape comprises a space in which identities are not only asserted and contested but institutionalised; prisonised. Listening to the soundscape announces navigations of identity which more finely articulate the way power is experienced and contested. As part of the closed social world of prison, staff are far from immune to these processes.

Identity, stigma, sound and space

Listening allows for a greater appreciation of the rich tapestry of cultural expressions which constitute a sense of place and belonging, interwoven with identity and remade through sound (Bramwell 2015). A prisoner's sense of self can be shaped by the 'profiling' of wider, normative expectations which impose stigma (Goffman 1963:68). The impact of carrying shame on the inmate echoes the contaminative 'dirty work' prison staff experience (Crawley 2004:245; Simpson *et al* 2012). Examining these experiences of prison in concert raises different questions about its symbolic significance and its social meaning. The soundscape carves out space to consider the prison social world as a whole, articulating the convergence as well as divergence of strategies of survival between different actors. There are aural aspects to the "shedding" rituals staff engage in to avoid sullyng their outside worlds (Crawley 2004; Liebling *et al* 2010). Crawley identifies these isolating behaviours as an effort to avoid tainting social identity with the

stigma of prison. Incorporating sound reveals the possibility these activities are as much about re-making the outside self, stripped of the clamour of prison routines. Considering the symbolic potency of the prison soundscape raises questions about adaptation and wellbeing as well as how wider social expectations impose on social relations within prison spaces.

Place, sound and identity are intimately bound with processes of self-making and belonging (Hudson 2006). Prison relations are complicated by the proximity of staff to the most intimate features of human life. Privacy and the backstage performances which are consigned to this realm of life are more usually associated with familiarity and equality, in prison they are accompanied by stark asymmetries of power (Goffman 1959, 1961). Ritual behaviour refers to those routines which govern much of social life; potent demarcations of purity and danger (Douglas 1966; Travers 1982). “The prison community is a place of shared existence” and staff and prisoners are equally implicated in processes of routine and the ritual meaning they are invested with (Morris and Morris 1963; Drake 2008; Morris 2013:40). Exploring the soundscape reveals the impact of this erosion of boundaries on identity as well as the strategies of survival employed by members of the prison community.

Examining sound and prison experience reveals the former’s role in maintaining and reforming personal narratives. This can prove vital for navigating the prison sentence envisioning a future beyond prison and resisting its stigma (Maruna 2001; Stone 2015). In turn, narrative provides a pivotal means of exploring the prison interior (Liebling 1999). The prison sentence represents a hiatus to the life course, rupturing semblance of self by stripping social life of its ritualistic markers that lend meaning and structure (Goffman 1959; Cohen and Taylor 1981; Jewkes 2005a). The internal and external violence which characterises the prison experience as well as encroachment on ‘backstage’ space in which to perfect performances of the self, complicates the task of reforming self-narrative, central to identity work (Goffman; 1959; Toch 1992). Sound provides a means of accessing collective memory which assists with construction of narrative, its disembodied qualities detach it from constrictions of time and space (Morris 2001; Ihde 1976). Sounds properties – evoking memory and imagination as a means of traversing space and time – expands the room for exercising agency within confinement. This reading of ‘space’ is reliant on a conception which accommodates various dimensions of experience, including but not limited to the physical environment. Sound

is understood as a means of revisiting memory and reconfiguring space, making room for agents to rework identity and carve out spaces of resistance to the power of the prison.

2.5 Time, space and sound in the prison

Attending to the prison soundscape allows for a wider appreciation of the role of emotion in underpinning and destabilising conditions conducive to order. In prompting a consideration of the social processes of meaning-making, listening in prison spaces amplifies aural aspects of emotion and identity performance with respect to the rhythms of everyday life. Using the soundscape as a focus for exploring prison life invites a heightened awareness of the extent to which sound informs the meaning attached to prison social spaces. Assuming an analytical indivisibility between space and time makes a consideration of the ways in which sound informs temporal experience as inevitable as it is informative. In the context of prison, time is often conceptualised in particular ways, the emphasis being on the “doing” of it. Sound allows for a broader conception of the way time is experienced in the everyday, as well as how prison spaces are navigated.

Time

“In prison, time accumulates a new dimension. You try to eat it away rather than enjoy it. If a prisoner is having difficulty with his station the days become hopelessly long, he is doing ‘hard time’... and a frequent answer when one tells of his troubles is you’re on your own time’ or ‘don’t press my time’ (Cohen and Taylor 1981: 100).

Processes of order and survival are bound up with the portioning of time as well as the “doing” of it. Time and its successful navigation are central to living within prison spaces (O’Donnell 2016). The maintenance of order is bound up with successfully delivery of the expected regime, a series of routine practices signalled and reinforced by sound, which marks the rhythms of the day (Lefebvre 2004). These rhythms have an aural dimension, particularly audible within the prison where the day is characterised by routinized noise – unlock, shop, meals - in 1912 Berkman wrote “the regular tolling of the gong, calling to toil or to meals, accentuates the enervating routine” (p117). The marshalling of time in prison is a crucial mechanism in harnessing the prison to the service of industrial demands (Rusche and Kirscheimer 1939), implicating prison noise in wider processes of social control. Noise and its absence are a means of encouraging conformity to wider social purpose by enacting organising treatments upon the

incarcerated body. In this sense prison can be thought of as more closely resembling the 'metrophonicon'. Much attention has been paid to the function of prison within the wider political and economic landscape, but these macro processes prompt interrogation of how this mechanism translates to prison experience.

Sound informs experience of space and time, adding texture and dimension to forms of power in different settings and shaping social relations within them. Neidhart (2003) uses depictions of sensory experience to explain the transitions and transformations of a post-Soviet Union Russia in which sound played a central part in imposing order (e.g. using fixed radio signals and public address systems). Contemporary accounts suggest pre-industrial England had a particularly intrusive soundscape, exploration of which reveals the lived experience of those exposed to it (Cockayne 2008). In the context of the prison, particular ideations of the prison are embodied in prison architecture, mediating the meaning of prison spaces (Jewkes and Johnson 2007). Sound carries these meanings, portioning time prison spaces and shaping the social life within them. In reducing the solidity of conventional demarcations between these dimensions of human experience, sound provides an alternative lens with which to examine prison life.

Time, space, order and power

Time and culture form a mutually interdependent relationship, central to human experience (Elias 1992, 1995). Time is particularly important in prison where it composes the central component of both the form and substance of punishment. The challenges of 'doing time' are well documented by prisoner accounts and academic study (e.g. Kotova 2018). 'Doing time' successfully requires keeping busy in the absence of the ritualistic markers of time passing which characterise life on the outside (Cohen and Taylor 1981). Time and the imposition of controls over how it is spent form a crucial instrument of power upon the self. The immaterial prison – mechanisms of coercion which extend the power of the prison beyond the physical environment – relies on time to make the transition between perception and imagination (Gallo and Ruggiero 1991). The inextricable connection between space and time makes time a useful lens for exploring the particularities of prison spaces, and the experience of time and power within them (Moran 2012). This treatment of time prompts inquiry about how these mechanisms of coercion, and the particularities of these spaces are so consistently conveyed between and beyond the physical environment.

The extent to which the social world is constructed by shifting associations between time and space is well documented (Lash and Urry 1994). Time has particular significance within prison spaces lent potency by the life hiatus of the prison sentence and the sensation of de-synchronicity between time outside passing and stagnating within. Those subject to a longer prison sentence are rendered “cavemen in the age of speed-of-light technology” (Jewkes and Johnston 2009) without access to the means to keep up with the world beyond. Negotiating time successfully is of central importance to navigating a prison sentence but is frequently conceptualised using spatial metaphor (e.g. Wahidin 2005). Armstrong (2018) underscores this point using the cell and the corridor to represent both stagnation and movement without destination, which she identifies as characterising the prison experience. This is a useful conceptual device for lending time corporeal form but imposes an understanding of the experience of time passing as singular and linear. The sense of ‘doing time’ is enhanced by traversing time and space through sound, imagining alternative selves in alternative times and spaces through the evocation of the auditory imagination.

Lefebvre highlights the centrality of rhythms both internal and external to the way we experience our environment (Lefebvre 2004). Time is an essential component of order, imposing structure on chaos by harnessing time with systematised routine (Elias 1995). Order is integral to a prison sentence, keeping minds and bodies wedded to the workings of the prison. In this way the prison regime unites incarcerated bodies in the function of the prison through rhythmic rituals. While the prison is forged and shaped by wider historical, social and political forces, the routines, rules and regulations which govern prison daily life are integral to a continual process of remaking (Foucault and Brochier 1977). It is argued here that sound connects time and power in prison spaces, signalling points in the regime, and marshalling the prison day. Rhythm mediates this symbiotic relationship between time and culture, reinforcing and remaking the meaning of prison spaces and the relations conducted within them.

Sound and prison spaces

The ways in which space is mediated, constructed and navigated through sound are well-charted (e.g. Born 2013; Revill 2016). The development of carceral geography reveals the fruitfulness of applying novel methodological and theoretical frameworks to prison spaces (Moran 2015). While carceral geography reinforces the importance of accounting for the particularities of spatial context when considering prisons (Moran and Keinanen

2012), this emphasis heavily implicates sound. In grounding experience in environment, carceral geography provides a useful means of centring work on emotions and affect while opening space for considering taken-for-granted understandings of the prison experience anew (Moran 2013a, 2015). Approaching the spatial dimensions of prison emphasises the non-material aspects of prison space, as well as the transmission of cultural ideas and social relations through prison walls. Moran (2013b) underscores this point in her work on prison visiting areas as ‘liminal spaces’ – neither inside nor outside but a bridge between the two worlds. There remains a tendency to interpret space in terms of its material dimensions, undermining Goffman’s assertion that “walls do not form an analytical feature of the institution” (1961:161). Using the soundscape as a conceptual framework for exploring the prison broadens the way prison spaces can be thought about.

The degree of social isolation experienced by inhabitants of the total institution is sufficient to nurture distinctive culture within it, but these spaces retain semi-permeability (Goffman 1961; Schliehe 2016). Incorporating the non-physical dimensions of the prison, in conjunction with corporeal aspects of incarceration better echoes the many layers and functions of prison spaces. Reimagining the prison walls invites greater emphasis on the significance of the relationship between prison and the outside. Prison can be thought of as a heterotopia; a place which has a deceptive number of meanings and functions within the wider social world (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986). The heterotopic nature of prison emphasises the significance of its relations with the outside. A consideration of prison at its margins and borders reveals the multiplicity of meanings prison assumes for those moving through it (Turner 2016). Envisaging prison as both a total and heterotopic space reinforces the particular symbolic significance of its soundscape (Hemsworth 2015; Kindynis and Garret 2015). This understanding is emphasised by drawing from a wide body of literatures from a diverse range of fields.

Sound, space and stigma

Considerations of the significance of space are often lacking an equally important focus on the social practices which produce space and, in turn shape the identity of the people within it (Lefebvre 1991; Shabazz 2009:277, 2015). Considerations of the significance of prison in particular social as well as geographical contexts provide understanding of prisons potency to for minority groups, particularly Black prisoners in both the UK and US contexts (Mullen 2014). Shabazz’s work on the centrality of prison to black identities lays out how architectures of confinement correspond to particular

conceptions of Black masculinity. Du Bois powerfully illustrates the long shadow cast by the prison over Black Americans:

“The shades of the prison-house closed round about us all: walls strait and stubborn to the whitest, but relentlessly narrow, tall, and unscalable to sons of night who must plod darkly on in resignation, or beat unavailing palms against the stone, or steadily, half hopelessly, watch the streak of blue above.” (Du Bois 1903: 3)

These works extend understanding of the enduring stain deriving from exposure to prison spaces. Prison impacts on identity via constraining practices, spatialized routines and prisonised interactions which reinforce stigma and fragment personal narratives. Identity, as Goffman asserts, is intrinsically political as well as social (Goffman 1961). Sound provides the means of understanding how these mechanisms work, and the ways in which the power of prison spaces extends far beyond its spatial boundaries.

Towards a methodology

In neglecting considerations of aural experience, prisons literature has omitted an important dimension of social life. The prison soundscape provides a particular framework for exploring the nature of power in the prison. Using social aspects of aural experience as a means of examining prison social life has implications for the way power and its impact is understood. This extends to particular practices of power for which sound provides a means of extending understanding. In this way power is understood in a broader sense, as a force which is felt in conjunction between social practice and social spaces as well as within specific social interactions. This partial dearticulation of power from the processes of order has the effect of more clearly articulating both, provoking consideration of the role of emotion in maintaining and undermining order. Processes and practices of identity performance similarly have aural dimensions. In these ways sound forges connections between time, space, sound and the social, articulating a relationship which informs processes of meaning-making which contribute to the potency of prison. Sound bridges these facets of prison life and presents them as dimensions of social experience rather than separate realms, altering the way imprisonment can be understood.

The impact of prison on identity is widely charted, but how that institution derives its meaning, function and potency from beyond the prison walls and how this is mediated is treated as a separate unit of analysis. Exploring the gaps in approaches to these

dimensions of space, and how sound accounts for them offers understanding of how power is mediated and identity navigated in the closed social world of the prison. Sound offers a means to revisit themes of power, order, emotion and identity to explore our understanding of how prison spaces are experienced. Sound offers a means of listening to the closed social world of the prison in an attempt to answer how neglected, sensory facets of human experience shape the experience of prison life. This framework for exploring prison has implications for research design, and the way in which sound can be incorporated in to a method for exploring the significance sound has for the wellbeing and relationships of those who live and work at HMP Midtown. How these understandings of sound in prison have been used to inform research design are the subject of the following chapter.

3. Sound in the scaffolding: research design

Designing an aural method requires an awareness of the extent to which sound alters the manner of engagement with the object of analysis. Exploring the soundscape is a process requiring researcher familiarity with the daily rhythms of prison life as a focus for inquiry. Aural ethnography is uniquely equipped to do this, incorporating a particular understanding of the nature of sound as both rooted in bodily experience and shaped by subjective meaning (Ihde 2001; Chion 2010). Drawing on rich traditions of ethnography in prisons research, this design differs by taking sound as focus and method of an immersive engagement with the rituals and routines of prison life (e.g. Morris and Morris 1963; Crewe 2009; Phillips 2013; Gooch 2019). Pursuing a novel focus of research heightens the need to demonstrate a robust and thoroughly thought-out design. The design, its methodological underpinnings and the process of preparing to implement it have been separated from an account of putting those ideas in to practice in the following two chapters. Together these provide a comprehensive methodology and replicable outline of practice. The second chapter focuses on the practical challenges presented by ‘being human’ and what that meant in the context of this account of ‘doing’ prison ethnography (Maruna 2018).

I first briefly introduce the project before defining sound and how it is used within the project. The meaning of sound in this context echoes the methodological approach, which in turn underpins the method. Defining sound and exploring the rich range of interpretations and meanings attached to it by various fields of knowledge provides a useful space for pondering the ontological implications of the particular definition adopted here. Sound and the broader realm of the sensory have implications for how processes of knowledge production are understood. These require unpicking before moving on to the specificities of research design. Practical details comprise an account of the research process which also allows for reflection on ethical design and practice. I conclude this section with an account of how the broader methodological approach of the project is echoed in transcription, the analysis and the way findings have been presented.

The first project of its kind there was no roadmap of how to conduct an aural ethnography in prison to work from. The necessity of clearing two sets of ethical procedures and research applications while arduous, proved advantageous for preparing to enter the field (ethics is explored in more detail on p63). I spent seven months in HMP Midtown, a

small, local men's prison. Twenty-nine ethnographically-informed interviews were conducted with various members of the community – both prisoners and staff. While the interview sample was small, I spoke with most people passing through prison spaces during this time, many of them repeatedly and at length. Interviews were informed by hundreds of hours of aural ethnography. I lacked the foresight to keep accurate records of time, but I estimate well over seven hundred hours.

The novelty of aural ethnography in criminology, and specifically prison studies, requires an elaborated account of methodology and method. While claims are made about a more comprehensive account of the sensory in cultural criminology it remains the case that the story of crime and its control rely heavily on the visual (Ferrell *et al* 2015). I draw from a range of fields and disciplines to develop a methodology with which to explore prison society; the first use of sound in prisons research. An exploration of sound in prison requires a working definition as a starting point. Sound is understood as both intrinsically social and subjective; an intricate process of meaning-making, transmitting packages of information which construct social spaces and direct behaviour (Chion 2010). Sound in this context refers to aural aspects of social experience. Both the process by which this definition is reached and how this understanding of sound reflects and complements the methodological underpinnings of this project require some unpicking. Attempts to define aural aspects of sensory experience is made more challenging by our cultural preoccupations with the visual. What follows is an account of how the research design echoed this conceptualisation of sounds' social and affective dimensions as well as a consideration of the implications of this for the relationship between participants, project and place.

The chapter is organised in to three sections which lay out the conceptual framework for the analysis which follows in chapter 5. The first: "What is meant by sound" explores the literature on sound as a means of charting its significance for social research. "Using sound as a research lens" discusses the implications for producing knowledge presented by using sound as an analytical tool. Having done this: "Towards a design" details the ways in which these ideas were used to inform the research design. The chapter concludes with "Producing knowledge" which details the approach applied to managing and analysing data.

3.1 Defining sound

Listening to sound

The dictionary definition of sound – “anything that can be heard” - is both daunting in breadth and unsatisfyingly insubstantial. The auditory sensation evoked by a vibration through a medium such as air, fluid or solids is a fuller, more technical explanation though clinically mechanistic and partial. A departure from physics, and towards physiology and psychology lends a focus on the reception and perception of sound waves of the brain. These treatments of sound fail to account for how aural stimuli is understood. Measuring physical aspects of sound is fraught with difficulty and plagued with problems of inaccuracy. Not only does sound have a number of dimensions but error and ambiguity are accepted aspects of environmental sound measurement (Dickinson 2006). Approaches which privilege physical aspects of sound do little to illuminate what feelings are evoked in the individual by what they hear. The British Standards Institute argue that this is dependent on context, understanding, mood and memory (BSI 2014). This too, is an incomplete and inadequate account of sound as a fundamental aspect of human experience.

Physics and physiology chart the profound physical impact exposure to extreme levels of sound has upon the person. These disciplines follow a particular approach, which emphasises physical and objectively verifiable characteristics of sound. In establishing a basis for measuring harmful levels of noise exposure which have formed the basis for international standards to safeguard health (Brink *et al* 2016) these approaches implicate other, less tangible aspects of health and wellbeing which these branches of science are less equipped to tackle. Beyond harms deriving from physical properties of sound are those deriving from subjective interpretations of intrusiveness or aggravation. Stephen Stansfeld, Professor in psychiatry, uses the sound/noise distinction to emphasise associations between a wide range of cognitive and mental health effects of exposure to noise (Stansfeld 1992; Stansfeld and Matheson 2003). Stansfeld charts an array of psychiatric, emotional and operational conditions related to noise, confirming its potential for profound impact on mind as well as body. Aspects of sound connect with emotional and social life, signalling the need to draw on additional disciplines to explore its affective dimensions and how these inform social life. These contributions to sound as a phenomenon do much to elucidate the far-reaching significance of sound to social experience but raise more questions than they answer about the implications of exploring

the importance of sound in prison society. Unpacking the intrinsic subjectivity of sound, and the limits of its knowability, illustrate the pitfalls of reliance on a universal standard.

What is noise?

A working definition of noise – unwanted sound – is necessarily ambiguous. The dictionary definition: “a sound, especially one which is loud or causes a disturbance” indicates the complexity of such a task. Noise has measurable dimensions and internationally determined guidelines for limiting life-impacting effects of exposure (WHO 1999; HSE 2010). Noise has environment-specific guidance to legislate for its effects, for example at night time or in the workplace. Areas of concern about excessive noise and its effects are diverse, covering all manner of human experiences. Those living in flight paths, working in factories or organising music performances have guidelines to limit their exposure to the harmful effects of excessive sound. Noise has discernible, measurable effects ranging from those concerning hearing specifically – such as tinnitus or reception - to those for health, for example the impact of sound on rates of recovery, or the relationship between noise and cardiovascular disease (e.g. Van Kamp and Davies 2013). There are clear, objective markers of physical harm wrought by exposure to excessive noise, but who sets these markers? Who determines which sounds are unpleasant and unwanted? Where there is agreement about noise and its harmful effects, who is protected from it, and who is not? These questions reveal the extent to which sound is inextricably intertwined with complex social processes which are far from neutral (Keizer 2012). The Marxist historiographer Jacques Attali contends that noise, or music in its organised form, is bound up with power relations. Music, he argues, is the harbinger of radical social change (Attali 1977). Personal preferences, cultural processes and power dynamics lie at the heart of subjective assessments of unwanted sound. If sound is implicated in shaping social relations its effects must extend beyond the physical. Examining sound in this way indicates its potential utility for exploring prison society, where disparities of power are stark, and space restricted.

Hearing, feeling and emotion

The inadequacy of the physical properties of sound as a means of exploring prison social life requires an understanding which reflects the complexity of aural aspects of experience. The ambiguity of ‘feelings’ as a facet of human experience emphasises the fluidity of emotional, cognitive and physical response. Within extremes of the sound spectrum, from the barely audible to eardrum bursting, perimeters between noise and

sound are fluid and changeable. As Bart Kosko, an electrical engineering specialist, points out, noise in small amounts can be beneficial, improving perception and signal reception (Kosko 2006). Noise is not a monolithic entity, but comes in many forms, from many sources. Sound possesses an almost unfathomable range of characteristics and provides a ceaseless soundtrack to daily existence. These distinctions suggest sound is more instructive when placed in the foggy world of effects rather than causes. Horowitz (2012) terms sound the “Universal sense”. In the field of auditory neuroscience sound is identified as a powerful driver of emotion shaping how we feel as well as think and behave (Horowitz 2012). Sound shapes our emotional world. The significance of sounds affective qualities are lent clarity by work in psychology and sociology focussing on the associations between music and emotion as well as noise (Juslin and Sloboda 2011). A variety of work focuses on the effects of sound in institutional settings. The body of work on exposure to excessive sound and impairment of cognitive performance in the classroom is but one example. Much of this is within the field of education studies, but powerfully illustrates the importance of sound within institutional contexts (Higgins *et al* 2005).

Socialising sound

Its centrality to emotion implicates sound in both internal and external processes, linking private, interior worlds and external, social ones. While it is language which is more commonly associated with communication, it is frequently sound which conveys its meaning and substance (Pell *et al* 2015). Anthropological approaches to sound and society place it at the heart of social processes with a degree of significance which both predates and exceeds that of language. The anthropologist Steven Mithen (2005) places the human language instinct within that of musicality, asserting that music precedes language acquisition and is central to what makes us human. Cross (2005) argues that musicality allows for greater flexibility in social relations, placing music – and by extension sound – at the centre of social bonds. Placing sound at the centre of social life has implications for how it is understood in terms of both nature and function.

Sound is a fundamental aspect of society operating as both a cultural artefact and conveyer of cultural identity. Culture is here used in the broad sense, as shared maps of meaning encompassing feelings, emotions, attachments, ideas and concepts (Hall 1997). The importance of sound as a conveyer of socially significant information is underscored by exploring what James Steintrager (2010) terms ‘sound weight’. Sound is perceived as

having gravity in accordance with the meaning ascribed to it. Weber's work on the development of music in Western societies underscores this point. The development of Western music reflects particular social processes, which in turn shape cultural practices central to social life (Weber 1920). Sound operates as a mediator of memory and identity for both the individual and the collective. Sound provides a socially-cohesive means of reshaping collective identity, reaffirming the social bonds which sustain it (Feld 2012). Sound, then, can be understood as laden with meaning; a semiotic system imbuing what we hear with shared understandings, shaping the way we engage with our spaces as well as with each other (Singer 1991). Sound provides aural cues to expected behaviour and the rituals which provide the grammar for daily life; the call to prayer or the morning alarm; the percussion which imposes rhythm on routines of living. Chion (2010) asserts that sound can be understood as a complex system of social signification. Specific sounds in specific social contexts act as parcels of information providing cues to emotional and behavioural responses. Sound, intrinsically social, signals predictable routine and the reassurance of structure. The sound of a loved one swinging the gate as they return home, or the reassuringly familiar whirr of a machine used at work indicate that all is as it should be. In this way aural experience can enhance or undermine ontological security (Giddens 1991).

Sound embodies a complex system of relationships between people and environment as well as contextual specificity (Truax 2001; Morat 2016). The soundtrack of industrialisation and concomitant shift in social practices is a notable example (Schafer 1977; Krebs 2011). In this sense sound is a means of articulating and reinforcing sets of social relations and is thus implicated in articulations and contestations of power. In his book on noise Garret Keizer (2012) makes the point that in an increasingly urbanised, frenetic society silence becomes a precious commodity. Control over exposure to unwanted sound is linked to a rarefied standard of living and so the enjoyment of quiet becomes a privilege only the wealthy and powerful can afford (Keizer 2012). Applying this social understanding of sound to the prison environment has implications for how we understand the prison social world. As the environmental psychologist Richard Wener notes, much of the distress resulting from noise exposure in prison environments stems from lack of control over what is heard and when (Wener 2012).

Noise, and who is heard, are intrinsically bound up with cultural dominance and disparities of power (Thompson 2004b). Who gets to impose their noise on whom is a

process of subjugation, sound a means of articulating and reinforcing sets of social relations. Noise is implicated in the wider social structure; a useful metaphor for social development as well as a means of exploring relations of culture and economy, a means of mapping the political economy and a harbinger of change (Attali 1977). The reification and dismissal of particular forms of sound – and by extension their sources – as ‘high’ or ‘low’ culture reflect processes of cultural distinction central to social order. Some cultural expressions – in speech, tone, language and music – are deemed to have greater ‘embodied cultural capital’ than others, reinforcing social differentiation (Bourdieu 1984). Sound is intimately tied up with the giving and denial of voice on which power relations depend (Ardener 1975; Mathieson 2005). Sound and noise are bound up with articulations of power and the social relations which lend it form, shaping our social worlds and systems of meaning; our habitus (Bourdieu 1992).

Sound, time and space

The three-way relationship between people, sound and space lends further clarity to an emphasis on social aspects of sound. Geography offers an understanding of how place is implicated in social processes of power, exclusion and identity-making (Sibley 1995). The introduction of sound offers a means of understanding these mechanisms. David Toop (2010: 58) asserts “there is a conversation between place and person that is articulated through sound”. Sound mediates the relationship between people and environment. The purpose and meaning of place are decoded through the soundscape within them; the pub soundscape, for example, signals a breach of normal expectations of restrained behaviour in these liminal spaces (Fox 2005), while hushed solemnity signals expectations of reverence in places of worship. The sociality of sound indicates its active role in shaping social spaces. Design is often tailored to ensure that acoustics echo spaces’ social purpose, offering a means of understanding the social life within (Blessner and Salter 2009; Hendy 2014). Rather than merely reflecting the relationship between people and space, sound is a facet of evolving social life; the way humans manipulate their physical environment echoes social development (Sennett 1994). Sound is a fluid, active component of the relationship between people and processes of meaning-making in social spaces. Aural signals for social behaviour intertwine sound with personal and social identity-making. As well as signalling expected behaviours, the soundscape contains packages of information which comprise an intricate system of collaborative meaning-making. While this sonic environment is lent meaning by the

experience and expectation which shape social spaces, its semiotic complexity is also bound with memories which traverse time and space and reconfigure its meanings.

Sound is intimately associated with our sense of time (Toop 2010). While treating space and time as inextricably intertwined is more theoretically fruitful (Moran 2012), recognising the association of sound with time signals the disruptive potential of sound for re-configuring accounts of this aspect of human experience. This is particularly useful in the prison context, where the concept of punishment is structured around the loss of time. The assumption that sound distorts and unsettles sequential notions of time is present if not explicit in a variety of explorations of sounds' properties. When Smith (2005) refers to "an archeology of sound" it is the potential for revisiting the past through an appreciation of historical soundscapes that he refers to. Smith contends that "all sounds that have ever occurred still reverberate, however faintly, somewhere in the wild blue yonder" (Smith 2005:21). Similarly, carceral geographers seek to reanimate prison spaces by invoking the aural experience of former carceral environments (Hemsworth 2015). This work suggests the potential of aural experience to traverse time and space provides a useful means of understanding prison life.

Invoking nostalgia by prompting memory, sound has the capacity to elide divisions in time and space and is used to move between past and present (Toop 2010; Reynolds 2011). The notion of a collective memory is implicit here; that there is some shared recollection which forms the basis of shoring up the self by revisiting the past (Connerton 1989). Connerton treats memory as a cultural artefact and argues memory is enacted through shared bodily ritual. Understanding sound as embodied experience thereby implicates it in processes of shared memory. This interpretation re-emphasises the basis for approaching sound as a facet of social processes of meaning-making. Using sound to evoke shared meaning and collective remembering places sound at the centre of social life.

3.2 Using sound as research lens

Talking about sound

Cultivating a protective membrane to filter the deluge of data we are inundated with in the modern age is necessary to preserve sanity, Simmel (1903) argues. This is not without its effects on our social interactions; we no longer listen in the same way, nor do we focus on aural experience as we once might have done. This has implications for the way we

talk about sound and therefore how we understand it; the visual has long assumed a privileged place in our cultural consciousness (Carpenter and McLuhan 1960). But what does this mean and how can this be effectively incorporated in to methodology? Adorno's treatise on 'popular music' indirectly undergirds this point arguing that the music industry engineers the passive subject by regulating the way such music is consumed (Adorno 1941). Adorno is arguing for a particular kind of listening that requires active engagement and rejection of conformism. Not excessively individualised but rather mindful of those connections between self and society – a kind of listening rooted in structure and experience. If listening is a cultural practice, so is talking about it. This presents immediate challenges because, quite literally, we lack the vocabulary to do so. Our speech is littered with visual analogies (e.g. sight for sore eyes, seeing is believing, beauty is in the eye of the beholder). The richness of visual metaphor, as Foucault (1977) amply demonstrates in his treatment of the panopticon, is unmatched by an aural equivalent.

Talking about what is heard is immediately problematised by the demands of converting sensory experience in to language. This problem of interpretation is neither mono-faceted nor exclusive to sound. Visual criminology is beset by debates about the adequacy and ethics of criminology's treatment of the image (Carrabine 2012). While using language to discuss aural experience raises ambiguity and uncertainty about accuracy of representation, this can be interpreted as a positive means of more accurately conveying the inherently changeable and subjective nature of social life. Recognition of this subjectivity naturally places people at the centre of inquiry, prompting a "listener-based approach to soundscape analysis" (Foale 2014). Placing the listener at the centre encourages examination of how aural experience might most usefully be captured.

Feeling, sound and knowledge

Difficulty in talking about sound, prompts a reflection on the challenges of talking about aural experience and how this can be most fruitfully applied to knowledge. Sound has strong associations with emotional and social life. Social life is conducted and shaped in particular spaces, at particular times. Exploring the significance of sound in prison therefore has implications for the way we understand how we experience society and space, disrupting ontological assumptions about how our lived reality is constructed. This has corresponding ramifications for methodology. What might the implications be for how we understand processes of knowledge production? How can this more complex understanding of sound be deployed methodologically to the study of prison spaces?

Using the analogy of the human body to make his point, not unlike Durkheimian representations of society as organism, Simmel argues that it is in the small, everyday interactions that understanding of wider social structures becomes clear. He argues for a development of the sociology of the senses on the basis that; everyday experiential aspects of human experience lend shape and meaning to larger theories of social life. Sensory experience bridges the divide between abstract concepts and everyday living (Simmel 1907). A focus on these aspects of lived experience holds the promise to provide more than representational depictions of human life, to get at the processes of living which lie underneath thought and theorising (Thrift 2008). Sociological accounts of sensory life offer the possibility of better accounting for embodied knowledge in a way which overcomes the over-emphasis of phenomenology on the tangible, which places the individual at its centre.

Demonstrating the physiological effects and cultural significance of sound, indicate its importance but fail to explicate how sound is experienced beyond the physical. Phenomenology is an attempt to incorporate embodied experience in to accounts of how we know; instinct as a source of knowledge (Husserl 1900). Phenomenology illustrates the ways in which this embodied knowledge represents a major means of engaging with our world (Merleau-Ponty 1945). Mohr makes a powerful case for the usefulness of phenomenological practice in the field of criminology:

“I see criminology as sterile if it does not increase our awareness of ourselves in relation to the world we live in, and the conscious approach to this proposition is basically what is meant by phenomenology” (Mohr 1969:7).

These theoretical contributions go further towards accounting for the importance of sound as a source of knowledge but they do not go far enough. In maintaining a focus on the self, phenomenology retains a distinction between subject and object. While important for illustrating sensual experience as a way of making sense of the world, phenomenology therefore encourages treatment of the self as a discrete source of experience, side-lining intersubjectivity. Phenomenology provides a useful starting point but is insufficient to account for the process by which we collaboratively make sense of our social world. A social ontology is, as Katz (2002) observes, a good place to start. Though a more social ontology requires a broader consideration of our sensory engagement with our social world. Sound, rather than vision, allows us to “start here”.

Simmel (1907) places sensory experience at the centre of social processes; it is our senses which lend shape and meaning to the social world. Simmel retains a heavy emphasis on the visual which he identifies as uniquely sociological (Simmel 1907). Weinstein and Weinstein (1984:361) argue that knowledge processes are ‘fundamentally participative’ but from within a perspective which argues our sensemaking of the world is fundamentally reliant on vision. In this way they echo and underscore Simmel’s interpretation which they define as ‘purely phenomenological’. Combining the sensory with phenomenological interpretations further entrenches the division between subject and object (e.g. Levinas 1998), relegating the intersubjective processes which make sense of our social world.

Vision forms but one part of our sensory world and explanations which privilege what we see fall short of accounting for the fundamentally social process of meaning-making. Instead, the self is the central referent, deriving definition in opposition to the other rather than as co-producer of knowledge and meaning. Phenomenological epistemology cannot meet the sociological burdens placed upon it by this stubborn adherence to the self as the central point of reference. Chion (2010) identifies sound as forging a bridge between phenomenology and constructivism, better accounting for the intersubjective nature of meaning-making. Sound offers a ‘helpful fuzziness’ which is offered as a more accurate reflection of human experience, also helpfully circumventing this theoretical impasse (Streintrager 2010: xix).

Further illustration of the theoretical potentials of sound are presented by the auditory imagination - a concept found in fields as diverse as literary criticism and philosophy (Elliot 1933; Ihde 2007). T.S. Elliot defines the auditory imagination as:

...the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without meanings in the ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilised mentality (1933: 118-119).

Elliot is elucidating an aural basis for shared sociality. Sound is a means of retrieving collective memory, reiterating it or “bringing something back”. Ihde refers to sound as a

means of uniting inner, personal life and the outer social world of shared meanings. Ihde argues that paying attention to sound illustrates the intricate connections between imagination and perception which has implications for how we understand the nature of being and “the existential importance of the auditory in the human community” (Ihde 2007: 135). Sound illustrates our social nature of being, the way in which our inner and outer worlds connect. Accounts of the auditory imagination in this way echo earlier assertions about the working definition of sound for this project.

A conception of personhood and being underscores this interpretation of sound. Assumptions about what constitutes a person are essential to attempts to explain and understand social life (Smith 2010). Persons are defined by social ties and obligations rather than existing as atomistic individuals (Smith 2010). What a person is, is significant here because it shapes the approach to the field. I aimed to ensure all interactions recognised the inherent interconnectedness between people (Buber 2008). These ideas were influential in determining practice in the field, in the conversational, open-ended style of interviewing and in the decision to view prison society in its entirety, encouraging participation from all sections of the community. This not only echoed working definitions of sound as inherently social and connective but represented a departure from much prison ethnography which focuses on one section of the population - more usually the prisoner community – (e.g. Carrabine 2004; Crewe 2009).

In practice this translated in to a collaborative process of interpretation through discussion and comparison with members of the prison community (Elliott and Culhane 2017). The intrinsic sociality of sound invoked an active relationship of inquiry with participants, utilising the relative ignorance of the researcher to explore meanings of the soundscape. Rather than being positioned as the expert, inquiring about the soundscape assigned the role of learner to researcher, participants acting as teachers and guides as I slowly familiarised myself with the intricate variations of the daily symphony of prison life. In this context outsider status went some way to addressing the disparity of power between myself – free to leave – and those participants who were incarcerated (Sultana 2007). This was less of an issue with staff who frequently exercised their freedom not to speak with me.

Asking about sound, particularly in relation to personal memory with questions like “are there sounds you enjoy in here?” and “are there sounds that remind you of positive things”

offered participants the opportunity to explore their memory on their own terms. Questions about sound and space – such as “what do you do if you want some quiet?” – extended participants the room to reflect on the extent of control (albeit limited) they were able to exercise over the soundscape. Using sound as a focus for enquiry therefore extended greater licence to those who spoke to me to take the conversation where they wanted, and some small respite from the sensory excesses of the prison environment. In these ways using sound echoed Fergus McNeill’s observation that a creative response to methods “offers the capacity to invite imaginings” (McNeill 2018:115).

Disrupting hierarchies of knowledge

What we see holds a privileged role in the pursuit of knowledge (O’Callaghan and Nudds 2009). The potential of sound to better meet Les Back’s call for “social investigations that utilize a ‘democracy of the senses’” goes beyond the benefits he identifies as being “likely to notice more, and ask different questions...” (Back 2007:8). Simmel’s (1909) argument that drawing more heavily on a sociology of the senses is vital to an understanding of the social, offers a powerful argument about why this is essential to our understanding. Better accounting for neglected aspects of human experience also sheds light on the ways a failure to do so hold the potential for distorting knowledge. Moving beyond cultural assumptions about the importance of what we see, holds the potential to disrupt hierarchies of knowledge. As Hume (1748:127) asserts, “The effects of resemblance in enlivening the ideas is very common”. The pre-eminence of the visual has been embedded in our cultural consciousness since the enlightenment. It is no mere challenge to the received wisdom that observation, replication, scientific objectivism are the gold standard of scientific endeavour. Rather, disrupting assumptions about the pre-eminence of the visual constitutes an assault on the ways in which this hierarchy of knowledge reflects the wider social structure: “the social structure of science [represents] an inherently sexist, racist, classist, culturally coercive practice and form of knowledge” (Oakley 1959:1). Systems of categorisation and classification on which criminological processes of organisation rely have long been rooted in “ways of looking” (Cohen 1985:1). Offering sound as some panacea for the replication of social inequality in research is somewhat overreaching. Stoevers illustrates the ways in which racist cultural practices persist through sound and music. Drawing on Du Bois she catalogues how processes of racism are reproduced through the maintenance of a “sonic colour line” (Du Bois 1940; Stoevers 2016). Aural aspects of culture are in no way exempt from the

multifarious methods of perpetuating prejudice. Nevertheless, sound renders these social processes audible, inviting interrogation and disruption.

Using sound methodologically represents a significant epistemological shift, posing a persuasive challenge to our assumptions about how we know, but requires no less critical engagement to navigate successfully. The significance of this shift is unearthed by consideration of the extent to which processes of knowledge production are culturally informed by what we see. Toppling the privileged position of the visual requires so significant an alteration in perception/listening, as to amount to a paradigm shift (Kuhn 1962).

In practice, privileging sound in interviews and conversation invited more wide-ranging musings, a greater degree of collaborative meaning-making and more freedom for participants to take the conversation where they desired. Formulaic, ordered and chronological approaches to interview are bound with particular conceptions of the visually-infused order of things (Foucault 1989). For prisoners this had a deeper significance. Accustomed to delivering the particular narratives imposed by involvement with criminal justice agencies, initial autobiographies were offered in the format familiar from numerous conversations with those who had spent time in prison. Almost invariably these narratives take the form of “overcoming the monster”, or the “quest” with a view to “rebirth” (Booker 2004). Prisoners become accustomed to leading with their convictions and a desire not to come back to prison, preceded, often, by tales of a misspent youth. If our lives become stories, it is also the case that these stories become our lives; these processes of self-making become intertwined with the status imposed by the institution which forces the endless repetition of these narratives (Eakin 1999). Privileging sound carved out space to riff independently in creation of alternative tunes of their own making, peppering conversations with anecdotes and memories far removed from the prison walls.

Sound and ethnography

Despite the closed nature of the world of prison, or perhaps because of it, prison sociology has a rich history of ethnographic and ethnographically-informed study; Clemmer (1940), Sykes (1958), Morris, Morris and Barer (1963), Jacobs (1977), Sparks, Bottoms and Hay (1996), Liebling and Arnold (2004), Crewe (2009), Phillips (2013) to name but some of the most enduring and influential. The complexity of prison societies suggests a method which Coretta Phillips describes as:

the promise of getting to the nub of this lived experience, offering the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the social world...in an attempt to uncover the sense and meaning social actors attach to the complexities of their everyday lives (Phillips 2013:62).

Earlier contributions acknowledge the enormous debt owed to anthropology in which ethnography has its roots (e.g. Morris, Morris and Barer 1963). Exploring the significance of sound within the prison environment necessitates an immersion in, and deep understanding of the culture which lends it shape and meaning. Ethnography allowed for the development of a thick description of everyday life in the heart of HMP Midtown (Geertz 1973). David Howes offers a spirited critique of the lack of room for sensory experience in Geertz's interpretation of ethnographic method, making a plea for an "anthropology of the senses" (Howes 1991). His argument, that sensory experience forms a major if unacknowledged strand of ethnographic practice has implications for 'doing' ethnography. Such argument heralds the potential of incorporating sound in to method holds for harnessing the critical potentials for ethnography to unseat assumptions about the prison environment (Lave 2011). Using sound in method both capitalises on the broad, rich histories of previous research within the field of prisons and beyond, while carving out space to listen with fresh ears.

Incorporating a focus on sound in to ethnography also has a tradition behind it, though one often relegated to a particular branch of anthropology. Steven Feld's (2012) research in Papua New Guinea, exploring the way sound and emotion reknit culture and community is a powerful example. Despite the sensitising potentials of ethnographic practice, there frequently remains a chasm between what we say we do, and what we actually do (Forsey 2010). Engaged listening is a major facet of ethnographic practice but one we generally fail to acknowledge or interrogate (Forsey 2010). Erlmann (2004) draws out this glaring omission in his essay "but what of the ethnographic ear?" in which he argues that sound has implications for proximity with the field and the people in it, as well as being more closely allied to other aspects of sensory experience, such as touch. Listening - engaged hearing - is an essential component of ethnographic practice (Boggis 2018). Rather than constituting a break with more conventional methodologies, incorporating sound more accurately reflects a long tradition of ethnographic practice both within prison spaces and beyond. Nevertheless, doing so explicitly requires attending to research design.

3.3 Towards a design

Rhythmanalysis

Rhythmanalysis explores various aspects of rhythm and its utility for exploring everyday living (Pinheiro Dos Santos 1931; Bachelard 1936; Lefebvre 2004). Lefebvre's approach explores rhythm as both a general theory, a focus of study and a methodology, proposing "nothing less than to found a science: the analysis of rhythms; with practical consequences" (Lefebvre 2004: 1). It is the job of the rhythmanalyst to "listen to the world, and above all to what are disdainfully called noises... To murmurs... silences" (Lefebvre 2004: 19). Lefebvre acknowledges the fundamental multi-disciplinarity of this approach, allowing for the inclusion of a diverse array of knowledge from a wide collection of fields and disciplines. Interpreting everyday life in this way is compatible with ethnographic practice and its emphasis on immersion in social life, echoing his insistence on the need to be present as the rhythms of human activity take place (Lefebvre 2004).

The aural in ethnography

In order to understand the complex relationships between place, time and activity which constitute lived reality, it is necessary to operate *presence*; to be there experiencing these complex rhythms as they unfold, through time (Lefebvre 2004: 22). Lefebvre's assertion echoes Les Back and Nirmal Puwar's (2012) manifesto for live methods. They identify these as methods which allow for greater 'craftiness', innovativeness and cross-disciplinary collaboration to engage more actively with the social world we seek to understand (Back and Puwar 2012). An ethnography incorporating sound elicitation was suited to examining social processes using sound, allowing them to be heard as they developed over time. This approach takes the multisensory nature of knowledge and the human experience as its starting point. This also echoes the belief that this represents a more accurate reflection of ethnographic practice whether relegated to implicit understanding or not (Pink 2015). Particular restrictions of the prison environment rendered the use of recordings as a method of sound elicitation impractical. Being present in the environment and employing limited use of soundwalking was a more viable approach and also offered a more instructive means of exploring the rhythms of prison life through sound.

Soundwalking is rooted in acoustic ecology (in turn related to anthropology) and refers to practice whose main purpose is to listen to the sound environment (Schafer 1994; Cox 2014). Soundwalking offers a means of evoking memory and experience, inviting reflection on both embodied and emplaced knowledge (Schine 2010). Stevenson (2014) demonstrates how using soundwalking in conjunction with interview offers insights in to how experience is constructed, and how memories are evoked through engagement with space and sound. Given the particularity of prison space, applying sound in social inquiry holds potential for understanding how prison spaces are experienced beyond the stark, restrictive parameters of vision. Up to 22 hours a day can be spent behind the door for those locked up, adding huge significance to sound as a means of compensating for an inability to see through walls. Within the acoustic community of prison, it is sound which is primarily charged with forming and maintaining the social world: “sound rules in prison” (Kelly 2017: 3).

A research design incorporating both sound and ethnography; an aural ethnography, most closely reflected the theoretical approach and research aims of the project. A combination of ethnographic listening and ethnographically-informed interview presented sufficient latitude to respond to the requirements of the community and environment.

There is no aural equivalent for an observation schedule, though this would more accurately be termed a schedule of listening. Keen to use language that was more familiar to the ethics committee, I opted to echo the language used in the process, but this does somewhat underscore the point about the scientific bias towards a visual culture. The schedule was designed to demonstrate a systematic approach to the research process. While listening proved rather more organic in the field, the process of writing one encouraged reflection on how to go about assessing different soundscapes as well as interrogating my assumptions.

While I intended to use ethnographically-informed, in depth interview the necessity of demonstrating form and function to satisfy the university ethics committee focused thinking on exactly which questions would be likely to elicit aural imaginings without leading participants. The interview schedule reflected the conversational tone I sought to adopt in interview. This allowed me to draw on data from the aural ethnography while extending power over the interaction to my participants (Oakley 1998). Approaching

interviews in this way satisfied both methodological concerns and the open-ended nature of my research questions.

Ensuring a means of anonymous contact for both prisoners and staff is challenging within the prison environment but necessary in order to maintain ethical safeguards. This required a system. How to avoid creating more of an obstruction than my presence already represented with limited space and resources? I spent weeks establishing how to use the complaints system for this purpose, and additional time e-mailing a number of staff responsible for elements of the process. The complaints system operated via a regularly-emptied box in to which people could place plain envelopes marked for my attention, which would then be placed in my 'dip' (pigeonhole). I then needed to ensure a regular supply of envelopes (they were used for a multitude of functions within the prison, primarily roach material). One person used this system to contact me throughout over seven months of fieldwork and this was motivated by convenience (he spent little time on the wing). Details of how to use this system were included on information posters which also included invitation to interview. I placed these around the prison on both the wing and in staff areas. I regularly repeated the information contained on them though few showed any signs of having engaged with the posters.

Consent, information and debrief sheets also provided details about how to contact me and the purpose of the project. All of these required clarifying ideas about information storage, as did gaining security clearance for the recorder for use in interviews.

Consistency and transparency with participants was demonstrated by using the same paperwork except where support information differed (on the debrief sheets) as well as similar recruitment techniques to this end. Information on these necessarily reflected the different services and avenues for support available to respective groups (listeners, peer advisors, Samaritans and personal officers for prisoners, line managers, local counselling services, Samaritans and GP for staff). All information was repeated verbally to all participants regardless of whether they had disclosed difficulties with learning or literacy.

I used several different methods to inform people about the project. Prior to my arrival I asked for a brief description of the project and invitation to interview to be included in the governor's global bulletin (weekly information e-mail). I also designed posters which I distributed at various points around the prison in both staff and prisoner areas which outlined the project briefly and invited prospective participants to interview. I enlisted

the help of a prisoner to do this which allowed him to act as guide, introducing me to others as I went around the building. This was Stretch who would be my first prisoner interview. While participants were self-selecting, I gained most of my data from ethnographic listening conducted in the main wing of the prison. During this time most people passing through the space spoke to me, many prisoners and staff doing so repeatedly for extended periods of time. In this sense my participants, all of whom opted to engage with me (I was easily avoided having adopted a stationary position), numbered several hundred rather than the considerably more modest number of formal interviewees.

Sounding sampling

Attending to the aural in ethnography allowed for an exploration of the significance of sound to those living and working in these prison spaces. As mentioned previously (see p6 *Sound in methodology*) I spoke to most people who passed through the Midtown lifeworld during my time there. While quotes are mostly taken from interviews with a small number of (prison) community members, these supplement data gathered in the course of an immersive ethnography and the observations, listening, conversations with and reflections from the broader community which comprised much of my time at Midtown. I spoke with governors, gate staff, maintenance workers, cleaners, anyone loitering at the cabinets as they revved up for the day, admin staff, drug workers, orderlies and other prisoners on a daily basis about a number of topics. Personal issues, impending trials, events within the prison, the upcoming election, a good visit, how the project was going and what I was writing were all frequent subjects of conversation though discussion was always brought back to the topic of the soundscape. Interviews were ethnographically-informed, presenting the opportunity to expand on themes identified in the course of conducting ethnography as well as to explore the soundscape and its features in more depth, with less interruption arising from the vagaries of prison life.

Engaging more widely with the community at Midtown reduced the need to target specific individuals for interview. Rather than seeking a representative sample – a process incompatible with the aims of this research as well as the prison environment – those selected for interview were chosen on a purposive basis, in that they were all members of the Midtown community with experience of its soundscape (Rubin and Rubin 1995, Palinkas *et al.* 2016). I was interested in the community as a whole rather than replicating the usual divisions between staff and prisoners, hence making generalised invitations to

interview (Carrabine 2004). Additionally, operationalising sound as a subjective sensory experience, intrinsic to social meaning-making, meant that it was important to speak with a diverse range of (prison) community members. Approaching interview in this way echoed the intrinsic subjectivity of the meanings and effects of sound (see pp41-42 *Defining sound*). I rarely asked anyone directly if they were prepared to talk to me, explaining the nature of the project and my desire to speak to as broad a range of people as possible. All but a couple of people offered directly in the course of engagement – one of this small number was the No.1). Approaching interview in this way granted greater autonomy to those wishing to participate, allowing them to nominate themselves. To be clear, the ethnographic process was distinct from that of recruitment. My approach to the latter sought to broaden inclusivity in a way which recognised the vulnerability (both perceived and circumstantial) of participants and encouraged participation by demonstrating my status as an independent agent (with all the caveats implied by the prison context) (Ellard-Gray *et al.* 2015). This was particularly important within the prison environment where nominations from those in positions of power might be experienced as coercive (McDermott 2013) (for further consideration of ethics see *Ethics: process, practice and praxis* below p73).

I actively engaged with most members of the community which lessened potential problems presented by a self-selecting sample within the volatile dynamics of the prison environment (considered in more depth in the following section). These interactions formed my thematic grounding, while the interviews played a secondary role to ethnographic participation. This allowed for triangulating themes which were identified throughout the ethnographic process (Ely *et al.* 1997), by comparing against interviews with both prisoners and staff. Since those speaking to me were drawn from various sections of the prisoner and staff populations this also broadened the representativeness of those I spoke with (Bachman and Schutt 2007). I regarded these people as members of the community and initially failed to categorise them in terms of their roles and distinguishing circumstances. Ten members of staff and nineteen prisoners were interviewed. Staff interviewees included non-operational staff (Senior psychologist, resettlement worker, substance-use support worker), as well as a mixed number of operational staff from officer, managerial and governor grades. Prisoner interviews were drawn from an equally diverse range of community members. Those imprisoned for the first time (Urfan and Dave), on remand (King, Boyd, William), a lifer (Tommy), IPP-

sentenced prisoners – both on recall and well-over tariff (Nate and Tonk) – repeated sentences for relatively minor offences (Mooch), and those with a long-standing relationship with the prison spanning much of their lives and touching on a number of their wider social networks (Lugs and Stretch), were amongst those interviewed. These people also assumed different roles within wider prison society; a number had long-standing relationships with drugs and alcohol which had often played a part in their prison sentence and some were frequently on ACCTS¹⁵ during my stay. I also spoke to more vulnerable prisoners (Jack was a long-term resident on the vulnerable unit) and both Robert and Urfan were disinclined to socialise beyond their own, small social groups. In short, a group of people comprising precisely the diversity of circumstance characteristic of a local men's prison. Their ages ranged from 21 to 58, and while the population of HMP Midtown was unusually ethnically homogenous – being dominated by local, white men in contrast to the population of Midtown – people of a diverse range of ages, sentences, statuses, ethnic backgrounds and religious beliefs were represented.

While I spoke with a number of men for whom English was not a first language, they were less represented amongst those I interviewed and this research is somewhat impoverished by the absence of their voice. It would have been interesting and informative to include their interpretations of Midtown's soundscape in relation to their respective cultural contexts. Much older prisoners were also under-represented both in my conversations and interview. At Midtown, this section of the population were more inclined to "pad rat"¹⁶ behaviours (discussed in more depth on p148) and I rarely walked around the landings during unlock for reasons explored elsewhere (See *Standing still*, p69). Those of those I spoke with most were particularly sociable and prominent members of the prison community, and frequently contributed significantly to the soundscape though this was far from universal. Had I spent more time on the wings it is possible that accounts of the soundscape would have differed markedly. I attempted to offset this by speaking with as wide a range of people as I could, but I was conscious of preserving the limited privacy and space extended to those in prison. Had I spent more time with less active members of the community, my conclusions may have been

¹⁵ Assessment, care in custody teamwork – if a prisoner is identified as being at particular risk an ACCT may be opened which triggers a range of behaviours designed to effectively monitor their wellbeing. This takes the form of a large, Orange-covered, set of papers to which a range of prison staff (and possibly other actors – such as IMB) may contribute.

¹⁶ "Pad rats" are those who prefer to remain in their cells than actively engage in prison society

different as to the basis of order at Midtown. Carrabine (2004) emphasises the “overlooked contribution that fatalism makes to the maintenance of order in prisons” (p19). This was not at the forefront of accounts offered by those prisoners I spoke with but may have been more prominent had I focussed on those at the margins of prison society.

Both staff and prisoners had moved around the prison estate and, as is often the case, asking about the specificities of Midtown prompted comparison between and reflection on other prison environments – particularly across the estate. Staff commented on past experience in women’s prisons, high security and, in the case of Officer Rose, work experience in an Immigration Removal Centre (which he hated, tellingly because of an absence of beloved routine). Prisoners reflected on experiences of local prisons both in the context of relative conditions and territorial pride (this was particularly pronounced in conversations with Stretch) as well as drawing on wider experience of the estate, particularly Young Offender Institutions, the high security estate and open conditions. While aspects of interpretations were specific to Midtown and the individuals within the community, as in the case of Shambles (See p131), the wider “folk memory” (HMCIP 2001: 4) of the prison system, passed on and shared between staff and prisoners was a consistent feature of shared knowledge and conversation. While exploration was grounded in the specificities of the soundscape of spaces and communities of HMP Midtown, there was a sense in which experience was drawn from collective knowledge of the prison more broadly. When Officer Derek referred to “the everyday tune that’s normal for here” (See p151) it was to his collective experience of interpreting the emotional climate in prisons to which he referred. In this sense, while the nature of this research was resolutely qualitative, details about the way skills and knowledge had been developed to interpret the prison soundscape have transferable and generalisable elements.

What you do not hear: ethnography and its limitations

Whilst drawing interviews from a self-selected group of people safeguarded ethical principles of voluntary and informed consent, it arguably raised other issues with regard to the nature and quality of the data. Doubtless there were a number of motives for speaking with me, one of which was passing the time (for a discussion on the experience of time see chapter 8, p179). Additionally, and more seriously for the quality and nature of the data, is the potential for self-selection bias; those who volunteered to take part did

so out of a particular and pronounced interest in the subject thereby lending a false quality to the analysis of their responses (Bachman and Schutt 2007). Given the ethnographic nature of this project, self-selection might more accurately be termed respondent-led. As discussed above (p68) the impact of respondent-led¹⁷ interview participation was offset by ethnographically-derived knowledge and insights about the soundscape. This allowed for recruitment to take place through a longer process of engagement with as wide a range of (prison) community members as possible, maximising the potential for ‘thick’ as well as informative and theoretically rich description (Geertz 1973). In this respect, ethnographic method allowed for an extended period of engagement with and understanding of the people of HMP Midtown and their reflections on the soundscape which were then complemented by interviews while compensating for potential limitations and pitfalls of this approach (for a more detailed consideration of the limits of interview see p96).

While ethnography may be an effective means of capturing the dynamism and fluidity of lived experience, its practice is a necessarily interpretative process (Gullion 2016). This is not without peril. As Geertz documents (1973), ethnography is a complicated business of careful scrutiny and analysis and as such is open to the charge of bias, inconsistency and inaccuracy. Nowhere is this more clearly illustrated than in the anthropological origins of ethnography and subsequent revisionist projects to assert the agency of populations previously subject to the doing of ethnography. In privileging the contestable, contingent and historical nature of ethnography, the politics and power implicit in its processes are also brought to the fore (Clifford and Marcus 1986). Representation is a fraught and delicate practice demanding an awareness and balancing of various facets of experience, or as Hammersly (2006) terms it “a tension between what we might call participant and analytic perspectives” (p3). Listening ethnographically requires not only an appreciative and respectful ear but one which strives to hear the symphony of social and personal experience. An art which privileging the sensory carves out additional space to do (Boggis 2018).

The practice of ethnography, then, is one riven with the problem of balancing the ‘partial truths’ which constitute social experience and its interpretations (Clifford 1986). In

¹⁷ I refrain from using the term “respondent-driven” as RDS or “respondent-driven sampling” has explicit links to research involving hard to reach populations such as in the study of HIV contraction – a variant of “link-tracing sampling” (e.g. White *et al.* 2012).

addition to the problem of accurate and theoretically informative representation, Denzin and Lincoln identify legitimization and praxis as together forming a triumvirate of issues plaguing the perceived veracity of qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). The problem of representation is ever-present in the research process, though the inadequacy of textual based representations of lived experience is partially offset by a focus on sensory experience (I discuss this fundamental contradiction in chapter 9, coda, and the difficulties of defining sound above pp.52-53). 'Legitimation' requires adequate assessment of the process of doing research, while praxis necessitates a reflection on the extent to which ethnographic principles have been enacted. This last observation is made significantly more challenging by working within a prison environment in terms of both politics and practice.

Prison is a peculiar social world in which power relations are particularly stark and pronounced (for discussions on power see pp.18-29). This has implications for the way such relations are negotiated by the researcher as well as played out in social interactions between researcher and those in the field. The politics of participation were difficult to navigate as an outsider, requiring careful consideration of both the hierarchy and individual relationships between both staff and prisoners. While a number of those I interviewed were most definitely not on the lower rungs of the social hierarchy (discussed more extensively p143), I was at pains to express a stubborn resistance to internalising these and made efforts to ensure I could be seen speaking with all manner of prisoners and members of staff. I would make a point of going in to the vulnerable prisoner's unit during shared association to spend time there, for example.

Despite these efforts to circumvent the politics and power of the place, there were practical limitations to the degree of immersion possible within a men's prison (Bhandyopadhhay 2015). I spent little time in the care and segregation unit, and rarely walked the landings unless the men were away. I was tolerated at mealtimes but was sometimes asked to disappear if an incident was in progress and only stayed one night. The vast majority of the prison day is spent behind the door (HMCIP 2018), and yet the cells were a place I barely ventured. I participated in social life, but only to the extent constraints and ethical concerns allowed. For all that, sound encourages a consideration of aspects of prison social life conducted out of view, and what the implications of doing so may be (Herrity forthcoming). While I was not free from constraints of power, politics or practices of the prison I attempted to reduce the impact of this on data by ensuring I

spoke to as wide a range of people as possible. New staff and veteran officers, high-flying governors and maintenance workers, the first-time prisoner just landed at reception, the lifer, the repeat visitor, the vulnerable sex offender and the ‘known’ faces were all spoken with whenever the opportunity presented. It was this broad engagement with the social world of HMP Midtown which informed the ethnographic data which underpins the subsequent discussion.

Ethics: process, practice and praxis

Prison research requires an additional layer of ethics application; from NOMS¹⁸ (now HMPPS) in addition to the host university. This has both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, a longer process encourages a more reflective engagement with the role of ethics in design, as well as a need to present a more thorough research plan. On the other, presenting ethics as an arduous hurdle runs the risk of drawing an artificial and counterproductive distinction between process and practice (Haggerty 2004). Ethics, rather than a discrete part of the process, remained fundamental throughout.

Active consent was sought by reading all forms and repeating the voluntary basis of participating (as well as the right to withdraw). Consent, as well as the voluntary and informed nature of participation were treated as ongoing, active, processes. Prison offers limited autonomy to those who live and work there making it imperative that the voluntary nature of participation was underscored. The optional basis of talking to me and the confidential nature of exchange were always emphasised, as was the freedom to withdraw both during and after the research project (prior to transcription). I included contact information on all information sheets in case participants had additional questions and I returned on several occasions offering the opportunity to answer any queries. All recordings were stored centrally on an encrypted computer prior to transcription. Transcripts do not bear names and will not be accessible to anyone other than my supervisors upon request. Names have all been changed to protect identity and transcripts identified with numbered codes to further insulate against identification. It is for this reason that I refer to the prison as HMP Midtown; many of these people remain part of networks of association both personal and professional. Consent forms were also locked away. I used a secure recorder which I kept with me or locked away at all times. This

¹⁸ The former National Offender Management service, replaced by Her Majesty’s Prison and Probation Service in 2017

device was subject to additional security clearance from the prison, having been sanctioned by both the university ethics committee and NOMS.

The nature of prison as a secure setting with a multitude of security concerns necessitated an early start to the process of gaining ethical approval. I began writing my application at Leicester in the first term and had gained ethical clearance from the university by January 2016. I was aware that institutional ethics clearance was a prerequisite to NOMS consideration. Negotiating this part of the operation as soon as possible gave me maximum time to hone my application. Having made extensive enquiry I knew that having the agreement, in principle, of a governor to host a research project would increase the feasibility of my research application to NOMS. I am indebted to Ben Crewe for extending me an e-mail introduction to the governor of HMP Midtown. His being prepared to vouch for me undoubtedly offered an 'in' I might not have secured without his help.

Armed with the permission to conduct my research at a specific site I embarked upon the NOMS research application process. This intimidating and unwieldy online system required familiarity with a number of facets of prison service and NOMS priorities which continue to inform about wider prison culture. The application is reviewed by a regional or national body of prison service-registered psychologists depending on the number of prospective research sites. I was keenly aware of the challenge posed by presenting my qualitative, creative design to a team of professionals acculturated in a very particular research ontology. This was reflected in a jarring initial response which challenged me to identify independent variables in the research design amongst other requests for further clarity. There are but two attempts at receiving approval, and while I viewed my application being declined pending clarification as the best possible outcome I was nevertheless anxious in case my response failed to meet requirements. I spent several months over the redraft and was pleasantly surprised when only a week later I received news of a positive outcome, accompanied by a warm message of encouragement. By 20th January 2017 I had received NOMS approval for my research project. I was in the prison by February.

Ethical practice was a never-ending source of challenge and reflection. Nowhere is this more evident than in prison where the stakes of talking carelessly can be so high. However, coaxing engagement and reflection from participants required effort. Once an

individual had decided (usually volunteered) to take part they were uninterested in the intricacies of what this involved. Gently encouraging engagement with consent forms and information or debrief sheets was a frustrating business and frequently met with impatience and dismissiveness. Similarly, despite the wide use of posters bearing information about the study and invitation to interview as well as establishing an elaborate system to ensure people could contact me privately via the complaints box, all but one prisoner and most staff declined to engage with written information. Having said that, the complaints box and IMB system have never been so thoroughly and frequently restocked with hopeful brown envelopes. I continued doing this throughout my time at Midtown and checked my 'dig' upon arriving and leaving every day. With the exception of communication with Dave, an older first-time prisoner who managed to keep a very active schedule and used it for mutual convenience, the only items waiting for me were those placed there by accident.

Negotiating access

However official the stamp of approval, access to the prison is only theoretical without securing the agreement and permission of the governor. Recognising the need to establish connections and forge a trusting relationship I met with the deputy governor and governor of the prison to explain my project and how it might prove of value to the prison. I also assisted in several MQPL workshops (moral quality of prison life) and made contact with the prison as soon as I had received NOMS approval. At this point I was invited to design a COMPACT detailing my obligations as a researcher in the prison, and the support I felt I needed in order to conduct my research. The point appeared to be in submitting to the process, an aspect of prison security echoed in numerous practices. I was well known at the gatehouse and generally ushered straight through, scrambling to reassemble my clutch of papers and equipment displayed for anticipated scrutiny. The performative rituals of security provide a valuable insight in to the role of security as well as the nature of institutional life in prison. These too have their rhythms and routines.

3.4 Producing research

Transcription – part of the process

Transcription was treated as an integral part of the research process. After transcribing my fieldnotes, which prompted reflection on my changing relationship with the environment, I opted to transcribe interviews chronologically, in the same order as I had

conducted them. I kept in mind the assertion that transcription is both a theoretical process and object; one which is frequently neglected (Ochs 1979; Davidson 2009). I proceeded with an awareness that transcription can be a reflection of the researcher's focus of interest and preoccupations rather than of the phenomena under scrutiny. I opted to transcribe as faithfully as I could, including gestures or aspects of the environment as a means of preserving the richness of the data rather than a commitment to maintaining the illusion of neutrality.

Transcribing this way encouraged reflection on my changing relationship with the prison environment and people within it. The first prisoner I interviewed, Stretch, halted the interview at one point: *"Never mind research and about being in and out of prisons. Tell me what's happening in this prison right now"*. I responded with a rather sullen *"I can't"*. *"I'll tell you now"* he told me authoritatively, *"They're feeding dinner. They've got some of the high fours out and some of the high threes, and they're feeding the low threes"*. It is true that dinner service followed similar patterns, and there were a limited number of ways of ordering meal times. It was also true that I had no way of knowing, at this point. Neither did I quite realise the pertinence of what he was telling me at the time. In later interviews my familiarity with the environment had shifted and I asked different questions of my interviewees when our conversation was interrupted by the strains of unusual activity outside. While talking to Robert I asked: *"that isn't trouble, but what is it?"*. Someone has set off the fire extinguisher on the twos we discover when we emerge.

Listening to the recordings placed me back in the prison, and as I listened to the environment I became more struck by my familiarity. I recognised the difference between maintenance banging in the course of assembling furniture and the typical sounding of frustration/irritation this represented. I could distinguish between a good day and a bad from the soundscape forming the backdrop to the interview recordings. Painstakingly transcribing my interviews not only provided an opportunity to improve my interview technique, but also the space to reflect on my acclimation to the prison environment and re-forge my relationship with it. While recognising Layder's (2013) advice to avoid the perils of collecting too much data on the mistaken assumption that more equals better, it was necessary to record as faithfully as possible in order to document both the method and my relationship with people and space. This also formed part of the process of analysis.

Analysis

Adopting a thematic approach to data analysis allowed for sufficient flexibility to embrace the broad, exploratory nature of my research questions. By “thematic analysis” I refer to “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun and Clarke 2006: 6). Analysing observations, sounds and conversations was an iterative process. Rather than constituting a systematised, formal and discrete element of the research project, this mechanism was integral to the project as a whole. I echoed Ely *et al*’s (1997) assessment that there is no ‘right way’ but that data analysis forms a concurrent practice with data collection, led by the data. Lofland and Lofland usefully summarise (1984:134): “analysis and data collection run concurrently for most of the time expended on the project, and the final stage of analysis, after data collection has ceased, becomes a period for bringing final order to previously developed ideas”. Treating the data this way complimented the theoretical approach and degree of immersion in the field. It became clear early on that much of the information those in the prison community were sharing with me lay outside of the project’s remit. Rather than discount or dismiss what participants chose to tell me, I engaged in an ongoing process of organising data in to that which lay within and beyond the scope of the project. Treating data this way allowed for careful evaluation of all information while retaining a focus on the task and avoiding being overwhelmed by the inevitable “mountains of words” which are the stuff of ethnography (Johnson *et al* 2010).

Analysing sound

Taking sound as a system of signification provided a starting point (Chion 2010). This interpretation of the soundscape differed from approaches resting on an idea that these sounds reflected a set and universally systemic understanding, as is a starting point for some work grounded in speech sounds (e.g. Hinton *et al* 1994). Rather, this sensory semiology was interpreted within the particular context of HMP Midtown, the social context which lent the soundscape form and meaning (Goddard 2006). Understanding sound in this way underscored the ‘fit’ of aural ethnography as a means of interpreting the soundscape as it unfolded and revealed its meanings to those within it. Lefebvre articulates this method in practice:

Noise. Noises. Murmurs. When lives are lied and hence mixed together, they distinguish themselves badly from one another. Noise, chaotic, has no rhythm. However, the attentive ear begins to separate out, to distinguish the sources, to

bring them back together by perceiving interactions... A certain exteriority enables the analytic intellect to function. However, to grasp a rhythm it is necessary to let oneself go, give oneself over, abandon oneself to its duration. Like in music... (Lefebvre 2004: 27)

Lefebvre here employs a rather particular notion of “noise”. In the particular context of method, if not more generally, this is useful for discerning the analytical process. Understanding the meaning of these separate strands of the symphony of prison life required the development of an intimate familiarity with “*the everyday tune that’s normal for*” HMP Midtown (Derek, prison officer). Listening for notable points in the soundscape formed reference points for discussion and interview. Listening for prolonged periods led to the formulation of informal matrices of typologies relating to sources of sound and their context as I became attuned to the “listening culture” of the community (Andrisani 2012). The meanings ascribed to these sounds, from fieldnotes, conversation and interview, were then interpreted in this context. Fieldnotes and interviews were cross-referenced in ongoing dialogue as the soundscape unfolded and themes emerged. My understanding derived initially from persistent inquiry amongst the staff and men. Where sounds intruded upon interview they provide additional impetus for investigation and reflection.

Ethnography allowed for the development of thick description and extended sufficient latitude to shift the conventional foci of rules and rituals of everyday life in order to privilege sound (Geertz 1973; Lave 2001). Thick description of the soundscape then combined with interview to allow for an exploration of the significance of particular elements of the soundscape as their meanings became clearer (Lefebvre 2004).

In to practice

Incorporating sound clips and passages of descriptive writing reflect the need for innovative approaches as a means of counteracting the cultural neglect of sound (Elliott and Culhane 2017). Presenting findings in this way also echoed a coherence in methodology and the promise of sound to evoke the auditory imagination of the reader in an effort to more closely depict the rhythms and routines of daily life in HMP Midtown. Using sound in these ways held the promise of more faithfully depicting the field of research, and the experiences detailed within the project as well as offering the potential of prompting consideration of why these matter as well as to whom, when and why. How this design was put in to practice in the field, as well as the challenges raised by using

aural aspects of experience as an analytical framework are the subject of the following chapter.

4. Method in practice

Little prepares for the disparity between the rigorously designed research method on paper, and its relation to the messiness of social life found in fieldwork. How fieldwork differed from the design, as well as how relationships between people and place required careful navigation. Charting the approach to the experience of implementing a novel research design in praxis provides a roadmap of practice.

The ways in which field experience both echoed and altered the research design are central to a full account of how consideration of sound alters ways of knowing and as well as shifting what we can know. The following chapter includes excerpts from interviews and fieldnotes which resonate with the collaborative nature of knowledge production allowed for by the inclusion of sound in the research design.

4.1 In the field

Getting in and getting orientated

Undergoing security and key training previously at other establishments eased the path in to the prison and decreased my obtrusiveness for those otherwise charged with its organisation. Excited to receive approval from NOMS I wanted to get started as soon as possible but illness and loss of voice prompted more careful reflection on how to orientate myself around the prison. I wanted to feel braced for fielding endless questions and curiosity as well as the bristling inquiry an outside invader, trespassing on private living and working space, ought to expect. This also encouraged a more tentative, thoughtful approach to the prison soundscape. I did not initially go on the wing, when I did, my first two visits took place while the men were locked away. I felt like an intruder, illicitly lurking in others' personal space. But this was invaluable. I entered prison spaces by degree (see p14), initially spending time on the periphery and listening to the wing from the outside. I sat in the entrance to the offices, by the staircase and listened to people coming and going. I could hear but could not see and reflected on how quickly I was able to identify the role of people by the sound of their gait. Office workers, officers, members of the IMB. Those coming for meetings or returning with a cup of tea. Lack of enthusiasm for their purpose indicated by a weary reluctance in their gait. All offices were divided by painted, plywood partitions which stopped short of floor and ceiling offering no privacy. Personal phone calls, complaints about fellow colleagues, music on a radio,

coughing and sneezing. I began acquainting myself with the rhythms of daily life on the periphery of the prison and in this way began learning about the prison itself.

Position

A number of personal characteristics undoubtedly influenced my perspective on prison life, including my ethnicity, age and London accent. Sex and gender provide a relatively straightforward means of interrogating the way my identity affected interactions with people and the environment as well as the relationships I forged with people during fieldwork. Laura Mulvey (1975) uses psychoanalysis to explore the ways in which patriarchal mores shape cultural artefacts; film is shaped by the ‘male gaze’. Lack of colour and comfort in the prison environment emphasise the “nakedness of men’s lives”, enhancing the starkness of the soundscape as well as my jarring presence within it (Atwood 1985:82). In this context every decision about what to wear, from clothes to cosmetics required scrutiny; perfume became political. Female visitors are frequently advised on conservative dress in prison, while uniformed staff often refrain from make up or wearing their hair down, whether because of institutional culture or discomfort at potential scrutiny about whether “*this might look provocative*” (No. 1). My appearance was subject to comment on a daily basis. This often felt intrusive and personal, but frequently denoted curiosity and growing familiarity, presenting a rare opportunity to forge heterosocial relationships (Sykes 1958). Men frequently skirted around inappropriate invitations for a cheeky Nandos ‘on road’ or queries about my marital status to test my limits. Like most exchanges, particularly within the prison environment where all is subject to scrutiny (Laws and Crewe 2016) this formed but one element of complex, layered communications.

The weight of this gaze deflected from the profound vulnerability which my female gender and outsider status also afforded exposure to. It was not unusual for men to respond to my concerned queries about whether they had anyone to speak with following personal disclosure, to tell me they only chose to speak to me or female staff (e.g. Robert). Issues relating to security take dominance over all others in a prison, perhaps unsurprisingly (“*My job is to keep people in*” – Paul, officer). I was frequently called upon to point out the limits of my role and training while urging prisoners to seek support from more appropriate quarters.

Prolonged exchanges with the men also drew considerable scrutiny from prison staff. Many conversations were prolonged, my presence representing an opportunity for the

men to lose some time in a place where disposing of it is the primary preoccupation. But this cast suspicion on my motives with one prison officer remarking that I was only there to “*perv on men*” (Ben, Officer). Carter’s characterisation of the cultural representation of women resonates with that of the prison:

The hole is open, an inert space, like a mouth waiting to be filled. From this elementary iconography may be derived the whole metaphysic of sexual differences – man aspires; woman has no other function but to exist, waiting. The male is positive, an exclamation mark. Woman is negative. Between her legs lies nothing but zero, the sign for nothing, that only becomes something when the male principle fills it with meaning (Carter 1974: 4).

My gender rendered my body risky, subject to the security conscious scrutiny of the staff watching out for signs I had fulfilled my biological destiny. Navigating these gazes was tricky. Social relations are remade in prison spaces and nowhere is this more starkly the case than in matters of sex, as the No.1 gov noted:

Males, full of testosterone, will always see a female as an object of desire, I think staff, male staff see females as objects of desire. And that’s probably reflected in society so there’s probably nothing different. The staff obviously have the opportunity to enact their bits and pieces outside. If you’re a prisoner stuck in here for five years, well, that’s actually the only sexual release is to look at a female member of staff, and whatever – god, good luck transcribing this! (No.1 Gov).

The lens of security acted as a means of polarising disparities of power in gender relations. Constantly aware of the scrutiny and suspicion to which my femaleness was subject I was forced to police my risky body (Foucault 1977).

There is nothing in prison ethnography literature which details the experience of being a lone female researcher, immersed in the environment in this way. This raises anxiety about how such candour will be received by wider academe in which patriarchal assessments of appropriate engagements still dominate. In prison spaces the male gaze is tri-focal, a delicate balancing act requiring social contortions. When on one occasion an unknown prisoner announced his intention to “*cum on*” my face I was thrown in to panic. Not because I felt any immediate threat from this. I did not. But because of the ways in which I feared it jeopardised my access. My solution was to repeat this exchange to a

number of staff as well as chastising a number of prisoners, explaining why this isolated example of sexual aggression and disrespect was unacceptable. Following this and a similar incident directed at a female officer we referred to one another as cum face and spunk face respectively (when out of others' earshot).

“Always watching”

While researchers of different gender identifications may well have enjoyed various displays of hospitality and commonality, some displays of care were undoubtedly influenced by my femaleness. On one occasion a gentleman from London had 'landed'. His patterns of speech were markedly different, more rapid, staccato. His manner forthright and persistent though he sounded like home to me. A Midtown local I frequently spoke to – Stevie - interjected to tell this newcomer I was spoken for. I was his woman and therefore unavailable. This did not seem to be said in jest, nor was it a means of spreading rumour, but rather a way of lessening the pressure on me without confronting the other man. On another occasion, during interview, Stretch informed me all women were “safe” in HMP Midtown while he was there. This was part of Stretches' performance of self but said important things about his assumptions about gender and women's place in prison. He recounted an occasion when he'd been observing me from several landings above: “*You checking her out?*” a fellow prisoner had asked him. “*Not at all*” he said, “*have a look at who's around her*”. He told me he was “*always watching*”. Most of the “*wrong uns are in the main wing with the rest of us*”, rather than the Veeps¹⁹ he said. This observation emphasised the symbolic complexities of prison hierarchy.

I did not set out to explore gender roles but it would be disingenuous to ignore the issue of gender entirely when I have no doubt that it formed an aspect of my relationships with both the people and the place of HMP Midtown. Considerations of positionality were not limited to the degree to which my femaleness shaped my interactions, but also featured as a methodological tool I used to explore the environment and as a base for questioning. Positionality frequently constitutes a barrier to understanding (e.g. Vanner 2015). Using sound as a focus allowed me to use it as an additional lens of inquiry, challenging my own assumptions by juxtaposing them with those I spoke to. I would ask questions about sounds I considered unusual, or which made me feel uncomfortable, prompting those I

¹⁹ Vulnerable prisoners, as in a number of other prisons, were kept separate. Both the area they lived in and those so classified were colloquially referred to as “Veeps” (amongst other, more pejorative terms)

spoke with to examine their own responses. My gender allowed me greater latitude to ask questions, since it formed the basis – for a number of the men – to seek an ear during a bad time. Using sound as a means of inquiry bypassed many performative elements of more conventional interaction, and may well have reduced the methodological, if not the social, significance of my personal characteristics.

Over time my response to aspects of the soundscape became a marker of my increasing familiarity with members of the community. Unusually, a large bell is used at HMP Midtown to mark various points of the regime. I failed to restrain myself from jumping every time the bell sounded for the entire duration of my fieldwork. Many of the staff took to warning me. When they failed to do so this became a focus of chastisement for the men, offering an opportunity to display hospitality and extend community. They knew I found it uncomfortable which prompted discussion and comparison about respective experiences. I often drew on my own observations of engaged listening as a point of questioning, inviting the men to reflect on their own responses. In this way my positionality provided a way of knowing. Listening was both a solitary and a group activity. *“How does it sound today then?”* became a morning greeting, implying that my interrogator too, was considering the soundscape and reflecting upon it.

Standing still

While the original research design incorporated sound walking, this proved unworkable in practice. Early on in my fieldwork I accompanied the No.1 on his morning rounds of unlock around the main wing. I planned this as an opportunity to reflect on the soundscape – using “sound walking” as method - but this was revealed as completely impractical in a few moments. We could barely walk a step without him being stopped in order for staff and prisoners to discuss some pressing issue, interrupting our conversation and breaking his concentration (which is distracted at the best of times, unless you can lock yourself in a room with him which I did eventually manage). Brief observation of staff alerted me to the necessity of remaining alert and focussed in several directions at once. I had no wish to further drain finite energy and resources so chose to refrain from walking around the landings when the men were unlocked. The men, of course, were largely prevented from moving much at all, that being a condition of imprisonment. I joined them for exercise on a couple of occasions but was then chastised by security via officer earpiece which discouraged further attempts.

I took up a usual position (*“we know where to find you: under the stairs”* (Mooch)), which was near the door, clearly visible but offering me some protection from unidentified projectiles appearing from the landings above, or fluids – a particular hazard on gravy days. This became a useful means of social breaching, extending me a vantage point from which I could better understand the rhythms of the day with my modest obstruction (Garfinkel 1967). Being stationary also allowed me to create an oasis of calm where the men could take some respite (*“We like hanging around you, you’re always calm”* (Elvis)), but also increased the ease with which people could avoid me if they so wished. The extent of my adoption of ethnomethodology was rather limited by necessity. Not only were there strict limits to the amount of social breaching which would have been tolerated in the prison environment, or ethical to undergo, but I would never pass for an ordinary member of this community. While acquainting myself with the environment I used this on a number of occasions to better understand the rhythms of everyday life around me. One example being my habit of sitting on a wall inside the prison and listening to the men by their windows when they were locked away. This provoked comment from most who passed by, offering me a means of engaging and introducing myself. As time went on I received less questioning about what I was doing, or why I was sitting there and received more greetings. In this way my presence represented a more stubborn and persistent breaching experiment being an outsider with an ill-defined purpose asking strange questions; the ‘sound lady’ under the stairs (Simmel 1908).

4.2 Learning the environment

Learning to listen

Over time my response to aspects of the soundscape became a marker of my increasing familiarity with members of the community. I failed to restrain myself from jumping every time the bell sounded for the entire duration of my fieldwork. Many of the staff took to warning me. When they failed to do so this became a focus of chastisement for the men, offering an opportunity to display hospitality and extend community. They knew I found it uncomfortable which prompted discussion and comparison about respective experiences. I often drew on my own observations of engaged listening as a point of questioning, inviting the men to reflect on their own responses. In this way my

positionality provided a way of knowing. Listening was both a solitary and a group activity.

Altering the environment – loaded listening?

I had assumed that once the novelty had worn off and people no longer mistook me for a member of the resettlement team/CRC/drugs worker/education, I would pass unnoticed. At this point, I thought, observation and listening would begin in earnest. Most people exchanged a minimum of a few words with me whenever we passed one another, or within the wing more likely when they passed me. Others took any opportunity to talk to me for as long as possible, whether to catch me up on their news, share some gossip or a joke, or pass a boring day. Some spoke to me when they were low, others preferred to talk to me only when in good humour. I grew familiar with many members of the community, to such an extent that when I told one prisoner I was nearing the end of my stay he suggested the prison “*get a life size cardboard cut-out of you and put it in your spot, so we can talk to it when we need and won’t miss you*” (Jason). The endless chats, sharing of news, laughter, speculation not only shaped the course of my research but clearly impacted on the sound environment. Men would attempt to exchange greetings by shouting over the landings. I did my best not to shout back though it is difficult to conduct a conversation over this distance without doing so. Laughter is common in prison, smiling not so much. I smiled at everyone, all the time. This altered the tone of communications between me and those who passed, as well as inviting frequent comment. One man refused to look at me, and would rarely talk to me, only doing so when no one was within earshot. He explained he did not want to look at me because he did not want to smile.

Prison is a place in which movement and its regulation are constant. My standing still not only breached expectations, but also created a pool of stillness. Men would linger, avoiding whatever they were supposed to be doing, staff would join in during rare lulls in activity. These behaviours altered the soundscape by changing the sounds and rhythms of movement as well as the tone of speech. It was not uncommon for men to “make” sounds for me, particularly early on. Stevie took to banging on various surfaces, rattling gates, or offering bursts of tropical birdsong. Lugs would sing my name repeatedly and hide. Lugs used a rather complex system of echo location to conduct his business around

the prison landings so calling to me or making strange noises was but an additional layer of communication which nevertheless profoundly altered the soundscape.

Despite going to considerable lengths to provide anonymous means of contact as well as using signage and staff communications to introduce the project – and invite all to interview – conversation and verbal introduction remained my primary means of recruiting participants. My hope to use the complaints system to ensure people were able to contact me anonymously, fell rather flat. My posters curled over time and provided roach material for smoking (though they started at the edges and left my text until the end – I choose to interpret this as a sign of respect). And all but an initial handful of staff volunteers offered me their time in person.

Trust

While sharing a pint, the No.1 asked at what point I knew I had the trust of the men. I had to think about this quite carefully. I wasn't sure I did. I wasn't sure it was either singular in nature or sufficiently solid to warrant confidence it had been resolutely earned. I discussed trust with the prisoners quite frequently when asking about their relationships with staff. When they said they didn't like any, I would often counter with the observation that prisoners frequently picked out members of staff they did like, or trust, and these were often different individuals. Trust is a particularly potent, complex and risky business in prison (Liebling *et al* 2015). In this community it seemed, trust was not unconnected to being liked, to what was at stake, or to who else you appeared to get on with. A prisoner, having recounted a history of severe child abuse was disgusted to hear of my intention to spend time down with the Veeps and told me so. I responded to this by reiterating my position of non-judgement and pointing out that if I was faithful to that it extended to everyone. I was often tested with, presumably, disposable pieces of information which were sufficiently vague to avoid incrimination but might result in some consequence.

Trust was complex, on a fluid, changeable continuum I attempted to navigate by being honest, consistent and respectful. Always reminding people where discretion met ethical duty. It was also the case that trust seemed in some ways far easier to establish amongst prisoners than staff. Accustomed to making rapid assessments of authenticity and threat, I was frequently vouched for by prisoners "*she's alright*", "*she's sound*" etc. This did not preclude speculation about my "real" purpose. One prisoner returning on an additional conviction expressed having felt concern when he got to his new prison that I

was “Pamorana”. I thought he was calling me a piranha and making some comment about the parasitic nature of the research process until I realised he too had begun to worry about my purpose. That prisoners and staff alike expressed concern in case I was reporting on them with reference to a recent feature on prisons in which a reporter went undercover (*Panorama* 2017), said something pertinent about the prison. Authenticity was central to trust. There seemed to be a degree of collective trust and validation amongst the men. Staff were only ever won over by tentative increment, and on a strictly individual basis.

While staff proved somewhat wary and distrustful – one member of staff immediately assigning me the name “Panorama” - they did become more relaxed in my presence and some offered more personal disclosure over time. There was a degree of trust or at least acceptance in increasing willingness to show me the nasty of the job. The bits, it transpired from interview, that staff were least likely to discuss with outsiders who “*do not understand*” (No.1). When, during my night stay, a prisoner self-harmed so extremely it was feared he might bleed to death, one officer told me to come with him – “*if you’re here to learn, you might as well see it all*”. At the time I interpreted this as his desire to rub my face in his dirty work. To demonstrate his power over me, however fleetingly. In retrospect I am inclined to interpret it more generously. Perhaps I was a proxy for an imagined, indifferent public?

Within the strictly stratified constraints of prison society, everyone has a role and a place. “*Who are you?*” demanded a series of enquiring men, frequently asking day after day whether because they were too addled to remember, wanted a more satisfactory response or were testing to see if repetition revealed telling inconsistency. Rapid turnover (in HMP Midtown the average stay is a mere forty-six days), meant a constant supply of new faces struggling to orientate themselves. It did not help that my chosen spot “under the stairs” was directly next to the resettlement office. Resettlement workers were vital in ensuring the men had somewhere to return to upon completion of their sentence, and helpful in ascertaining they were allowed to do so. There was always a healthy queue exhibiting a mixture of anxiety and resignation outside the office. Their hours remained mysterious to me, and seemingly the entire community of HMP Midtown for the duration of my stay. Those clearly advertised on the door bore little resemblance to their actual availability but this did nothing to ease the flow of anxious questioning about whether, at a push, I might be able to help. Eventually I broadly assumed the role of “the sound lady”. New

people would still ask, but I would often have my answers helpfully, if somewhat creatively, delivered by an assortment of men who happened to be passing. Trust is a slippery, multi-faceted and fluid concept. Acceptance less so. If only through the length of my visit and habit of remaining for long days – a subject of speculation and bemusement by many who would repeatedly ask “*aren’t you bored yet?*” – my presence became less of an issue.

Narrative and parable

Narrative function in conversations and interviews was the focus of additional ethical concern. Participants, particularly prisoners, made sensitive disclosures quite regularly. There were occasions when these disclosures intersected with the narratives and life events of other prisoners. These prisoners, while often talking to me themselves had no control over how others made use of these stories which frequently differed in detail from one to another. Despite being the protagonist in these accounts they had passed in to public ownership, harnessed for a multitude of social purposes beyond the reach of individual agency. I omitted reference to specifics where prisoners had elected not to tell me themselves but this raised questions about the function of intersecting narratives, particularly for the prisoners. Stevie was a local and known well to many of the men from either the prison community or the wider, local one with which relationships converged. Two older men, well known and established Midtown figures, told me they had known him “*since he was ickle*” taking care of him as a baby. Stevie was used as a benchmark against which others juxtaposed their own narratives of prison and life experience. He himself spoke fleetingly and fondly of his childhood (to me) preferring to reflect on more recent episodes of his life, his children, the loss of his best friend and numerous romantic relationships. Other prisoners told a markedly different story of tragedy and loss, which contributed, so the various narratives went, to his becoming a “*lost cause*”. He would “*always be inside*”, unlike many but “*just like me*” in the case of Stretch who characterised his childhood in similar ways.

Ethically the only thing to do seemed to be to omit details of Stevie’s biography. But I could not unhear what I had heard, and these narratives lent context to his behaviour. He was constantly touching at the hair or faces of women as a playful means of asking for attention and boundary-setting. Nor could I change the way in which these intersecting narratives altered the way I interpreted relationships within the prison community,

between its members and the prison. These narratives operated more as instructive parables – “*I will not be like this*”, “*I will not come back*”, or “*don’t be like me*” - echoing Sandberg’s assessment of narrative value as lying in their function rather than any particular conception of objective ‘truth’ (Sandberg 2010).

4.3 “Being human”

Breaking silence

When applying for clearance to conduct research in prison it is necessary to demonstrate an intention to observe prison rules. These extend to limiting confidence to matters which do not infringe on said rules. My consent forms and posters reiterated the limits of any undertaking to keep information to myself: “Intention to break the prison rules, to hurt yourself or other people will be reported”. Reminding some of the men not to put me in an awkward position was a frequent activity.

I was told about plans to hurt an officer and felt bound by my agreement with the prison to pass this on immediately to security. A couple of days later this officer was the subject of a potting²⁰. A few weeks after that he was assaulted. I felt deeply troubled by breaking a confidence but reassured by the way unfolding events had demonstrated my decision was correct. To feel some sense of relief that a fellow human being had been covered in urine and faeces was a curious position to find myself in.

Taking it, and giving it back

A prison runs on order and control. It is therefore unsurprising to be subject to occasional censure. Knowing how to respond presented its own sets of social and ethical challenges. One morning, I arrived on the wing in the midst of the second of two incidents that morning. The governor greeted me by saying “*now’s not a good time, go away and try again later*”. I saluted and turned tail, gingerly trying my luck two hours later (quite keen to sense the aftermath of a disrupted day). As the heat took hold I ventured out on to the exercise yard with the men. On the first occasion I walked around in the customary anti-clockwise fashion for the hour of exercise. On the second I spoke to a female officer on duty out there. On the third, there was an atmosphere outside. Five minutes in an officer approached me and indicated security had informed him I had to leave via his earpiece. I

²⁰ Otherwise referred to as “shitting up”, the unfortunate recipient has a mixture of collected urine and faeces deposited over their person (or squirted from a suitable receptacle – such as a plastic bottle).

sheepishly scurried inside. When the men returned and asked where I had gone I informed them I'd been told off. Several responded by saying "*it happens to us all, it was bound to happen to you eventually, your turn*". Answering that I was unsure when asked what I had done seemed to validate perceptions of power as arbitrary, opaque and inconsistent. That I was subject to it too seemed to cement my position amongst the prison community though following orders also seemed to earn me some latitude from staff.

There were other occasions when I felt it necessary to be a little less contrite. On one occasion a prisoner became verbally abusive and threatening following a case of mistaken identity. I automatically challenged him, angered by his display of brutish disrespect. I was embarrassed by my inappropriate response, but a member of staff immediately remarked: "*your London came out then*" while laughing. Standing ground in this instance earned me a little respect. The man later approached me and apologised before shaking my hand. He shook my hand every time he passed from that point on.

A Kettle, a penguin and a 'word arrow'

What you are allowed in your possession, in what quantity and in what circumstances are all a matter of rigorous regulation in prison. Such heavy emphasis on material items of any description loads them with symbolic value and meaning. In addition, *things* are subject to intense scrutiny and subscription, representing possible security breaches on a number of fronts – whether indicating the recipient is successfully being "groomed" or carrying items in and out. These considerations ensure that navigation around discussion, possession and transactions of *things* becomes an ethically laden process. One interviewee spent our entire exchange in a heightened emotional state. He had never been to prison before and engaged in an extensive cataloguing of the indignities he had experienced since being incarcerated. Chief amongst these hardships was the broken kettle in his cell which prevented him from making his older pad mate a cup of tea. Despite asking staff repeatedly his kettle situation remained unresolved. He had lost his social standing alongside his freedom. He was unable to practice his faith as he wished, his vegetarianism frequently left him existing on a diet of potatoes, bread and margarine and he expressed recurring terror at the prospect of coming out of his cell. But not being able to have a cup of tea was the final straw, it appeared. In conversation with another prisoner I referred to the kettle affair, thinking this gentleman would be able to point me in the direction of a functioning one. "*Tell me who it is miss, I have a spare, I'll go give*

him one” was his response. When I next saw Urfan he was wearing a beautiful expression. It was the first time I’d seen him smile. I interfered in daily life, in a way which in many senses constitutes an ethical breach (Desmond 2016).

Gifts represented another tricky area. Nothing should be brought in and out if possible. I spoke often with a lifer who worked in the kitchen. He had a medical issue which had necessitated a trip to the hospital. Seeing the outside, however briefly had made him think about life passing him and we shared a particularly sombre reflection. Shortly afterwards he presented me with a Penguin biscuit. I was mortified and declined immediately but politely. He then gestured across the way to the kitchen where the supervisor stood, visibly nodding. Dwane had gone to some lengths to get this gift sanctioned. In an environment where people frequently receive beatings for failing to repay their tobacco debts, this Penguin represented a bit of dignity. I thanked him profusely and confessed I hadn’t eaten all day. I proceeded to make a scene when exiting the gatehouse, by brandishing it at every bemused member of staff I encountered. I had permission, I assured them. It was sealed, I demonstrated.

One day, I found myself cornered in the library by a rather animated gentleman who was enraged about his incarceration for threatening his neighbour with an axe (so he told me). We covered a lot of ground, including a variety of health concerns and his dissatisfaction with his probation officer as I anxiously entreated him to bear in mind we were in the library. This greatly amused everyone present who seemed to enjoy my painful education (I subsequently approached the library with caution and attempted to position myself where I could make a swift exit but it wasn’t the last time I was cornered by someone who wanted to talk about all the things, very loudly). Following this, Robert invited me to join him and the librarian doing a word arrow. It was a welcome relief. Despite my rather childish competitiveness in completing the word puzzle with someone who was working on their literacy skills, we had a very calming time with occasional contributions from the odd passer by. Library close was approaching so we were forced to abandon our activities. Shortly afterwards Robert approached me. The librarians sometimes gave the prisoners photocopied word arrows to do in their cells over the lunch lock up and he wished to gift me a spare to do over my own lunch, which he’d fetched from his cell. I realised immediately that taking a piece of paper from a prisoner could easily be misconstrued (the offer of phone numbers and attempts to borrow my fieldnotes book to write them in or give me pieces of paper were not uncommon). Nevertheless, the gift of

this word arrow was significant and thoughtful. I wanted to honour the spirit it was given in so went about demonstrating there was nothing on the back etc to the somewhat irritated officer in charge.

In many ways these instances were not significant, but of course in prison terms they are for a number of reasons. Detailing them illustrates the difficulty behaving ethically and honourably on all fronts can represent. In hindsight somewhat trivial, I agonised over each at the time, both worried about offending anyone and being viewed as a security risk.

4.4 Ethnography

Immersion?

The prison environment represents particular challenges to the ethnographer. Freedom of access is heavily constrained for the visitor, and the project of ethnography riven with political concerns about the battles between disruption and documentation both inside and out (Wacquant 2002; Bhandyopadhyay 2015). Having keys and being unhindered in movement I worked out my own limits with tentative care. I was offered a desk in the staff office space. I expressed gratitude but instinctively declined. At the time more out of politeness than any commitment to experience the prison space with less respite, as those who live and work within it do. Only later did I realise the significance of that and despite aching feet and a permanent headache my research was richer for it. I was not specifically told I was not to enter or visit any area of the prison. I imposed my own restrictions out of a desire to be as unobtrusive and as undemanding as possible on finite staff resources. Unless I had a specific reason to do so and had informed every member of staff I encountered I refrained from walking the landings while the men were out. The men repeatedly expressed frustration at my failure to visit their cells. This was not always because of refusals of offers to have a “*lie down*”, but because of the opportunity to display hospitality this afforded. A precious cup of coffee and a chat, invitation in to someone’s personal space and a chance to display pride in cleanliness or innovative approaches to furnishings (rug collections, book shelves fashioned out of cardboard). Expressions of pride and civility in a place which does not offer many.

I neglected to keep record of the number of hours spent at HMP Midtown. A regrettable oversight but reflective of my failure to appreciate the significance of how much time I was able to spend in the prison or how great my relative freedom and immersion in the environment was becoming. An estimate is the best I can offer. There from February to August, twenty four hours per week per month, calculated at 4.5 weeks a piece gives me over 700 hours of fieldwork. I cannot be accurate. There were weeks I was there every day, though I noticed this left me mentally exhausted. I made the occasional weekend visit for prearranged interviews, stayed on in to the evening on a number of occasions and for a full night shift. Most of this time was spent on the main wing, not only “*where the action is*” (or the cacophony) but where I felt most at home (McDermott and King 1988). This was in contrast to some past accounts of prison ethnography (e.g. Bosworth 1999; Crewe 2009). Perhaps education provided some institutional familiarity in an overwhelming environment. Initially I intended to spend equal parts in different prison spaces as a way of listening to sound and exploring the emotional geography of prison spaces. I always gravitated to the wing where I found the learning curve most stimulating and challenging, and the craic most lively.

I caused disruption at meal times, but it was such a valuable time to be there I was reluctant to withdraw. Towards the end, having been told off, I made a more conscious effort to leave as meal times approached. Meal times offered a rare opportunity to observe the entire prison community going about its routine business. Morning association and assorted business allowed for this to a far lesser degree since people were sleepy and busy. In contrast, meal times showed the whole prison on the move. Staff working in concert as landings were unlocked and on movement in relay.

I slowly edged around the limits of accommodation as I nudged up against unspoken rules. The expectation was that I should be gone before the lights went down unless there by arrangement – I found this out by staying to listen to the men, listening to a local football match. The staff area was locked down from ten by duty staff making it necessary to remove possessions before then in order to avoid presenting inconvenience. Not having established any time limits I only realised this required special arrangement as I went. When I explained the reasons for my later presence the staff, many of whom were local and interested in the match were accommodating and friendly. My interest in the unusual soundscape created by the enthusiasm for the match offered a means of illustrating the reason for my general presence.

I am unaware of any researcher staying overnight in a prison in England and Wales. Similarly, while others have been in cells, using the cell as a site in which to interview the No.1 offered precious insight. My unease shifted the relationship between me and the interviewee. At the end, I realised we were reliant on those outside to come to our aid and let us out. We had been locked in and the observation hatch closed in order to ensure privacy for our conversation. But this meant we had no immediate means of alerting staff that we had finished. The governor groped around the walls for a minute trying to find the cell bell. Inwardly I was amused as my fieldnotes reflect on how frequently these go unanswered. I felt an immense gratitude to the No.1 for his presence in the cell, keenly aware of my vulnerability. The unprecedented accommodation of me and my research project undoubtedly contributed enormously to my understanding of the HMP Midtown community. This was very much necessitated by my subject matter; exploring the soundscape required a familiarity with it. I needed to become conversant with the environment in order to orientate myself to the everyday rhythms of the place.

It took time to orientate myself within the project. Only once I had gained some familiarity with the soundscape did the central significance of this process become clear. Derek, the senior officer with whom I shared the very first interview had provided a thoughtful demonstration of why this was the case. Shamefully, it took some time for me to hear it:

“They’ll know. But if you try to explain it to ‘em they’ll be like you whacky... what you talking about, tunes ‘n noises. What you talking about? But people won’t understand, but that’s how it is. That’s how we react. Yeah, tuning stuff with your eyes and you hear things. That’s what it is. So when you go to a particular department... seg, or the first night centre, or education or one of the workshops, or the gym... you’d know that tune. And if something’s out of sync you’ll know. Speak to the PI²¹s, if you spoke to the PI’s and asked them what do you listen out for here when you know something’s wrong? If someone, what’s the difference between someone dropping a weight, and someone throwing a weight down. They’ll know the difference but they won’t know they know. They’ll subconsciously know it. That’s why I say it’s kind of like a Derren Brown thing...”

²¹ PI = physical instructors. Always found in short shorts regardless of the weather

Reflexivity

The oft-quoted assertion that reflexivity is like a hall of mirrors – best passed through quickly (Lynch 2000) - is an eloquent account of the perils of lapsing in to self-indulgence. It is worth reflecting though, on how feelings can affect the way the field is interpreted. The emotional climate of prison often feels as if it is cranked up to eleven (Crewe et al 2014). Lack of privacy, the presence of 250 men locked up in a confined space with limited natural daylight and fresh air, coupled with a complex array of mental health issues - estimated to affect the majority of the prison population (PRT 2017) - is a heady mix. Spending days in the midst of this emotion soup was demanding but stepping back from that to observe how these intense displays of emotion and accompanying soundscape were navigated was instructive. There are fewer resources from which to draw on for support and succour, just as there are fewer material resources to make life comfortable. It was inevitable then, that I would often end up doing what I referred to as “making like an HMP toothbrush”. A prisoner explained to me one day, that prison-issue toothbrushes were frustratingly inferior. Made of cheap plastic with an unyielding, modest clutch of bristles. No one would use these for their teeth if they could avoid doing so. They nevertheless provided for a range of alternative purposes; particularly good for cleaning shoes. Prisoners were similarly resourceful when putting me to use. ‘Listening’ has a particular potency in prison, as does being heard, and I was frequently used as a sounding board, hearer of complaints, injustices or emotional distress. I was also called upon for advice, to help fill in forms, to watch over equipment, to offer additional opinion about a perceived injustice or to bear witness if I had the misfortune of being around when a nicking had been meted out for some infraction of the rules (or not, as the case may have been). Some purposes seemed innocuous, others less so and navigating them could be a precarious business.

Self-harm was something I found traumatic and upsetting, not least because of the necessity of restraining my impulse to tend and fix. Watching a man I had come to know well bleeding unattended was uncomfortable. I would busy myself chastising them for putting their grubby fingers/random objects in their wounds and hope someone would come along with gloves. This would require the presence of trained and equipped members of health care; those rules again. It was difficult to restrain my impulse to judge the lack of attendance to these men as careless. On one occasion, after I had been talking to a prisoner as he reopened wounds I sought out a member of staff to mention that he

seemed particularly distressed today, to fail to do so seemed unethical in the extreme. His response, that this individual was a “*waste of oxygen*” was hard to hear. Had I not resisted the impulse to dismiss this as callous I might have missed this same officer, taking this prisoner to one side and disrupting lock up to do so. Sitting down on the step with him, he spent a considerable amount of time talking with him. Imperfect as this was, it took time, energy and effort. The disjunct between the representation of his feelings and his action revealed itself in the space carved out by suspended judgement. Categorising the prisoner in this way, while hard to hear, was a means of ensuring detachment. A brutal coping mechanism perhaps, but a coping mechanism all the same. The man would visit the prison most days when not in custody and was frequently attended to by staff on the street when suffering the effects of drug consumption. He had nearly died on a number of occasions, having self-harmed to the point of dangerous levels of blood loss and the expectation was that sooner or later, his luck would run out. My own emotions threatened, in other words, to cloud my judgement and hamper my understanding. This episode also illustrated the instructive potential of ethnography in providing space to chart the gap between the way people may explain their standpoint and how that relates to what they do.

There were several occasions when men I had come to know quite well were in states of distress and self-harming. My immediate response was to try to find a way to sit with them through the night. I recognised how inappropriate this would be. Seeing beyond my own discomfort allowed me to refocus on what I was there to do. My initial response led me in to conflict with the operations of the prison as well as being ethically problematic. There is a chasm between ethics in principle and what constitutes ethical behaviour within a community which operates with different rules and priorities to those the researcher may enter the field with (Montgomery 2001). Nowhere in the textbooks does it adequately prepare the novice researcher for navigating these murky, problematic and disorientating waters. Arguably the process of obtaining ethical clearance militates against it.

Sound elicitation and the limits of interview

Without a clear purpose the prospect of hanging around has been reported as awkward and uncomfortable by some prison ethnographers (Bosworth 1999; Crewe 2009). In contrast I found the ability to reflect spontaneously on how sound was being experienced as it occurred in the environment frequently proved more pertinent to my research

questions. Observing in smaller areas of the prison was less comfortable and I felt particularly unwelcome in the education department – perhaps because the only things to listen to represented direct eavesdropping on classes. Increasingly I grew frustrated with the format of interview for the research project. This was despite relishing the opportunity to have a sit-down chat with people I had come to know very well, as much for the lack of predictability about the course the conversation would take. I established quite early on that interview was not proving as useful as anticipated. I looked for fault in my interview technique, scrutinising the course of conversation, but it was rather the very quality of sound which was resistant to sustained capture in conversation. It needed to be heard and reflected upon in praxis, underscoring the methodological utility of soundwalking and necessity of ‘tuning’ to the soundscape (Schafer 1994; Cox 2014). Sound demanded presence in the soundscape, echoing Lefebvre’s (2004) emphasis on the importance of being there.

The interviews proved useful in a broader way, offering an opportunity to shore up rapport and explanatory context for individual’s relationship with the sonic environment which provided rich theoretical insight. Time spent in the soundscape was invaluable for developing an understanding of what those who spoke to me were referring to, as well as for developing my own familiarity with the rhythms and routines of the prison.

Getting out

There is a lot of focus on conducting research ethically, of how to approach people and maintain ethical standards throughout the duration of fieldwork, but less on how to exit ethically. I was reluctant to leave having become attached to those in the community and remaining thirsty for more understanding. I could happily have become researcher in residence (as was jokingly suggested on occasion) but recognised I had a wealth of data and was running the risk of outstaying my welcome. I left by degree allowing me to explain and say my farewells. I put up posters which I referred to and read realising that many have an aversion to anything printed. I have been back since on unrelated projects, as a show of appreciation to the prison or as a guest for events and have presented to both the No.1 and on a return visit at an all staff briefing. The No.1 having left, this invitation was not, regrettably, extended to present to prisoners. That some of what I have learned may be of some value to the community who extended such warmth and patience to me offsets some of these concerns. It should perhaps be noted that much of this revolves

around not having yet decisively left. The prison community are part of mine, and, thanks to their ongoing patience and warmth it appears that I am part of theirs.

The governor informed me I had not been subject to a single report. At no time had he been approached by any member of staff with concerns about my presence. I had managed to maintain relationships in a way which would benefit, or at least not adversely affect those who came after me.

While incorporating sound in method raises challenges it offers the possibility of translating ‘more-than-representational’ depictions of social life. Sound more accurately reflects the fluid, shifting ways in which time and space are experienced. Sound allows for a consideration of processes of meaning-making with greater degrees of praxis which more accurately reflect the contingent, fluid nature of social interactions. Harnessing the ‘helpful fuzziness’ of sound reduces the distance between researcher and participants, and researcher and audience, and in so doing lessens the flattening effects of more conventional representations of social life. The chapters which follow depict the ways in which sound renders the rhythms and routines of social life at HMP Midtown audible, and what this means for the way we understand prison life.

5. Power, order, time and space

Wherever noise is granted immunity from human intervention, there will be found the seat of power (Schafer 1994: 76).

Since sound is an intrinsically social phenomenon, and order is a fundamental preoccupation of prison social life, it is therefore unsurprising that order formed the overarching theme of analysis. Sound acted as a conduit and site for articulations as well as contestations of power at HMP Midtown. Order is frequently understood as an articulation of power, a relationship which is mutually dependent and intimately intertwined (e.g. Ikenberry 2014). Conceiving of the relationship between power and order in this straightforward, dichotomous way shapes a particular conception both of what power is and how order operates. Attending to the soundscape more closely disrupts these depictions.

‘Power’ is used in a multitude of ways and ascribed various properties in ways which are not always robustly articulated (Hearn 2012). In the context of prison this obfuscation is further compounded by particularly stark articulations of power, in a social environment in which ‘order’, and its perceived inter-dependent relationship with security, is an overarching concern (King and McDermott 1990) (for an outline of working definitions see chapter 2). Sound lends audibility to incomplete accounts of power, extending understanding of what it consists of beyond definitions limited to the “capacity of some persons to achieve intended and foreseen effects on others” (Wrong 1979:2). In illuminating the limits of agency and consciousness in the exercise of power, sound adds nuance to understandings of how power operates, both between people and between people, place and the broader cultural imagination. Attending to sound reveals the way in which power is enhanced and remade through aural systems of signification (Chion 2010). Power is revealed to operate not only in multi-directional flows between people, through tension-filled, fluid “dialectics” (Crewe 2007), but also by drawing on the cultural imagination and the potent place prison has within it. This both reinforces and adds nuance to conceptions of the particularities of power relations within the prison context, drawing as they do on sounds which are lent particular force and meaning within carceral spaces.

While power is the starting point for the following chapters of analysis, it is the ways in which disentangling enactments of power provided further clarity to the maintenance and navigations of order which form the focus of what follows.

Focusing on sound revealed more of the social life at Midtown in ways which provided for a re-evaluation of the basis for its organisation. Focusing on sound unveiled the texture of social life in the prison by broadening the scope for listening to it. Schafer (1994) underlines the centrality of sound to those social relations in which there is an asymmetry of power (a state which characterises much of prison life). This alerts to the potentialities of listening for illustrating the plurality and fluidity of power relations (Attali 1977; Schafer 1994). Sound offers the potential to disrupt assumptions about the nature of power, and an unbroken association with order which dominate prisons literature. I first turn to how sound adds depth and nuance to this aspect of prison life, and correspondingly to how power and agency are used in the following analysis. I go on to draw sound in to this treatment of order as a means of illustrating how it applies to social life at HMP Midtown.

Sound provides a useful means of echoing the complexity of prison social relations. Ket illustrated the way in which sound was a conduit through which power relations were expressed, reinforced, negotiated and contested. He had a background in social services, drug support work and child protection. Like a number of staff he had spent his entire prison career at HMP Midtown, and was a well-known and well-liked member of the community. His insights on the functions of the prison soundscape echoed his familiarity with the environment

“It’s a bit chaotic, it’s quite in your face. I see sometimes, prisoners and staff being quite, acting like children if they don’t get their own way and they bang their, stamp their feet... and usually the one who shouts louder gets what they want. And sometimes it’s the same with staff you know? Make a lot of noise and you know, usually, sometimes they get what they want...” (Ket, officer).

Sound was a way of affecting influence over other people, whether to express might, impose discomfort or sonically commandeer space by “stamp[ing] feet” and “shout[ing] louder”. In this way sound echoes Hearn’s useful elucidation (see Chapter 2).

Taking forms of sound emerging from interactions between humans and the prison environment in to account, adds complexity to conceptions of order and disruption. Tonk

had served a number of sentences in prison and had not long been recalled for breaching the conditions of his release following completion of an IPP sentence for which he had served eight years. While his sense of injustice was relatively acute, he distinguished between this and his relations with staff. In so doing his accounts of how power was imposed through sound, but order negotiated through routine and mutual desire to maintain mechanical solidarity (Durkheim 1893), deepened understanding. A local, he considered Midtown his home turf and was well acquainted with its rules and rituals. In talking about the sounds those in prison were subject to, he was saying a number of things about how power operated:

“I’ve heard people:”Rrrraaaaarrr, turn that fucking alarm off!”, smashing their pad up and that just cos the alarm’s gone off. If you were out there you’d just press the alarm, take the battery out – fucking thing. But cos you’re in here and it’s the other side of your door and you’re asking the screw to turn it off, and there’s a bit of power there. You can’t do anything about it. You’re restricted” (Tonk, prisoner).

Tonk reinforces a host of contributions to prisons literature in detailing the specificity of power relations in the prison context, where actions are ‘restricted’ (e.g. Liebling and Arnold 2004; Crewe 2009). The range of responses and resistance to expressions of power are constrained by reduced agency, but conditions of the physical environment also amplify those responses (*“if you were out there you’d just...take the battery out”*). Tonk shows how power is contextually specific, both in terms of social relations and environment, but goes on to raise questions about the nature of order. Where did the impetus to go behind the door derive from given the acknowledgement of disparity of power? His account complicates definitions of power by illustrating the ways in which the meaning attached to sonic aspects of the environment are contextually bound. That alarm has an additional potency, reasserting social order by re-defining role and status; prisoner or staff, those who can turn it off, and those who must endure it until it has been.

My analysis focuses on how sound illuminates these aspects of social life at HMP Midtown. Prison has *“...got its own sound, you know? I don’t think you can replicate that anywhere really. Cos obviously doors shutting and keys jangling, you’re not going to get that anywhere else are you?”* (Kathleen, officer). Kathleen had spent twenty-five years in the prison service, her time divided between Midtown and a category ‘A’

prison²². Skilled in her jail craft, her reflection that “*the prison noise, you can just sort of tell what’s going on*” placed sound at the centre of practices of surveillance and security, underpinning order through structural and agentic forms of power. Kathleen’s account echoes the contention that the particular social world of prison, the power relations which shape interactions within it, as well as the power derived from the social meaning of prison resonate in the prison soundscape.

5.1 Themes of analysis

The organising themes used to present the following chapters were identified using thematic analysis as a means of identifying and organising patterns in fieldnote and interview data (Braun and Clarke 2006). Rightly, they criticise the process of identifying ‘emergent’ ideas, as if these spring fully-formed from a neutral process of identification. Rather, groups of ideas were organised through an ongoing process of re-reading fieldnotes, reflecting on interviews and listening to the soundscape with members of the community. This coding process was an iterative one, as interactions with the community and their soundscape developed and the association between particular ideas was strengthened or refuted (Castlebury and Nolen 2018). This coding process developed and solidified as the organisation of ideas developed in dialogue with interpretations of the soundscape. The basic structure of the analysis - split in to three main sections: power and order, order and the regime and order, time and space – have remained unchanged since their identification in the field. The particular forms these have taken and the organisation of concepts has been refined and reordered as the analysis developed. Identifying these themes lent a system of categorisation to the analysis which formed a framework and focus for digging deeper in to the data (Braun and Clarke 2006).

5.2 Themes and chapters

I proceed to explore the ways in which sound intersects with power to inform three main themes which emerged as predominant in accounts of the sound environment amongst the community at HMP Midtown. The three chapters which form the main body of analysis are organised according to these. In *Jingle Jangle* I begin with a focus on how sound is not only a means of exploring power but also a major means of mediating power relations. Sound adds nuance and complexity to understanding the experience of power

²² Category “A” prisons are the highest security prisons

and how sounds interpreted within the context of stark power relations can be shaped by both the potential of power and its exercise. In this way sound extends to the context not only of relationships but the physical environment and cultural significance with which it is imbued. Sound resonates simultaneously with these different dimensions of social experience.

I go on to discuss the implications of unpicking the recurring lack of distinction between power and order in the prison in *The hustle and bustle*. Here I consider how sound can contribute a greater clarity to these concepts. If sound adds clarity to conceptions of power, this clarity extends to depictions of the relationship between power and order which are frequently murky and unclear. Sound operates as a means of demarcating order and allowing for its scrutiny. In so doing a focus on sound enhances understanding of how order is maintained as well as when it is disrupted. While order is sometimes treated as a manifestation of power, listening to the relationship between order and sound illustrates how this is an inadequate and incomplete treatment. Rather than offering a reductive account of how power operates to maintain order, sound allows for a more nuanced account which brings in to question assumptions of an unproblematic, two—way relationship. Listening to the social world of HMP Midtown revealed a more complex motivation at the heart of cooperation and compliance in every day order.

If sound is intimately bound up with processes of power and its contestation, and with order and its maintenance, it follows that sound is also implicated in the processes of parcelling out time and space with which order is concerned. In *Warp and weft* I explore how understandings of the relationship between people, time and space are challenged by considering them through sound. This amplifies the importance of sound for exploring prison life. Sound is the often-missing component in the relationship between people, time and space. Understood as “the temporal sense” (Toop 2010), sound offers a means of deepening understanding of how time is experienced within the confines of prison spaces. Exploring the role of sound in the experience of serving time at HMP Midtown depicts time as multi-modal, complicating depictions of the way time and space were lived through and within by the prison community.

Most of the following is presented in conventional text, but on occasion I have attempted to more clearly annunciate the sound environment by attempting to evoke the auditory imagination. What follows is the result of hundreds of hours spent within HMP Midtown

spaces, collaborating with the prison community to reflect on the soundscape and what it revealed about life within.

6. Jingle Jangle

It is therefore a force acting upon people, for good or ill. At the same time sound never bestows absolute power on anyone, since by its very nature it is hard for sound to be entirely owned or controlled. Its natural tendency is to move freely through the air. And although human ingenuity is such that sound can always be manipulated, sound is also too intangible and slippery a thing to remain in the service of elites without also being available for use in inventive and subversive ways by the dispossessed (Hendy 2016: xiv).

As Richard Wener (2012) notes, much of the potency of sound in correctional environments lies in the inability of those subject to it to control their exposure. Will illustrated this when he said: *“there’s not really anywhere for peace. Dunno, you can’t really get away from noise, really. You just go sleep I think”* (Will). This raises the question of how accounting for sound changes our understanding of how power operates and is experienced within the prison. It is this question with which the following chapter is concerned.

Given their association with loss of freedom, autonomy and security, keys are perhaps the most powerfully evocative symbol of imprisonment. For Midtown prisoners, much of their power rested not in their physical form – keys often cannot be seen at the point of greatest significance; behind the door – but in their sound, their “jingle jangle” (Behan 1954). That *“you can always hear keys, always”* (Marcus) speaks to the important symbolic function of sound in the context of prison (Chion 2010). While the sound of keys is experienced as particularly significant for those locked in, this does not reflect the importance attached to them by staff whose awareness largely extends to a practical consciousness of their operational significance (Giddens 1984). The differing relationships with keys reflect relations between the people and place of prison and in so doing provide instruction on the nature and experience of power. Prisoners report greatest awareness of the keys when new, which indicates a role for sound in reinforcing and remaking particular institutional relations. Aspects of the soundscape derived their potency from the context of prison, as well as the social position of the listener.

“You want to speak to someone new then. I’ve felt it myself. When you hear those keys coming and you’re in a new nick and you don’t know who’s out there... are they coming

for you? What's happening?" (Tommy, prisoner). Tommy was a lifer, caught at Midtown on hold while awaiting an appeal date. He was referring to the particular experience of entering an unfamiliar prison for the first time. For him, keys induced anxiety about exposure to what awaited on the other side of the door, inviting apprehension from a number of sources. Keys enhanced feelings of uncertainty and lack of control by heightening fear about who is *"out there"*, *"what's happening"* and whether *"they"* are *"coming for you"*. He also spoke of his first time inside:

"I remember waking up in the morning and I was in a cell with my cousin Ciaran, and he was like oh, what's it gonna be like? And I was like will you shut your mouth, I dunno, I've never been before! Opened up in the morning and, I think the build up to that door being opened is when you feel really... well you don't know. But when you first come jail you wake up at, you can't even sleep, and then you wake up in the morning, and you can hear, like, dogs, you can hear like dogs patrolling the perimeter and just with that on its own just keeps you on your toes. You're a bit worried. And then, But once you've. Two days of it and it's nothing, it was just, like, but the sounds. It was the dogs barking in the morning that I remember. And then you can hear people shouting". (Tommy).

Tommy's account echoes Ben Crewe *et al's* description of the effect of living with the potential for violence as affecting a state of Hobbesian diffidence, or *"consumptive wariness"* (Crewe et al 2014). Their work powerfully characterises the (variable) emotional geography of prison life but is less able to explain *how* such a feeling of preparedness for threat is perpetuated. Jack attested to this sense of apprehension: *"This environment can be very, very, it can be very scary, it can be very intimidating. It can be very push-comes-to-shove if you know what I mean? Like they say there's three ways, what is it? Run stand or flight?"*. Sound extends the analysis of Crewe *et al.* by offering an explanation for how apprehension is maintained with such consistency. Feelings of discomfort have the potential to endure regardless of proximity of others (if in single cell occupancy) or how limited is the line of sight, because the institutional soundscape is not subject to such restrictions – *"those keys, can't forget where you are"* (prisoner, fieldnotes). The sound of keys reinforced these men's sense of their precarious position by reminding them of their vulnerability to the caprice of the keyholder. Hearing that jangle alerted them to their position, not only powerless to control their movement beyond the cell, but in terms of exposure to what lay beyond.

Sound is a particularly potent means of permeating and reducing a sense of autonomy since it traverses boundaries of place and person. In these ways sound is part of the process of mortifying the self; institutional practices of acculturating the individual by attenuating links with former identity. Erving Goffman details the mortifications process, which consist of a series of systematic humiliations which erode the sense of identity (Goffman 1961: 24). The sound of keys outside the door could have profound effects upon the person on the other side, reinforcing awareness of disparity of power as well as prisoner status: *"They think cos they got a key to your door they're god"* (Robert). Mooch echoes this assessment of the symbolic power of keys which reverberates with the power of their sound: *"Just cos I'm locked up and he's got the key, he thinks he owns me"*. The jangle of keys evoked the auditory imagination, extending the potency of prison to sound, which reinforced the impact on the self because of its transcendental qualities (Elliot 1933; Ihde 2007). As well as being the source of resentment, an aural reminder of relative powerlessness, the sound of keys had the potential to induce anxiety: *"It makes you hyper vigilant innit, and when the lights start going out and the keys start going round I get really anxious. I have ptsd you see, so it affects me mentally"* (Kenny). Keys then, heightened awareness of prisoners' precarious position within the prison and attendant ontological insecurity (Giddens 1991). In reminding those behind the door of their lack of control over movement, the sound of keys also had the capacity to induce anxiety.

Staff differed in the way they engaged with the sound environment; keys more usually represented an operational aspect of their work. Tone, an officer, illustrated the way staff tended to consider the sound environment from behind the door: *"the sound of us, which ironically annoys them. I think it's volume. I've heard people shout out the door and tell us to be quiet, so I find that quite ironic. I haven't thought any further, You think there's more?"*. In both interviews and observations, the keys were an operational device for the prison officer and not an object of particular reflection, though they were the most commonly referred to element of the soundscape amongst prisoners. Giddens' concept of "practical consciousness" is useful for understanding how staff related to keys. Practical consciousness relates to beliefs about the social context in which they act, but which they cannot reflect upon in the wider discursive sense (Giddens 1984: 375). Whether or not staff might have been reluctant to engage with the wider implications of holding keys was unclear, which may suggest the use of consciousness lay between the limits of practical consciousness and unconsciousness. When discussed, staff expressed surprise

at the response the sound of keys elicited, despite the ubiquity of their sound (which reflected staff presence). Keys simply did not carry the potency they did for prisoners though many fiddled absent-mindedly with them, clutched them in their hands or swung them around, indicating habits of familiarity or reassurance through routine. Fundamental to the daily routine – quite literally beginning and ending with a visit to the key cabinet – keys formed a part of the putting on and taking off of staff identity. Arguably, given their ubiquity these habits of handling and jangling suggested the sound and feel of keys were a source of ontological security, in contrast to the prisoner experience (Giddens 1979, 1991).

Staff's response to keys was not a reflection of a general dismissiveness of the aural environment however. They were far from immune to the effects and significance of the prison soundscape, reporting that *"you can hear tension over there, you know. So you're always aware, always alert... automatic"* (Tone, officer). In addition to requiring specific, conditioned, responses some reported that *"it's just on top. It's more intense, the noise"* (Kathleen, officer, speaking specifically of the soundscape at HMP Midtown). Particular aspects of the sound environment were experienced as grating:

"the only time anything gets on my nerves is when the alarm bell goes but that's cos it's dead loud you know? But no, you can't shut off from what's happening really because like I said, you'd leave your colleagues" (Kathleen, officer).

The context of prison determined the way sound was interpreted, the response it garnered as well as imposing a considerable level of attention to it. Sound annunciated the ways in which staff were also subject to mortifying processes which acculturated them to the ways of the prison and intruded upon their sense of self beyond the prison boundary: *"I carry a whistle, and if I hear that on the telly I perk up"* (Kathleen, officer). Certain sounds had the effect of evoking behaviours associated with work identity, regardless of context. In this way sound acted as a means of reinforcing roles and identities otherwise bounded by the workplace. Associations of sound with memories of the prison evoked the auditory imagination to diminish demarcations between private life and work. Sound mediated identity and place by sparking memories and behaviours associated with work. Sound was intertwined with the power of the place, elements of it intruding upon the sense of self in a way that was unbounded by time or space. Aural elements of work-related rituals steadily ingrained themselves on workers sense of themselves. Alertness was

“automatic”, triggered by particular sounds. Joanne, a drugs worker made the same point about keys, having to double check herself when she locks her house as the absence of work keys *“feels wrong”*.

The potency of the prison for those who lived and worked within it were reinforced by aural components of work rituals. Sound acted as a means of echoing the pains of imprisonment by reiterating lack of control over movement, environment and company (Sykes 1958). Sounds of keys and alarms were interwoven in processes of acculturation to the prison environment, exerting power upon those who had little or no control over exposure (Goffman 1961; Wener 2012). Lack of ‘earlids’ enhanced sound’s intrusive qualities which extended around corners, through walls, and over time and space. The power of the prison was partially imposed, and therefore renewed, by exposure to its soundscape. These sounds carried particular meanings, symbolic importance that resonated with experience and expectation, dependent as this frequently was on the status of the listener (the sound of keys carried huge symbolic weight for many prisoners, but this was largely overlooked by prison staff unless explicitly brought to their attention) (Bourdieu 1991; Lefevbre 1991). It is this which lends them force within the prison environment. Aspects of the prison soundscape were experienced as the combined weight of a large community and its interpretation of both the prison space and the actions of people within it, in unnaturally confined circumstances. Power flowed through the interplay between people, and place, and was mediated by sound, though it often formed an undercurrent to conscious action and interaction.

Sound bridges the individual experience of the prison to that of its broader routines and rituals (e.g. unlock, association, visits, workshop, mealtimes. See p157 “Polyrhythmia and the everyday tune for a detailed account of the regime). In this way sound unites social meaning with the significance imbued by the individual to sounds interpreted by their auditory imagination and weighted with expectation and experience (Ihde 2004). The meaning imbued in routine sounds, such as the jangling of keys, or alarms, colours social interactions and reinforces roles and identities within the social world of the prison. Sound, then, is bound up with the routines that remake the rituals of the institution, constructing habitus and reinforcing social structure (Giddens 1991; Bordieu 1992). Expectations and understandings of what the prison space is like are brought to life and remade in the clangs and the slams of the environment. Power is negotiated and imposed within the soundscape, where it is harnessed in practices of order through which social

roles are differentiated and re-defined. The jingle jangle of keys provides a powerful example of the ways in which the individual habits of the prison officer reflect and reinforce the impact of imprisonment and the potency of the prison. The sound of prison keys reveals the complex relationship between power, people and place. Officers' position of relative power precludes their awareness of the effect on those conditioned to recognise their significance, this practical obliviousness reinforced their work identity and the privilege of power represented by the keys (and the capacity to lock and unlock people these presented). To those imprisoned the keys served as a reminder of their prisoner status with all that is implied by attendant loss of autonomy, liberty and security. In this way the sound of prison keys could be experienced as symbolic violence – while not physically violent the keys reinforced social distinctions experienced with particular acuteness within an environment where status determined whether or not one could move freely (Bourdieu 1984).

6.1 Clang

While staff contributions to the soundscape might be interpreted by prisoners as articulating their power, this did not necessarily denote intentional behaviour on the part of staff. There was indication that they were frequently unaware of how their actions were interpreted by those subjected to them, and of the impact they had. Staff could be practically conscious of their acts, without appreciating the contextual specificity lending them force. Joanne illustrated this divergence between action and intention: “[for] *the guys, I guess, the keys are quite a negative thing, it reminds them, whereas yes I just think of it as a necessity to get in and out*” (Joanne, drugs worker). The particular material conditions of HMP Midtown contributed to the daily discomfort imposed on some prisoners by the soundscape. People and soundscape acted within prison spaces to shape the ways power was experienced. This varied between individuals, some of whom were unbothered – reinforcing the fundamentally subjective nature of noise. Noise, or unwanted sound was here intimately bound with explications of power and inherently social in terms of both processes of meaning-making and the functions it performed. Some attributed motive and intent to sources of noise, while others did not. Interpretations of whether or not discomfort resulting from noise was intentionally inflicted or not was contextually and relationally variable, as were the ways its effects were experienced, if at

all. Examining the nature of these relationships reveals nuances of power and therefore of relations within prison.

The way uniformed staff engaged with the material environment was recognised by some as unintentional, but nevertheless served as reminders of relative powerlessness for prisoners. Banging and slamming of doors was a particular source of irritation, a physical reminder of their prisoner status: *“See, those doors bang. They don’t mean it, but it goes through you, you feel it in your body”* (Clive, fieldnotes). Some staff expressed keen awareness of the potential impact this could have and made efforts to minimise their contributions to the soundscape as a result. Joanne demonstrated thoughtfulness of how her interaction with prison spaces could affect others:

“...you know when you’re coming through the main gate and the beeper goes? I always think, like, so this morning I was very mindful that these guys are asleep, so I was trying to do it quietly, and then I’m on the landing and I’m making sure that I don’t slap the door cos I know people are asleep. But then I can hear my chain hitting my sticks and the keys and I’m trying to be quiet, so, cos every time I go through that buzzer I think – obviously there’s a reason for it and I get all that – but you just think how do the guys interpret that?” (Joanne, drugs worker).

Former prisoner Ben Gunn explained the significance this could have, from a prisoner perspective, during a discussion on twitter: *“I completely changed my view of a dog SO²³, when I saw him lock cells quietly. You lot won’t understand”* (Gunn 2017). Here sound mediates power disparities which, while frequently unintentionally produced can be interpreted as profoundly disempowering. Institutional thoughtlessness usefully captures the way in which the institutional function of the prison compounds the injury imposed by unconscious interactions with the environment between those free to come and go. Crawley (2005:350) describes this as *“the ways in which prison regimes (routines, rules, time-tables, etcetera) simply roll on with little reference to the needs and sensibilities of”* [prisoners]. She uses the term specifically to refer to the ways elderly prisoners experience prison spaces designed without consideration of their needs, but it is usefully extended here.

²³ SO – Senior officer

Several prisoners explained that the incident alarms (which did not sound terribly often), were designed specifically to incapacitate: *“You know that’s made to put you on the floor?”* (Lugs). I heard many smoke alarms for the first portion of my time at HMP Midtown, and cell bells/alarms were a feature of the soundscape while the men were locked away, but few emergency alarms sounded on the main wing during my time there. When it did the effect was significant. I wrote at the time (I was in mid interview) that I had felt unable to think, my discomfort sufficient to prompt the prisoner I was with to express concern. I neglected to ask directly what the reason behind the decline in use was but noted that such was the size of the wing, staff could make themselves heard quite easily in the event they required support. Diane suggested the decline in use of alarms was a direct and systematic result of a change in operational leadership. She was a relatively new member of staff at Midtown, a resettlement worker who had been subject to the impact of Grayling’s probation ‘reforms’²⁴ and had migrated in to the prison. While Diane had only been there for three years, and considered herself relatively ‘new’, she had been around long enough to perceive a change in the soundscape which she attributed to a more settled prison: *“There were lots more general alarms so all the time you felt there was general alarms going off which has changed quite dramatically actually... there’s been quite a dramatic reduction in general alarms”*.

During a conversation amongst senior management it appeared there was agreement about the potential for alarms to escalate rather than pacify (Pre-fieldwork meeting). This was less about institutional thoughtlessness and more about unintended consequences of operational practice. Alarms heightened a sense of disruption as well as being painful and agitating. The potential for encouraging the behaviour they were designed to address for all members of the community may or may not have contributed to their infrequent use on the wing. Associated with trouble and disorder, alarms heightened both the awareness of and response to this heightened state rather than de-escalating any disturbance. Alarms, signalling danger and threat to safety, offered a sharp delineation of role within the prison, sharpening the particular social arrangements of the prison habitus (Bourdieu 1992).

²⁴ Termed “transforming rehabilitation” – the name given to the white paper, delivered in 2013 by Chris Grayling, then Secretary of State for Justice - the aim was to “revolutionize” the way rehabilitation services were delivered in order to “drive down” reoffending rates. The main feature of the plan was to split probation services between one, main, National Probation Service (NPS) and private sector “Commercial Rehabilitation Companies” (CRC’s). CRC’s became responsible for offenders in custody.

Some prisoners interpreted aspects of the soundscape as punishment. Lugs was a local and had spent much of his adult life in and out of Midtown. He had a local inhabitant's familiarity with the culture and soundscape of the place which corresponded with his identity as a member of the Midtown community outside:

"That bell, and that alarm, that just does me. It's mental. That's how, it weren't like that a year ago. It used to be dlaalala and now it's drrr. And you know if you misbehave? You been downstairs? They got a noise. If you're misbehaving they'll go and press that button so that noise is out your door, and you'll be like I'm behaving turn that fucking thing off. And they're wait til you're calm Lugs or put some earplugs in they'll say. Fuck off, turn it fucking off or I'll chin ya! That noise does me!" (Lugs).

Prisoners reported experiencing these aspects of the soundscape as less about interpersonal power relations between themselves and individual officers, and more about being at the sharp end of the disciplinary purpose of the prison. Prison exerted power through sound, acting upon and affecting the body, and by extension the self. Sound evoked unpleasant bodily responses, but in these circumstances (though not in others) adverse experience tended to be attributed to the institution as a whole rather than the actions of individuals or staff as a group. Stretch illustrates this complex distinction when he talks about the place and people within it: *"I'm lucky I've got Miss F, Mr S., Mr P on the first night centre. They just pick me up and they're like me parents, literally"* (Stretch). He does not suggest this fondness extends to all staff, by any means, some of whom he refers to using a range of expletives. Nevertheless he expresses significant attachment to some staff who he assigns quasi parental roles in his life. This is in stark contrast to the way he talks about the prison: *"Just blow this place off the face of the earth... This is inhumane. This place is inhumane"* (Stretch). A number of prisoners recognised that staff were *"Just doing their job"* (e.g. Will, Davey and others in fieldnotes). Sharp distinction was drawn between these individuals and the deprivations of imprisonment, which drew sustained criticism. While prisoners had a host of experiences of negative (and positive) interactions with staff, these types of sounds (keys, clanging, alarms) were interpreted independent of individual staff whose interaction with the environment frequently comprised its source. The sounds emanating from an individual's interaction with the environment were indivisible from the potency of the institution, lending gravity – or "sound weight" to its experience. As Lugs explained, these sounds were interpreted as

punishment, both in form and content. They signalled impending use of coercive force, which frequently took the form of C & R,²⁵ if a prisoner was failing to comply, and were interpreted as being unpleasant by design, meant to elicit discomfort in the listener and amplifying a sense of powerlessness. Power then, flowed through aspects of the soundscape, imbued with the semiology of punishment and remaking the social relations on which its force was dependent.

6.2 Looping the Slam

In the case of alarms and clanging, sound altered both communication (forcing people to raise their voices to be heard above the din) and movement (hard metallic sounds vibrated through the body, while loud alarms often abruptly if temporarily stopped people in their tracks). In these ways sound was implicated in processes of accustoming prisoners to their role. The prison landscape is characterised by a lack of softness and elaborate locking/unlocking rituals of doors and gates which act as symbolic reinforcements of the carceral environment (Jewkes and Johnston 2007). Various responses to the aural environment worked to further impose prisoner identity upon the individual. Efforts to enact resistance could be subverted in the service of institutional processes. Goffman refers to this process as “looping”, a defensive response – in this instance to avoid or anticipate unpleasant sensory experience - is then targeted, reducing the ability of the ‘inmate’ to defend themselves against processes of mortification (Goffman 1961: 41). Sound is integral to the process of looping, as responses to the sound environment whether protective or immersive mire the individual further within the soundscape, and thereby within the prison environment. Covering one’s ears which prevents communication reduces awareness or shutting oneself in cell to deprive an officer of the opportunity to bang the cell door are examples of this.

A number of those I spoke with referred to the prison environment as “*not for everyone*” (No.1 Gov). There was no discernible judgement accompanying this assessment, it was simply a statement of awareness that some would not thrive in the unique prison environment. Alf, a maintenance man who had worked in Midtown for a number of years described having taken new recruits around, only to realise they “*were not cut out*” for the prison. While I was at Midtown there were several occasions when people visited the

²⁵ C & R: control and restraint. A range of sanctioned techniques to quickly bring a non-compliant prisoner under control. Officially used as a last resort.

prison only to express discomfort and a desire to leave. A drugs worker was being shown around the prison by Joanne with a view to joining her for work. Joanne was doing her customary errand running while she was on the wing and left her in my company while she did so. I asked her how she was finding the prison, she answered: *“Noisy, very noisy, and claustrophobic. It’s not for me, I won’t be coming here”*. The soundscape imposed a particular feeling of discomfort amongst some, their responses served to remake the form and function of the institution and the social relationships within it. Officer Tone described his unease when he began working at Midtown:

“And I remember walking down the rotunda and I was by myself and I needed to get somewhere. And they were all out. And I got to the door that leads you on to the wing. And, I was afraid, really afraid. God, I don’t want to go in there...I don’t want to go... and I turned back, and I went another way” (Tone, Officer).

When I asked him: *“What was it that made you feel like that?”* he responded: *“there’s so many people”*. Being familiar with the environment I knew full well that the outer door offers little view of the wing beyond, requiring unbroken sight through two small, grubby windows. I said so: *“but you weren’t on there?”*. He answered:

“No, the sheer, yeah, I suppose the noise. Which wasn’t noise it was just the volume of conversation that let me know that everybody’s out. And I think that the fear came from them assuming that I’m an officer and wanting something and just not knowing what to do. So I found another way to get to where I wanted to go”.

The soundscape of the main wing reminded him of his rookie status and his concern about being found inadequate. His avoidance of the soundscape reinforced his sense of the expectations of his uniform as well as the uncertainty and potential vulnerability of dealing with a prison population who vastly outnumbered him. His response to what he heard further institutionalised him by invoking his expectations of his role, reinforcing his officer identity.

In HMP Midtown, enquiring about the soundscape emphasised the subjective and changeable nature of noise. Tonk explained there was one officer who he recognised as very loud. He acknowledged this could be irritating to some, but his noise was welcome because he now regarded their relationship in broadly positive terms:

“When I first come here though, it used to annoy because I think I was singled out because I’m an IPP... they wouldn’t give me nothing... so I never used to like all of them, the screws... Can you hear him echoing the wing off? But now I think he’s alright cos he gave me a cleaning job. You know what I mean? So when he’s shouting an’ that, I know it pisses other people off but I’m like yeah go on Mr Tawny, you ain’t pissing me off any more, you’re alright, I like you!”

His relationship with the people and place determined how he interpreted others behaviour and consequently how positively he responded to Officer Tawny’s shouting (he shouted quite a lot). In talking about his changing relationship with the staff, and this aspect of the community, Tonk also indicated that his interaction with the soundscape was influenced by how he felt. In turn, this influenced how he responded to the soundscape in a looping effect which further reinforced his acculturation to the environment:

“Cos I’m strong I don’t mind being in the environment I’m in. So if like, I get on well with everyone I don’t mind hearing them on the wing, but if I’m making enemies or I’m angry or down and I keep hearing someone I’m like fucking hell, is he gonna shut up or what? You know what I mean? And I’ll probably tell him to shut up. But because I get on with everyone I don’t mind everyone making noise. You know what I mean?”

Tonk suggests that if he was “*angry or down*” he might regard intrusive sound negatively. In a delicate mental state, sound, certainly that made by people he was irritated with, would be regarded as agitating. The feelings evoked by the soundscape for Tonk, were coloured by, possibly determined by, how he was experiencing the power of the prison rules. In this sense, getting work and so forth, the practical pains of attempting to progress (particularly as an IPP prisoner in a local prison) were both associated with the way staff exercised their discretionary power, and how he fared as a subject of it. Being held within a prison whose regime was designed for those passing through or near release, on a sentence without a definite end point heightened Tonk’s sense of vertigo. It was how he fared in navigating these processes which determined how he responded to the soundscape. His response, whether agitated or amused, reinforced and sustained his particular relationship with, and role within the prison. Tonk’s relationship with the sounds he was subject to was bound up with his personal feelings about their source. This

was regardless of whether the interaction was directly between him and the person in question or not. Sound mediated these institutional relationships and served to intensify his emotional response to them, a destructive relationship echoed by Lamar, who was not a local and wished to move on in order to progress with his sentence plan:

“Within two minutes of your door open it sounds like it’s a youth club out there. Do you know? Years ago you woke up, and it’d be quiet. People’d be more calm. It’s difficult to explain, do you know? But from the minute I wake up in the morning, and sometimes its them and all their noise that wakes me up, or someone playing some hardcore, or some rock like headbanging music. Like straightaway you’re up, you’re in a different mindset. They’ve not got no respect. Why they just blasting out their music when the door’s just opened? Then next minute, oh have you got a sugar, have you got this? You know, you’re in bed. They can see you’re physically in bed and they’re coming in your cell, you got this, and you got that? Then five minutes later the officer’s like bang up so straight away when you wake up in the morning you’re in a bad mood” (Lamar).

Lamar’s adaptive response, to deter people intruding upon his space with hostility, then shaped subsequent interactions with staff negatively. In Tonk’s account, his changing relationship with sound indicated how he was feeling. His feeling about the soundscape was also linked with his experience of the institution and the people within it. Tonk felt he was doing okay at that point and was quite buoyant about the soundscape as a result though he was well aware his feelings were not necessarily shared by others (*“You’ll find people who’re not comfortable. Shy. And the noise to them is like, it’s angry noise, but it ain’t, like, to us it’s fun, messing about, but to shy people it’s intimidating”*). In this sense his adjustment to the prison environment represented routinised behaviours which corresponded to the particular order of the prison. Tonk spoke about his familiarity with the prison environment and his adaptation to it – *“I adjust to this type of environment because that’s been me all my life”* (Tonk). He attributed his comfort in the environment to his familiarity with its routines. For Tonk sound acted as a means of conveying both his current relationship with the prison and his identity within it. Tonk’s expression of acculturation to the carceral environment – shouting and being *“boisterous”* – was, by his own account, sometimes interpreted as disruptive which in turn encouraged staff to place further restrictions on his movement. This process further embedded him within the

rituals of the prison, and the perpetual tension between resistance to being banged up behind the door, and the imperative to bang prisoners up as a means of maintaining order.

How Tonk felt about the staff, and the place were bound up with how he was experiencing his sentence, relationships which were mediated through sound. He was well aware that his own contributions to the soundscape were open to negative interpretation: *“Because I’m loud and a bit boisterous, they were banging me up behind my door like, the whole time”*. Tonk presented his boisterousness as a facet of identity with such regularity he appeared to take comfort in it as a means of reasserting his sense of self against the institution. Another example of looping in that his loudness, often a response to the conditions of imprisonment, provoked punitive responses which meant he was subject to further punishment. Restricted by the prison space and rules as well as his own responses Tonk found himself repeating these behaviours, which in turn reinforced his particular place within the prison. In contrast to Tonk, Cameron was considerably more reticent, and separated from the general population as he found the environment too challenging. He also referred to his relationship with the sound environment as a source of potential for trouble: *“I got mental health issues, so the best place for me is down here. I got PTSD and I don’t like crowds and it’s too noisy out there, too much going on and it makes me crazy and I fight”*. Cameron was happier protected from the bustle and temptation of the main wing, but his consensual removal from it again mired him further in the depths of the institution.

As well as suggesting that sound was bound up with ongoing communications between prisoner, staff and prison, Tonk’s account indicates that sound operated as a means of gauging wellbeing. The extent to which an individual was getting on and getting by in the prison was correspondingly indicated by how they expressed their relationship with the soundscape. Talking about sound was a way of exploring how people in the prison environment experienced its effects. Sound simultaneously indicated how individuals were navigating the complex configurations of power in the prison and how they were feeling. While I was talking with people in the first night centre, a prisoner briefly staying there responded to my conversation with another. He remained in his cell and I didn’t wish to intrude as I knew he identified on the autistic spectrum and was distressed but he overheard our conversation and responded:

“Sound, you say sound? Only the keys and banging, they’re difficult to cope with. They draw, they draw... hang heavy on my shoulders. When I hear the keys coming it makes me anxious. It makes me really anxious. If they could put me somewhere quiet, away from the noises?” (Prisoner, fieldnotes).

While he did not refer directly to his condition, associations between autism and sound sensitivity are well documented (e.g. Stiegler and Davis 2010). Goffman makes the point that mortifications upon the sense of self are distinct from psychological distress, though this could enhance the mortification process (Goffman 1961). It was clear though, that for him, the impossibility of escaping from a soundscape he experienced bodily was adding to his difficulty coping and intruding upon his sense of self. The more he attempted to retreat from the soundscape, the more engaging with the prison community was likely to become problematic. The soundscape was an inextricable element of the prison environment, both mediating and amplifying his discomfort. While prisoners more frequently expressed difficulty with the sound environment (citing a diverse range of issues; PTSD, insomnia, depression, ASD), this did extend to some members of staff: *“It is noisy. It is too much. Will they give us compensation for the damage?”* (Officer Rafferty) *“are you going to do something about this din then? Affects our mental health”* (Officer Smith). The soundscape was intruding upon the sense of self of these individuals, provoking protective responses which served to further sensitise and heighten awareness to the institutional environment. Some of these individuals consistently made significant contributions to the soundscape themselves, but at no point indicated an awareness that this might be similarly negatively experienced by others.

In a number of ways, prisoners and staff recounted relationships with the soundscape which elicited behaviour which consolidated their position within the institution. Both prisoners and staff felt the soundscape encroaching upon their senses of self, evoking particular responses, amongst them fear, agitation and anxiety. For Tonk and Cameron, relationships with the soundscape increased the likelihood of being subject to additional punishment. Their evasive action served to mire them further within the realms of the institutional culture. Sound also worked as a proxy for wellbeing. How people interacted with, and interpreted the soundscape indicated how well they were coping more generally. A part of this reflected robustness of self, and how well individuals felt able to reassert themselves against the potentially overwhelming wall of institutional sound.

6.3 Bang. Bang. Bang. *** SOUND 2

<https://leicester.figshare.com/search?q=10.25392%2Fleicester.data.7628846&searchMode=1>

Perhaps the most explicit demonstration of sound as a system of signification in prison is provided by the lexicon of banging (Chion 2010). As is well documented, prison offers limited access to goods and services, in addition mobility and consequently vision was restricted for much of the prison day (Sykes 1958; HMCIP 2018). In this environment banging (most often on the inside of a locked cell door) was a means of compensating for lack of visibility behind it (in both directions). Imposing a presence on the soundscape presented a challenge to the constraints of being ‘behind the door’. Quantity of banging, as well as tone, frequency, context and quality denoted the wider emotional climate: “*a bad day, I s’pose the sounds that relate to a bad day is banging, constant banging, unified banging is terrible, that is, it’s not a good sound*” (Officer Tone). Some I spoke to claimed it always meant the same thing (“*to get out, mostly to get out. It don’t have no meaning, it’s just to get out*” (Robert)). Others recognised the wider set of meanings banging denoted, depending on the context in which they were interpreted:

“...You could hear banging now and it wouldn’t necessarily bother you, but in those situations when you’re walking on the landing to drop something off, it’s a different type of banging. It can be quite intimidating.... It’s just the type of bang, isn’t it, and you know, the atmosphere when there’s been lots to go in to that full lockdown...” (Joanne, drugs worker).

Conversations elicited in response to banging while out on the wing prompted nuanced reflections on what was causing the banging and who was doing it. Banging represented an act of insistent communication in opposition to the constraints of the physical environment and in that sense constituted an act of resistance. Interpretation of banging as resistance in no way restricts the array of meanings, and messages being communicated depending on who was doing the banging and the time and space in which it was going on. Diane explained:

“I always find, in the seg it feels different... I find it personally quite disturbing really, and I think the prison staff probably do as well because I think they’re often dealing with people who, you know, have severe mental health issues and you know, it obviously isn’t the best way to treat people, to put them behind doors.

And I find that, again, quite upsetting really. I think there's a difference between that and people just kicking because they want to be unlocked".

Diane interpreted banging differently depending on where it occurred. It is also clear that Diane and Joanne could discern different meanings. In this way banging worked as a system of meaning (Chion 2010). What follows is by no means a comprehensive key. Specific meanings vary according to context of regime and individual circumstance, but these are the most commonly heard during fieldwork at HMP Midtown and provide a useful means of illustrating the social significance of sound in this environment:

Rapid, rhythmic (BangBangBangBang)

Denotes frustration and irritation. The banging may indicate the regime is running a little behind, that the person within has urgent business to attend to, and/or wants out. Frequently this banging erupts in short bursts. It may be echoed by a number of cell occupants depending on what else is occurring. It can go on for prolonged periods of time, particularly if items are used to do the banging rather than fists or feet.

Slow, rhythmic (Bang.....Bang.....Bang.....Bang)

This expresses more focused and intense displeasure. The effect can be disconcerting, especially if other prisoners join in. At this point the intention is interpreted (by some officers at least) as indicating power in number and strength; to intimidate. Officer McKie illustrates how this can be experienced by staff:

"...I remember being on the twos landing...and a small number of prisoners started banging on their doors, and a large number followed the cue and joined in. And we were standing there on the twos looking at each other, everyone was locked up, but it was genuinely frightening. It felt like the wing was shaking with this banging on the doors. And I guess we were standing looking at each other thinking fuck, we're going to have to unlock these for tea. And there was such a... you could cut the atmosphere with a knife. There was a noise that was quite

intimidating, and I was thinking I've seen this before, you know, I've done a number of years' service, and I was looking at these new staff thinking they're probably shitting themselves. It was quite scary".

Aural reminders of the greater number and potential might of those imprisoned echoes Sykes' (1958) (and other's) point about the contingent and negotiated nature of power:

"It means that, to me, that all prisoners are aware of their perceived injustice, they all agree that something bad has happened, and they're all on the same page. And that's not good. Rightfully or wrongfully, that's not good. Yeah, I've not heard it often though, thank god" (Tone, Officer).

Banging could function as an expression of potential power. A reminder of the greater number of prisoners, that they represent an unspent force and that unofficial contracts of cooperation could always be redrawn or withdrawn altogether. When banging gathered momentum in numbers and volume, it emphasised the potential power of the collective. In this sense banging can be understood as a ritualistic expression of mechanical solidarity (Durkheim 1893). This could be particularly powerful in HMP Midtown where the small space meant there was little opportunity to diffuse, dissipate or contain frustrations. The effect on collective mood could be profound, a subject returned to in the following chapter.

Arrhythmic (Bangbang...Bang. BangbangBang) Bang.)
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Arrhythmic banging encompasses a range of expressions of emotion from extreme frustration to distress and despair. Disordered banging is often the sound accompanying "smashing up" or the colloquial "flat packing"; sustained destruction of cell and property. The person inside may be experiencing acute distress and/or wishing to go off the wing, whether to seg²⁶ or transfer, either because they are finding it hard behind the door or wish to avoid other issues. If this occurs close to canteen day, they may well be in debt. Often people want to force a move, though of course motivations vary: "...nine times out

²⁶ The care and segregation unit. A distinct area of the prison reserved for people removed from the general population for either their own protection, or, more commonly for issues relating to prison discipline.

of ten, when prisoners are violent on the wing, it's 'cause they want to be taken off the wing. They want to be transferred. They want to be segregated" (No.1 Gov).

Rapid, moving location (BangbangbangbangbangbangbangbangbanG)

Unlike those above, this is always celebratory, like a sonic Mexican wave, and normally heard during sporting events. I stayed behind one evening to listen to the men listening to a Midtown football match on home turf. I was able to monitor the progress of the game by standing on the wing, as the men's response to goals, near misses, unpopular referee decisions and the other team scoring effectively relayed the game. I was advised by a number of staff, as well as one or two prisoners to make sure I was there for such an event: *"...when the football's on, or the tennis, the atmosphere's brilliant... you hear the cheers, you hear the chants and I can remember feeling really buzzing after that. And like the guys. It was so powerful..."* (Joanne). The emotional climate of the prison sounded markedly different (See chapter 7). This was an evening match, and despite it being an important Midtown game the volume declined as the evening wore on, seemingly a collective code about noise levels and disturbance after certain hours (the match concluded after ten).

Banging communicated a complex range of information and emotion. It could also function as a means of redressing unequal power relations by imposing an effect on others through noise. As sound can impact cognitive function and concentration, as well as being a nuisance, causing distress and adversely affecting health this effect could be keenly felt (e.g. Klatte *et al* 2013; Basner *et al* 2014). This was underscored by Claire, a senior psychologist who had not long been at Midtown and having moved from a far larger and better equipped prison:

"I mean there's so much about the place that is just really impractical for doing my job, so things like I had an IQ assessment to do with a guy a few weeks ago. So firstly I need him to be able to concentrate, secondly I need somewhere relatively quiet because if I'm asking him to repeat back strings of numbers that I've just read to him and there's people bashing on the door shouting, that's not fair on him and that's going to bias the assessment".

Sound initiated by prisoners could work as a counterbalance to the aural pace-setting of the regime, providing a means of exerting power and autonomy through the expression of dissent and/or irritation. Sound mediated prisoners' opposition to the way the day was unfolding and represented an outlet for frustration. Banging was one form of contesting power sonically, allowing prisoners to overcome the constraints of the prison environment to make their feelings known and presence felt. The properties of sound could be harnessed to inhabit space in the absence of physical presence (this was not restricted to banging – shouting, or playing loud music were other instances). These sonic power contestations are documented in research in other contexts where sound is identified with an array of processes of power from operating as a tool of cultural imperialism to moderating and controlling social behaviour (e.g. Schafer 1994; Thompson 2004b).

Banging was a useful barometer for the emotional climate. An array of meanings, unambiguous to the initiated, were expressed in changing patterns and quality from mild irritation, exuberant celebration, to a warning, reminding staff of the potential power of the collective. Banging, a feature of the prison soundscape, echoed power relations, both shifting and fixed, in the prison community. Gauging the emotional climate was also a means of conducting effective surveillance, providing a powerful means of establishing the likelihood of disorder. These aspects of the soundscape place sound at the centre of processes concerned with safety and security on which order depends.

6.4 “I hear a lot of things, me”: Listening in the panopticon.

When Foucault adopted the panopticon as a metaphor for charting the operations of power and social control in the modern age, there was no place for sound, though Bentham had incorporated sound in a number of ways in his original design (Bentham 1767; Foucault 1977). Mooch, a local who had served previous sentences at Midtown, demonstrated his status by telling me “*I hear a lot of things, me*”. Mooch was likeable, in to everything and a terrible gossip. It was important to his presentation of self that he was recognised as being in the loop, having his finger on the pulse of prison life: “*I know what goes on in here man*” (Mooch). He was not alone in recognising the importance of sound as a means of keeping abreast of developments in the prison. Both staff and prisoners repeatedly referred to sound as a source of knowledge. Kathleen, an officer,

described how central a familiarity with the prison soundscape was to monitoring activity on the wing:

“I think with experience you know what’s going off as well. Like if there’s a fight or something the noise just sort of goes whoosh and drops. I don’t know if you’ve been here when there’s been any trouble or not? But even on the exercise yard I’ve been out there when there’s something happened and everybody just stops talking, and you look and you think there’s something going on. Or if you hear the clatter of a chair on the landing and you’re thinking is somebody chucking that chair about, do you know what I mean? So wherever you are on the wing, you can get a good idea of what’s going on” (Kathleen, officer)

She clearly indicates that keeping a handle on what is happening on the wing is dependent on active listening. Changes in the climate, potential “trouble” is first indicated by unusual peaks or troughs in the soundscape. Kathleen, a long-serving officer (of 25 years) speaks to a wide-ranging if frequently unacknowledged skill-set developed around a familiarity with the soundscape in different areas of the prison. Not only was she able to hear changing tones of interactions both with humans and between humans and various aspects of the physical environment but identified these as key markers of potential disruption. Her assertion that *“wherever you are on the wing, you can get a good idea of what’s going on”* relies on what can be heard, rather than seen, dependent as it was on being within - significantly further-reaching - hearing range rather than sight line. The pre-eminence of sound in identifying pressing safety concerns was underscored by a number of prisoners as well as staff, though their take was a little more critical:

“When the bell goes off next take note, yeah, of how long...it takes them to go running. When that bell went off yesterday that Tracy was running and she was just looking behind her, seeing what was going on behind her, and it was over there!” (Lugs).

Lugs repeatedly criticised how long it took staff to reach disturbances, but clearly indicated this was related to difficulty locating the source. Sound preceded vision in identifying the need for assistance. While staff monitored activities in the prison via sound, prisoners operated a corresponding sousveillance (Fernback 2012; Herrity

forthcoming)²⁷ – observation from below - which echoed staff reliance on sound. Stretch, in and out of prison for 38 years, considered HMP Midtown “home” and was keen to demonstrate familiarity with his territory:

“I can tell you exactly what’s going on every minute of the day just by sounds in this prison...I can tell you when they’re coming on the morning, I can tell you when they’re doing the count just by footsteps, cell bells, people shouting, I can tell you exactly what’s happening round the prison. It’s crazy, it’s mad. Because this is my domain. This is my manor” (Stretch).

While physically constrained for much of the day, prisoner’s soundscape extended far beyond that of staff since their aural vantage point presented a greater number of sources of sonic information. Prisoners such as Stretch, who were well-versed in the soundscape, used vibrations through cell walls as a source of information. Prisoners also communicated via windows and pipes. Sound was a powerful and reliable means of permeating the boundaries of the physical environment. While sound mediated considerably more nuanced power relations by allowing an uninterrupted stream of information, it also served to reconfigure space (see chapter 8). Staff were keenly aware that they were also under scrutiny by the many (Mathieson 1997). *“I suppose mischief heightens your senses greatly (laughs).... They know. They know a hell of a lot. They’re in tune to wherever you are”* (Officer Tone). A number of staff were identifiable by their movements. Joanne, for example, walked with sticks which made a distinctive sound as her chain bounced off them. One officer (to me) had a particular way of walking which swung his hips causing his keys and chain to chime rhythmically against the bars on the walkways. Another whistled the tune from “kill bill” repeatedly (from a film soundtrack called “twisted nerve” 1968). This reverberated with Tone’s memory of a former fellow officer’s habit of whistling “Zippety doo dah”, offering staff their own reassuring sources of ontological security. Accounting for the role of sound in processes of surveillance reveals the extent to which power is diffused through multi-directional aural interaction. Exerting power through the emphasis of presence in the environment was necessarily compromised by the responding scrutiny invited by it. If hearing is knowledge, and

²⁷ Jan Fernback (2012) usefully describes this as activities which resist monitoring practices of power. In this context; listening to the listeners. I explore the cell as a specific site of sousveillance elsewhere.

knowledge is power it was necessarily spread amongst those operating within the Midtown soundscape.

In an environment where goods are scarce, freedom restricted and the cost of being found in possession of forbidden items can be high, information is a valuable commodity. Both prisoners and staff used prison sonar to save time and legs. Conversations with Lugs were frequently interrupted by shouted responses to calls for him, inaudible above the general din to my ears “*yes, what you want Finchy?*”. Staff did the same, frequently shouting around the wing for some elusive prisoner or colleague. Information also took more conventional forms of course. Reputations could thrive or falter on the back of information: “*Want to know the loudest thing in here? It’s the whispers...*” (Karim). “*Loose lips sink ships*” was a phrase repeatedly uttered in my presence by prisoners. Often after some rash disclosure had been made.

The task of keeping on top of developments was made harder by the balancing of sometimes overwhelming streams of information. While staff reported an ability to “*just numb it out*” (Lena, officer) over time, the demands of wearing a radio while on duty sometimes showed:

“The screws? Useless!... I can tell you what they’re talking about and I’m on the fours and they’re on the threes. You know why? Cos they can’t talk to each other like we can, without looking. And they give it away, straight away. Or if they’re concentrating on their radio they close their eyes, cos they want to hear. They want to blank us out. They don’t want to look at us and listen to what we’re saying, they want to hear what they’re saying so they close their eyes and turn, seriously...” (Stretch).

It sometimes appeared the stream of information coming through radio communications constituted a sensory overload making it more, rather than less difficult for staff to effectively operate. It was also unclear whether this contribution to inner soundscapes enhanced tension rather than diffusing it:

“I can’t think, I can’t concentrate. It affects my ability to work. Trying to reason with people while there’s this row going on. Making a difficult situation worse. I end up shouting at comms and they’re only doing their job: Yes I’m fucking here!” (No.2).

Officers repeatedly encouraged me to wear a radio for a shift, which clearly indicated the degree to which they felt this was a significant component of their working day. I was reluctant to draw more attention to my presence but observing staff juggling communications with colleagues, interactions with prisoners and the stream of information feeding in to their ear was instructive. Conversations were frequently interrupted by muffled flows of instruction and information over the radio. Staff looked away in order to concentrate, a widespread habit which both betrayed the nature of the information they received (as Stretch noted) and was sometimes interpreted as an act of considerable disrespect by the prisoner who had lost their attention. I was frequently subject to this, which had the dual effect of teaching me about the practicalities of an officers' working day and of frustrating me as it signalled the premature conclusion of a conversation. Invariably, despite assurances to the contrary, the officer would not return from where they left off. This aspect of staff operations often seemed to provide more interference than assistance with processes of surveillance.

Sound was bound up in processes of surveillance between and amongst prisoners and staff. Surveillance was a site of both power maintenance and negotiation, placing sound at the centre of processes of social interaction and processes of power and resistance. In operating as a site for navigating power relations sound was intimately bound up with processes on which order maintenance and disruption depended. This remained the case whether explicitly acknowledged or no. Arguably, as discussed below, the degree to which an individual had acclimatised to the sound environment indicated the extent to which they had been subsumed within the rhythms of the institution.

6.5 Singing frogs

While waiting for staff to assemble for a security meeting, I sat with a visiting governor from a prison in Bermuda. David enquired about the project, when I explained to him he responded:

"I've never thought of prisons as noisy places. I still don't but it reminds me of friends we have who visit from Canada. They can't sleep at night for the singing frogs, they go all through the night and make a racket. We're so accustomed to it we don't hear it" (David).

The exchange between David and I raised a central point: does sound matter if it is not perceived as significant by those you speak with? And if so why and how? When I asked how David chose to unwind he told me: *“I like to unwind, no talking. Sometimes I like to just drive around. If I go straight back home, I’m a different person”*. His dismissal of the significance of prison noise, was contradicted by his use of sound (and space) as part of his shedding ritual. Sound was crucial for David, in guarding against “spill over” of his work life in to his private life, allowing him to leave the prison behind (Crawley 2004). What David appeared to be relaying was an attempt to use sound to impose clear distance between work and private spheres of his life. Imposing a period of silence composed a solid sound border, protecting against the permeation of the prison in to time at home. His efforts to avoid ‘spill over’ by imposing demarcations between these parts of himself were efforts not to take the “different person” he presented within the prison social system in to his family life²⁸.

There is a process of acclimation to the sound environment as a whole, after which specific aspects, or ‘discordant notes’ take over as foci for concern. Kathleen referred to this when she spoke of her move to Midtown many years before:

“Midtown is more compact and squashed in... and I sat there and it was just noisy you know? Like there was the clattering of this and keys, gates, doors banging and I sat there and I thought, ooh, I don’t know if I like this or not... I’ll give it six months (laughs). Yeah, been a long six months!”

Diane echoed awareness of undergoing a process of acclimation to the environment, and used our interview as a means of reflecting on her current position in the process:

“I think it’s quite good to be reasonably new because you do get institutionalised and probably slightly immune to it and I can see that happening to me and has happened to me, so if I think about my initial impressions, might be useful to recall to be honest...”

Goffman talks about the centrality of admissions procedures to processes of acclimation to the institutional environment, rituals which signify a *“leaving off and a taking on”* – a

²⁸ Giddens (1984) refers to this as time-space distanciation; the expansion of relations over space and contraction over time (or interaction with people who are physically absent). Sound, I argue, forms a neglected aspect of these relationships since it directly traverses space and time – a subject returned to in more depth in chapter 8.

‘trimming’ - of the former self to replace it with the institutionalised identity (Goffman 1961: 27). These processes were more visible amongst staff on the way out, signified by the importance of shedding rituals. Joanne indicated the importance of these: *“If you’ve got stuff on your mind, don’t hand them keys back until you’ve talked it through”* (Joanne, drugs worker).

Prisoners underwent perhaps the most significant process of “taking on” of identity on the way in. Reception processes constituted rhythmic rituals of admission:

Rituals of immersion, step by step. Van. Wait. “Permission to unload?”. Decant. Wait. Cell. Come forward. What you can have, what you aren’t allowed. Don’t beg, steal or borrow. Don’t tamper with the electrics and follow the prison rules. Rattling? Paperwork. Process. Paper, split, staple, shuffle, signatures. Picture taking. Card. Whirring of the card machine, has its own song: di dooorrrr.... Diiii di dooorrrr. Sounds flat and jolted if jammed or empty. Fingerprint. Search. Strip. Prison outfit. Sort kit. Keep your socks and boxers. “Next”. Wait. Nurse. Wait. Escort to first night centre. Ship in. Ship out. Prop. Papers. Mountains of paper and property documenting history, “risk”, what they came in with, what they’re leaving with; bagged, tagged, boxed and accounted for... (fieldnotes).

Reception at Midtown, friendlier, more intimate and less frenetic than others I had been in, had particular rhythms which reinforced its particular purpose. Despite David’s dismissal of sound, his use of it to de-prison himself implicates sound in processes of ‘prisonization’; absorption in to prison life (Clemmer 1940). Both staff and prisoners battled to redefine the borders of the self in opposition to the intrusive soundscape of the prison. Foucault describes the process of modern punishment as acting on the self to create “docile bodies”. The prison echoed wider mechanics of politics and coercion, acting upon the body to rearrange, coerce and to institutionalise the individual (Foucault 1977). Sound is heavily implicated in embodied processes of ‘institutionalisation’: *“All these noises, getting us used to things we shouldn’t be getting used to”* (Marlon, prisoner). Marlon was referring to the way in which the prisoner is conditioned to accept the prison environment through repeated exposure to the noises of the institution. Kevin underscored the significance of sound in processes of institutionalisation by drawing attention to the similar processes of various institutions of control:

“I thought of you on a visit. My little ‘un heard the bell and said: “it must be dinner time” cos he hears the bell at school. “Daddy has to go and have his dinner now””.

Kevin’s son had placed the prison firmly within the matrices of agencies of social control, echoing Foucault: “Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?” (Foucault 1977: 228). The prison soundscape was inextricably bound up with processes accustoming those who lived and worked there to the social life of HMP Midtown.

Asking about sound did not always elicit immediate recognition of its importance in the prison soundscape. Rather than questioning its importance this rather highlights the more complex and nuanced processes with which sound was intertwined. In encouraging members of the community to reflect on the soundscape of the prison it became clear that particular sensitivities and emotional responses shifted over time, as people became acclimated to the environment. Officer Tone made this clear when he explained that:

“...the fear came from them assuming that I’m an officer and wanting something and just not knowing what to do... and then after a while when we as a group went on the wing and I got to see people and so forth, that dissipated quite quickly” (Officer Tone).

Initial fear and discomfort arising from the prison soundscape became quickly replaced by an understanding of what it signified, but sound was interwoven with processes of institutionalisation; acclimation to the institutional environment as Gee illustrated:

“well, it makes you act stupid, see. I hear that bell all the time so I made up a song: “ding, ding that’s the sound of the bell”. I’d never do that outside. I’m normal me”. (Gee, prisoner fieldnotes).

Familiarity with what constituted a normal day was necessary in order to identify sounds ‘out of place’. These accounts implicated sound in processes of acclimation which both initiated individuals in to the prison world and threatened senses of self which derived form and substance from beyond the institution (Goffman 1961). Sound, then, was central to processes of institutionalisation, constituting both a source of fear and uncertainty and frame of cultural reference, evoking auditory memories of other

institutional settings. Quiet, or an absence of notable sounds, had its own particular significance within Midtown.

6.6 “Happiness is door-shaped”

Officer Rose explained that “*Happiness is door-shaped. That’s a reference to once we’ve got everybody in a cell and everybody behind the door. Then we get that, that peace*” (Officer Rose). As Officer Rose explained, quiet has a pivotal and complex role in the prison context. Rarely was quiet quite what quiet meant, rather it related to a calm, a peace, an absence of tension and/or disorder, but on occasion ‘quiet’ could also refer to a sense of foreboding. It was often alluded to in response to questioning about what a ‘good’ day sounds like. This was puzzling because a good day, at Midtown, rarely fell within conventional understanding of what quiet means. A good day in HMP Midtown often sounded incredibly noisy to my ears; a babbling soundscape which corresponded to a predictable, good-natured hubbub, as assorted respondents and fieldnotes underscored. Quiet had a complex meaning in Midtown, denoting both the array of emotional life conveyed by sound, and the centrality of sound to prison social life.

When describing a ‘good day’ or ‘good prison’ quiet was frequently used in conjunction with calm and peace, more closely describing a mood or feeling than an absence of noise. In terms of volume of sound, quiet often did not mean quiet at all, but rather a day/shift without incident; “*any day with no trouble is an ideal day...without any violence*” (Officer in Liebling *et al* 2010:7). The association between quiet and a ‘good’ day or at least a positive conclusion to the day links quiet with order more closely than any direct indication of noise level. A ‘good’ day at HMP Midtown was, if anything, even noisier. The soundscape bustling with the rhythms of good-natured activity. Nevertheless, the variety of uses of quiet indicated its significance as well as that of sound more widely. Quiet sometimes functioned as a prison equivalent of the Scottish play. When asked by Mark, an officer, how the day sounded and answering “*quiet*”, he responded with a familiar admonishment: “*now that’s a word we never use! Don’t jinx it!*”. Here quiet functioned more as an indicator of a predictable day – an absence of ‘noise’ or “*sound out of place*” which indicated disruption and threats to safety (Pickering and Rice 2017). If sound could denote a good day, and a state of safety, it could equally refer to its opposite.

The absence of sound as a signal of impending trouble was closer to more conventional understandings of quiet. Jack described this:

“The noise, it can make you paranoid, when everything goes quiet in jail, real quiet, you know something’s gonna go off. So it can make you paranoid. And when it goes really quiet it’s either something been planned by a lot of prisoners, like a riot’s gonna happen, or something’s gonna kick off, yeah?”

Drops in the soundscape could operate as audible book ends for disruption. Officer Tone’s description of the aftermath of an incident makes explicit reference to sound, indicating that quiet could function as a means of mediating shock, fear or disappointment: *“the after-effect of trouble, and the silence. The after, sad silence of a wing that’s banged up earlier than it should have been because a fight has happened”* (Officer Tone). Quiet was intimately bound up with processes of order and its absence, indicating both interruptions to the daily rhythms which characterised prison life, and unscheduled interruptions to it and their emotional aftermath.

In terms of both maintaining and regaining order, quiet was bound up with order as a manifestation of power; ending the day with the same number you started with (Officer Rose). But if quiet was bound up with power relations in Midtown, its field of significance extended beyond maintenance of the routine. In the event of serious incidents (at height, fire, or tornado visits – discussed in more depth in the following chapter) the laden quiet around the wing was palpable. Those locked behind the door were straining to hear, whether out of fear, interest or news of developments. Quiet then, could be identified with complex iterations of power relations and the struggle to hear as well as to be heard. Stretch explained the reason why this was important: *“if you’re not being heard you’re getting left behind, ain’t ya”*. Sound then, was inextricably bound up with power relations and the struggle to be heard against an environment designed to elicit acquiescence (Mathieson 2005b).

Uncovering the wide-ranging experience of power amplified by attending to the auditory is not to obfuscate its complexity, or its conditional and contingent nature. The starkness of the environment and form of social relations concealed a far wider range of relationships and instances of cooperation and understanding. While the structure and routines of the prison imposed rigid constraint, compliance was not (largely) secured by coercion. Prisoners frequently made considered and empathetic distinctions between

individual officers “*just doing their job*” and various injustices to which they felt subjected by the “*system*”. Similarly, some staff acknowledged their reliance on dependable characters amongst the prison population in the event that “*things went bad*” (Becky, officer). The authority of staff was dependent on its acknowledgement by the prisoner population who vastly outnumbered them. Stretch illustrates the awareness of this precariousness of control when he says:

“We allow them to come to work. I could go out there now and negotiate with ten lads and say: right, we’re shutting the jail down for a week. And just, right, no one’s banging up tonight, no one’s eating any food... They have to come to work, but they’d have to stand out in the cold and eventually they’ll want to come and take it back. But that’s when the prisoners get excited... it’s only the cons that are stopping this place being smashed up now”.

“They want them to think they’s hierarchical, but we allow them to come in to work. If we didn’t want them in this building they would not be in this building and that’s the truth” (also Stretch).

Stretch speaks to the fluid and contingent nature of power. His observations work to further extricate power from order. If the prison population are not compelled to contribute to the rhythms and routines of the working day, what else was at work?

Focusing on perceptions of quiet and its seemingly contradictory range of meanings indicates the significance of sound as a means of conveying a lexicon of social relations. It also reveals the inadequacy of current vocabulary for exploring this aspect of human experience. Not only is sound bound up with expressions of emotion and feeling but is implicated in power relations and their contestation. Connections between sound and order place sound at a central point of importance to the prison day and the relationship between power and order. Sound, it will be argued, reveals a considerably less straightforward association than is supposed.

6.7 Disentangling power and order

The prison soundscape elucidates the complexity of the experience of power as well as the way in which it is exerted through interactions between people and place, interactions

which lend sound force and meaning. Sound was a major conduit for power in the prison, reinforcing social roles between prisoners and staff as well as resounding with the symbolic potency of the prison. The force of various sounds was imposed whether or not it was accompanied by awareness or intention by staff, a corollary of institutional thoughtlessness, an exercise of symbolic power. In this sense sound, and responses to it had the capacity to reinforce the experience of prison, submerging the agent further within the rituals of the institution in a looping effect. Exploring the signification of banging illustrates how power relations traversed physical barriers, overcoming and contesting the constraints of operating behind the door. As well as contesting power, sound was also a means of maintaining it against the encroachment of others. Sound featured in practices of surveillance. Sound also provided a means of charting an individuals' progress within the institution, how well they were coping and adapting to the social world of the prison, as well as to how great an extent the prison was adapting the individual.

Exploring sound in this way allows for an account of power in which it is not only articulated in social relations but through wider social connections to collective memory and the meaning of prison. This extends understandings of power beyond the directly relational definitions by which it is often constrained in prison studies. This clearer conception of power in its multiple formations, both relational, interactional and dispositional allows for a corresponding re-articulation of the order with which it is frequently too closely conflated. If listening to processes and practices of power better articulates its complexity, this raises the question of how this partial distinction from order alters our understanding of the structure of the prison day. This is the question to which I now turn.

7 **“The Hustle and Bustle”**

Noises. Murmurs. When lives are lived and hence mixed together, they distinguish themselves badly from one another. Noise, chaotic, has no rhythm. However, the attentive ear begins to separate out, to distinguish the sources, to bring them back together by perceiving interactions (Lefevbre 2004: 27).

When asked what a good prison sounds like, Derek responds: “A *calming sound, it’s a settled sound. It’s like the sound you get when you’re going on a busy high street. It’s hustle and bustle but there’s no sounds of aggravation, there’s no threatening noises*” (Derek, officer). ‘Hubbub’ is a useful means of describing, if somewhat underplaying, the sensory experience of prison life; the chaotic din of a busy environment. It also acts as a means of evoking the auditory imagination to explore social life in a hard to reach environment (Cockayne 2008). The soundscape at HMP Midtown was initially disorientating and overwhelming to decipher. Once acclimatised to the social world of the prison, however, it was possible to discern different components of the prison soundscape. The cacophonous din which greeted me when walking on to the wing during unlock gradually revealed its secrets. I gathered familiarity with the “everyday tune” and learned to hum along with the regime. The regime, and adherence to it, was intertwined with order and its fluctuations. Order in the sense of a rhythmic pattern to the day which incorporated a variety of meanings and signifiers, both of practical purpose and of social relations had a corresponding sonic form. HMP Midtown “...*has its own rhythm, its own ebb and flow*” (Officer McCafferty). In this sense the order of the prison formed a rhythmic soundscape. Exploring the soundscape as a means of understanding the operations of power, correspondingly prompts questions about what the soundscape revealed about the nature and composition of order. Using sound as a means of theorising about the maintenance of order forms the following chapter.

Derek, a long-serving and senior officer illustrated how assessments of order were reliant on sound:

“The everyday tune that’s normal for there. Everyone’ll interpret that different. But you got to learn that tune. Learn the tune that the establishment’s playing. And anything that’s out of sync, any noises that are out of sync. Any shouts, or screams, or rumblings, you pick up on that, erm, and you’ll subconsciously do it

as well, there'll be staff that have worked in a particular place for ten, fifteen years, and they won't know, they won't consciously learn the noise of the place but if anything's out of sync they'll be like that: "what's he doing there?" "What's he doing up on the threes?" They'll know. But if you try to explain it to 'em they'll be like you whacky, what you talking about, tunes 'n noises? What you talking about? But people won't understand, but that's how it is. That's how we react...".

Order can be a difficult concept to pin down: *"both the means used and the conception of order sought or imposed can vary significantly from one prison system to another, and even in different prisons within the same system"* (Sparks *et al* 1996: 1). Sound lends clarity allowing the reconceptualization of order as ebb and flow of daily activity in its multifarious dimensions; a series of rhythms which have an audible dimension (Lefebvre 2004). Simultaneously sound carves out room for the individual agents operating within it, the soloists and virtuosos, the bum notes and crescendos of movement and meaning. Focusing on sound also detaches and redefines the relationship between power and order. Too often order is depicted as flowing unproblematically and simplistically through power as Anton Symkovych illustrates (2017:201): *"Despite a radical power imbalance, all prisons entail power negotiations between the administration and prisoners, even though the nature, function and degree of such negotiations and the resultant order vary considerably"*. Assumptions of order as a direct and unproblematic corollary of power reflect the difficulty of conceptualising power and differentiating between its various facets and operations (Hearn 2012).

HMP Midtown has an unusual design and composition and within this a variety of soundscapes exist, at different times and different places. When the men were out it sounded 'noisy' to me. Accompanying the No.1 on his rounds, I told him this when he asked how I was finding it. He bristled in response (*"this is a good day!"*) (No.1 Gov, fieldnotes). When I referred to this during our later interview he told me he was *"probably being defensive"* (No.1 Gov). His response reveals how interpretations of sound are interwoven with emotion and subjectivity as well as elucidating our developing relationship. There was an association between sound and order, and sound and Midtown's emotional lexicon. Here, 'noise' had little place and I had committed a minor social breach by referring to the environment in this way. If sound was connected to emotion and sociality, what did this do for understanding how order was experienced, articulated, maintained and disrupted?

7.1 Sounding the bell and ringing the changes ***SOUND 3

<https://leicester.figshare.com/search?q=10.25392%2Fleicester.data.7628846&searchMode=1>

“...I like ringing the bell. See ideally the bell, the bell situation is... everybody should all be, you should ring the bell, at their given time, and prisoners and staff should all know what that means” (Officer Rose).

In addition to its unusual size and composition, HMP Midtown uses a large bell, embossed with the year of the prisons’ birth, to sound out the regime. A Pavlovian symbol punctuating the day and signalling points in the routine. The significance of sound to prison daily rituals is underscored by a number of prisoner accounts (e.g. Berkman 1912; Solzhenitsyn 1962; Irwin and Owen 2005). Tom Rice explores how the hospital soundscape – specifically “*repetitive electronic noise*” - served to remind patients of their illness by reiterating their status as patient (Rice 2013:8). The soundscape developed and reinforced a collective identity, reminding them of “who” they were within the hospital setting. At Midtown the soundscape had numerous components, few more rhythmically regular than the bell’s imposition of regime, illuminating the relationship between sound, power and order. The bell sounded at set points every day, maintaining both symbolic and practical importance within the prison community, the identity of which it sustained in its sounding. Alain Corbin (1998) suggests scrutinising the functions of the bell is instructive for understanding the community and the processes of ordering relations in which it is implicit.

The bell operated as a useful device for exploring the complexity and contradictions of power relations and the order they were bound up with. Easily accessible to all on the wing, aside from the odd, cheeky (and muted) clang, the prisoners did not sound it. Neither was the bell used by all staff. In this way it enforced different roles and responsibilities. Kitchen staff did not ring the bell. Neither did OSG’s²⁹. The bell might be rung by staff not in charge of the duty, but only if they were performing certain functions (such as overseeing association). Of those sanctioned to ring the bell, only certain of those staff would do so and only at particular points of the day. The officer in charge would ring it for meal times, a large operation, the organisation of which

²⁹ Operational support grade staff. Uniformed, key-carrying staff of relatively junior status.

determined the smoothness of regime. These strict rituals reinforced and reiterated power relations at Midtown. The bell was an aspect of the soundscape which reinforced awareness of status as well as prisoner identity. An inescapable imposition of the prison's constraints on autonomy.

The prison bell was a symbol of social and practical order, indicating what was happening next and where people were expected to be; a means of martialling both prisoners and staff. In this way the bell represented the intersections as well as distinctions between power and order. The ebb and flow of movement and routine throughout the prison day were marked by the bell, which regulated and ordered the day by signifying phases of the regime. Only those of particular levels and types of authority would sound it, while others were required to respond.

Complying with the regulation of the bell signalled but did not determine assent. Will, awaiting a substantial sentence, but far from his first, indicated that while he conformed to the rhythms of the day, he utilised these signals for his own daily rituals, a means of ameliorating the constraints imposed by the prison:

“That bell’s pretty bad. But I think, the bell, when you hear the bell it’s like an action noise. It’s like you’re coming out in the morning and you’ve heard the bell, ding, so you’re like oh, bell; coming out. So I don’t know if you’re pleased to hear it, more, but that’s when my day begins you know what I mean? Ding. Then I’m like, out the door, routine starts...Seven o’clock every morning I get up out of bed, I’ll have a coffee, I’ll have my breakfast, I get my gym kit ready. Brush my teeth. Sit there and watch telly til’ the bell goes. Door opens, straight to the phone, ring the missus, then go to gym. Come back at 9”.

For Will, the significance of the bell was not what it meant, but that *“it means something though, doesn’t it?... it’s more an action noise. Like, what’s happening?”*. Will had carved out his own routine within that of the prison. One which suited him and reflected his stoical attitude that *“you have to work your ticket, don’t you?”*. Rather than adapting his consciousness in line with the bell, he had adapted the meaning of the bell for his consciousness. Will used the bell to mark the days of his sentence and routine, one which allowed him to get by while not being *“fucking arsed with”* trouble or argument.

In this sense the regime produced routinized rather than docile bodies. Compliance was motivated by a number of different factors, which did not necessarily signal assent. In

Will's case this can be interpreted as obedient dissent. He goes along with the routine, carving out his own space within it which allows him to get through the prison day as comfortably and pleasantly as he can. He is practically conscious of the routine, its legitimacy or otherwise is of limited concern or relevance in so far as it does not impinge on his day (Giddens 1984). Will had adopted a set of tactics for navigating daily prison life, a subject explored in more depth below (de Certeau 1984 in Jewkes 2012). The bell illuminated the relationship between power and order, while accounts of the meaning ascribed to this most constant and significant aural marker of the daily regime allowed for more nuanced echoes of how these formal aspects of prison life were navigated by individual agents. Responses to the bell illustrated that even in this most stark sounding of the regime, power was a more fluid and partial thing. Will exercised his autonomy in subverting the mechanics of order, moving in the spaces between.

Daily prison life was characterised by particular sets of noises - of which the bell was the most constant and prominent - which signified the 'normal' regime. Dave, an older man surprised to find himself in prison for the first time, indicated how central order was to prison life:

"It's just what the system is, you know, the bangs and the dings and the donges. The rattle of the keys. I think you get used to it after a bit... your life revolves around the clock and the bells and the whistles".

As Diane notes:

"And it is very loud on the main wing; doors banging, and generally communication tends to be quite loud. I mean the prison officer'll shout, y'know, obviously changes to the regime, and changes to the day in terms of gym, education gets shouted out quite loudly – through necessity to be honest because that's the only way to communicate that to the group really" (Diane, resettlement).

Diane's observations illustrate how integral to daily prison life is the regime, and the sounds which signal its operation. In this way the regime, and the rhythms of daily life it lent form and function to, were a means of analysing order (Butler 2010). Listening to these rhythms through the week gave prison social life a wider ebb and flow which in turn lent meaning to changes in the soundscape. Visits took place on most days of the week but had a slightly different feel depending on the ways they intersected with social

rhythms outside (Sundays were the “*loudest, as there are more kids that day*” (Officer)). Fridays were a bad day for getting people as the regime was more restricted, paving way for ‘canteen’³⁰ in the afternoons (or market day as I called it). Prisoners were only let out for orderly purposes or chapel on Friday afternoons, lending the prison an air of winding down (or up) for the weekends when the regime was also restricted and pool playing more prevalent. This was why Stretch identified Fridays and Mondays the “*worst*”. Fridays were unpopular because of the fall-out from canteen; the failure to repay debts with it, the disappointment of non-delivery of expected items and the irritation of staff, a number of whom expressed a dislike of Fridays. Mondays because they followed a weekend of restricted activity and possibly the first opportunity to settle any ‘beef’ outstanding over the period.

This was important for what it revealed about the function of the prison, indicating an orderly day. It was also a key signifier of a day when things were not running as expected. Relatively new prisoners would tell me what particular bell rings and shouts meant in response to my panicked queries about whether I was obstructing their day. Initial confusion on my part as to what was being loudly but unclearly bellowed upwards gave way to an unconscious familiarity of my own. These pace-setting aural markers, reassuring in their consistency, served to punctuate more fluctuating and inconsistent aspects of the soundscape. Nevertheless, it was the soundscape as a whole which provided vital information about the climate on the wing and the absence or presence of order, a subject returned to below.

“How can I put it.... You can always tell how a prison’s gonna be when you come in in the morning, if you can hear... Say you come in this prison at quarter past, half past seven in the morning. It’s nice and quiet, you know everybody’s calm and seckled.. but you know if you come in in the morning and you can hear music playing early, and banter, you know there’s trouble in the place... seriously” (Stretch).

The soundscape provided information about fundamental aspects of prison life. Social interactions and daily activity, the stuff of daily existence, were captured and reflected in

³⁰ The weekly delivery of items purchased by prisoners, ordered from a restricted list of items from a contracted supplier, chosen from a form which is supplied and collected on the same day each week. The maximum which can be deducted for “spends” is £15 which can be used for toiletries, food, phone credit etc from private cash, sent in and/or earned

the soundscape. Listening provided me with a means of decoding rituals and routines which were initially mysterious, and to immerse myself in prison life as far as was possible. It was also the soundscape which provided cues for developments and disruption, informing me of where staff attention was likely to be focused and current preoccupations of those prisoners inclined to participate in social life. It was the soundscape to which the social life of HMP Midtown was attuned: *“The tune’s playing, it’s the perfect tune, everything’s great, yeah?... why?”* (Ken, Officer).

7.2 Rhythms of the prisoner social hierarchy

While the routines of the day were accompanied by a soundscape, there was also an audible aspect to the messier and more changeable aspects of social life at HMI Midtown. Jostling for position in the prison hierarchy was bound up with individual contributions to the sonic environment. Some characters were consistently audible regardless of where they were (*“you know my voice quite well”* Stevie, prisoner). After a short time acclimatising to the sonic environment it was possible to discern the social status of many of the prisoners as well as the means of navigating or contesting the social system. Stretch explained how sound could signal status and provide a basis for forging associations:

“Your three people yeah? You have a conversation with each one of ‘em – he’s loud as oats, he’s mediocre, on the level, decent conversation... he’s not really saying owt, he’s talking really quiet... You’re gonna choose him. Cos he’s the level. He’s speaking a proper monotone, noise. He’s just making his own noise (adopts high pitched voice) “Ahhh ya fucking bastards” so you’re not understanding that, and then you got a mmmmmm (meek voice) he’s talking under his breath, can’t hear him”.

Sound was used as a cue for determining who was worth talking to, associating with or someone to avoid. In an atmosphere where being saddled with someone with irritating personal habits could mean being locked in a small space with them for much of the day, this was hugely important (*“I can’t stand him. I was at Ranby with him and I got banged up with him for about two weeks. Oh God he’s a nuisance. He drives me nuts”* (Mooch).

Prisoners’ position in the social hierarchy was often indicated by the rhythms and sounds of their movements and behaviours. Vulnerable prisoners, “nonces” or “wrong uns”, were

largely kept separate. They appeared skittishly for their meals, were considerably more ordered when waiting in line and were quiet and subdued – a sense reinforced by their appearance in the absence of the rest of the prison population. Those who were heavily in to mamba and spice³¹ were described as moving around like “zombies” though were reported as frequently being passed out on landings (e.g. Tommy and Robert – himself a user) (I saw a couple of instances of this myself, though could not testify to their regularity). Those withdrawing or “rattling” were closely associated with these but considered more irritating.

“Say if there’s a few travelling boys in the prison, I’ll know them and they’ll know me and that’ll be it, I’ll be set up. But in places like this, you don’t see many. It’s like a dumping ground, it is. But it just seems to be drug addicts. Cos if you go down south there’s not really.. there is drug addicts but there’s not to the extent that they’re publicly showing it. Cos you know it’s there, they seem to like, keep it to themselves. Here, you’ll hear it just before they open the doors, up there there’s a fella “oh we’re wanting tobacco for a zoot”... they’re talking about spice like it’s just a bit of weed” (Tommy).

Tommy referred to the soundscape as a marker of the social climate. Not as serious as other prisons he had been in (his worst being Belmarsh), in the ‘time’ it offered or the community it housed. Similarly quiet but unafflicted by the stigma attached to vulnerable prisoners were ‘pad rats’ who kept to themselves and aimed to escape attention. Local lads were the most vocal and by far the largest single group:

“The Midtown lads always like to have a name for themselves, even though I don’t really know how they can but they do try, see down here they’re more softer. They just talk shit. But when you’re in London and places like that it’s a game” (Tommy).

Some of the local prisoners, such as Tonk would become considerably louder around local sporting events, chanting “*Midtown, Midtown*” at various points of the day. I often had to remind people I wasn’t that far away when speaking with them (“*people think I’m aggressive, I’m just loud*” Dermot). Those in for more serious offences, with a reputation

³¹ Mamba and Spice are both particular types and common names for New Psychoactive Substances (NPS), so called because they are synthetically based chemical compounds. Commonly smoked although habits and usage began to shift following the smoking ban with men expressing a concern that greater numbers would smoke it without diluting its effects with tobacco given the elevated price.

on the out, or ‘lifers’, tended to be considerably more economical with their speech and movement. Tommy, a lifer who was stuck at HMP Midtown pending appeal, moved, at a slow, steady and deliberate pace. He spoke in low tones and never rushed, his movement was loaded with potential menace (though he was unfailingly charming and polite).

HMP Midtown was a local prison, with a particularly large local population who regarded the prison as ‘theirs’. Accent and bearing indicated belonging as did dominance over the sound environment - *“We’re in our comfort zone. You know what I mean? So like, it’s our local jail, all my mates are in here so I’m comfortable”* (Tonk). Being local was a means of claiming territory and expressing belonging in the prison, but also provided an identity which others defined themselves against: *“You think I’m from the North? I’m from London. We deal with things like this. Come in the cell now, yeah, and we’ll sort it out... we’re more straight to the point, we’re more direct”* (Lamar). Southerners such as Tommy and Lamar considered themselves disadvantaged by a system which rewarded familiarity and local belonging but nevertheless considered themselves more serious and direct. They had a different rhythm of speech and movement which was audible in their interactions with the soundscape. Midtown lads would often issue call and answers around the landings in the run up to important games and tended to move around in unhurried clusters. Londoners spoke in a fast patter – the familiar staccato of the streets of home to my ears but greeted with wariness from locals whose interactions were slower, and their speech softer save those hard Midtown vowels.

Staff used the soundscape to denote status and experience differently but to a similar extent. The ability to decode the mood of the day, in order to regulate it was dependent on familiarity and experience (Officer’s Derek, Rose, Kathleen). Sound could also be used to assert class and social standing beyond the walls of the prison. One younger prison officer, Kayleigh, had upset a number of prisoners by mimicking their flattened vowels in pronouncing her name (*“my name’s Kaylee not Kay- LEH, I’m not common”*.) She was reported to have told them: *“I’m not from the scummy part of town”*. A number of prisoners repeated this to me in affronted tones over a concerted length of time and amongst different social groups. Perhaps inadvertently Kayleigh had struck a raw nerve. Prisoners frequently complained she had *“no communication skills”* and she was later potted (see p95). In this way sound was used as a means of assigning people positions in the social system, both in terms of class, esteemed seniority and standing.

The significance of sound in terms of the prisoner hierarchy extended to judgements about care, charity and tolerance. In an environment where goods are scarce, Davey's attitude was a common one:

"They only do it for the sympathy. What they'll find is people will start self-harming if they've got no tobacco or maybe if they're stressed, which is understandable, but mainly if they haven't got something and they want something, they'll do it for attention".

The belief that those who shouted loudest got what they wanted over those who were more deserving was commonplace: *"If you're humble and nice to people you don't get nothing. It's cliquy in here. If you smash up your cell and kick off, you get everything"* (Jamal). In Urfan's case his frustration at failing to get himself heard or advance within the prison social system despite observing the rules was a source of intense frustration:

"He get the job, still they're not giving me the job. He banged the cell, he do it. Bang, bang, bang, get the job. Because ritual is banging, breaking, they good for them and they getting the job because they open. Which ones is the right persons? Okay?" (Urfan).

Alongside these expressions of frustration and agitation at a system considered unfair, were complex judgements about who was deserving of greater latitude and care. In such confined spaces excessive noise could cause considerable discomfort for others: *"You want to be here about one in the morning. People going mad. I've only been here three days but every night people banging, screaming. I guess people get frustrated. Kept awake every night so far"* (James). One prisoner would bang every morning. His cell was next door to Mooch and Sammy, above Davey and a few doors down from Will who described his behaviour:

"He's never got anything in his cell to be honest. I don't even know if he watches telly but what he does do, he either kicks the door, slams his toilet seat or his windows. You know what's strange is you can tell which is which". "That banger is bang on. Like ten to eight he's banging. Every day he bangs. He knows we're not opened til eight but he just bangs anyway" (Will).

This created considerable and concerted disturbance: *"Yeah, right above me. It was hard work that. I don't know how he kept doing it. He must've just slept through the day but*

he used to bang through the day as well!" (Davey). Nevertheless, prisoners were generally understanding of his poor mental health. Rarely did I observe anyone giving a word of caution about his continued noise (a regular means of unofficially keeping the peace between prisoners if a disruptive individual landed). He was extended charity and understanding which would have been rare in other social settings. Little fuss was made and it was widely acknowledged that Shamble's story was a cautionary tale of other's unkindness which had left him broken:

"Like that shambles up there, like, two doors away from me. The officers they pick on him you know? They treat him like shit man. I have to send him burn all the time I do. To keep him chilled out cos if he don't he's banging that door all fucking night...They treat him like shit. "come on Shambles, time you go bang up". They don't like him out. It's bad. He does proper jail, he does hard jail man. That's who I feel for in this jail. Everyone else is alright but him, he's got nothing" (Mooch).

In Midtown Sound was bound up with social codes and systems of status, integral to the social order of the prison as well as providing a means of identifying individual's role within it. In this way sound was related to jostling for power and position as well as indicating the ways in which power could extend outside more narrow conceptions of it; Shambles did not participate in Midtown social life in any direct or conventional sense, nevertheless he had an important role within it, allowing others to demonstrate their civility and kindness. Despite socially withdrawing he received charity and tolerance not extended to others. Here was a complex stratification of noisy/needy. Some disruptively noisy prisoners were disregarded as *"a nuisance"* (Davey talking about a banging prisoner), while others were extended sympathy – *"he set fire to his cell, poor sod"* (Lugs). The basis on which people were assigned to either category remained unclear to me, and it was often the case that more troubled individuals were dismissed in conversation, by both staff and prisoners.

There was power too, in the sense of collective force that could be discerned in the 'feel' of the prison. This collective sociality could both create and affect the particular emotional climate of the prison community. Not only could the vulnerable and socially disadvantaged receive considerable care and understanding from the wider community, but they could affect it in far-reaching ways, altering the 'feel' of prison spaces.

7.3 “Bubbly” reverberations

Elaine Crawley (2004) describes prison as an “emotional arena”, a space where the nature of confinement and heightened tension and anxiety combine to create a charged atmosphere where tempers run high. There are a number of words used as shorthand for periods of volatility and incidents in the prison context, used to describe the ‘mood’ or emotional climate; terms such as “Bubbly” and “Spikey”. After a few visits, my fieldnotes become peppered with reflections on how the day “feels” in relation to how it sounded (*“feels quiet”, “feels calm today – feels?” “feels stable but I have no idea what I’m basing that on.... No rumble underfoot?”*). This was a frequent and repeated topic of conversation with members of the community, during which explanations would be offered: *“...spice and that. They start holding it back cos they can’t afford it. That’s what it is more than likely. Looking at the landings now, I know it’s gonna kick off”* (Wes), *“Cos it were canteen sheets last night. Fridays and Mondays are the worst days in the prison”* (Stretch), *“...yeah, you know who’s gonna kick off anyway. There’s something in the air, and it’s all over mamba”* Robert)). Sound was frequently conflated with emotion and functioned as a means of assessing the temperature on the wing. Stretch made the association explicit when he said: *“if you’ve got no sound, you’ve got no feelings”*. Katie Hemsworth (2016) refers to this practice as “feeling the range”. The emotional atmosphere of a prison, she argues, can be gauged by listening to its soundscape.

Given the highly regulated and restricted nature of social life in the prison, sound operated as a major means of emotional transference. People echoed the emotional state of others in circumstances where they could hear but not see (Nakahashi and Ohtsuki 2015). Emotions were articulated aurally – such as through shouting, banging, whooping or singing. Feelings – attempts to articulate or think about emotion – were conveyed through sound, such as with exaggerated sighs and so forth. In this way emotions could be spread around prison spaces and “caught” as others were infected. Not only was the emotional climate of the prison audible, but this was also a major means of transference, altering the overall ‘feel’ of the place. The shifting nature of the emotional climate was particularly notable in HMP Midtown where the deputy governor noted: *“the feel of the place can change like that, you’re always on your toes. I’ll probably never work in a place like it again, it’s unique”* (No.2). The Deputy Governor’s assessment of the emotional climate of HMP Midtown perhaps reflected its small size and composition of

one, small wing. Emotional contagion is a useful concept for exploring how emotion spread in these prison spaces. Hatfield *et al.* define emotional contagion as “a multiply determined family of social, psychophysiological and behavioural phenomena”, “theoretically, emotions can be “caught” in a number of ways” (Hatfield *et al.* 1994: 7-10).

At Midtown, emotions could operate like infectious earworms. Different strains of emotions were more or less virulent and contagious depending on the source of infection and how conducive the environment was to its spreading. Davey explained how easily emotion could spread in a confined space: “*Say if you wake up to people shouting in the morning. You want to wake up naturally not to people shouting so you’re gonna be pissed off all day or pissed off for a bit*” (Davey). The ‘mood’ of the place could be drastically altered by individuals. Sadness might be endured in the privacy of cell, though could equally carry and lower the mood (particularly if someone had received bad news). Anger and violence were frequently expressed at a louder volume and could therefore be heard, increasing others’ agitation.

Hatfield *et al.* (1994: 11) argue that “*emotional information processing is not always accessible to conversant awareness*”. Sound articulated this process, providing an account of how emotion is experienced, and a lexicon for the feelings arising from it. Sound fulfilled an important function in HMP Midtown, operating as an emotional barometer in prison spaces. One officer would frequently ask “*how’s it sound*” upon walking on to the wing, to which I would always respond with an indication of the mood (Mark, Officer). Feelings of discomfort, agitation or wariness could be generated by a range of sounds, or ‘noise’. These weren’t necessarily directly human (shouting) or emanating from interactions between humans and their environment (banging), but rather the general soundscape. Red described Midtown: “*It’s one of the worst jails, the very worst...everyone’s on top of each other. If someone’s distressed you get interrupted sleep for days and you can feel the tension rising*”. Red’s observation reveals how “feeling” was made tangible when sound was taken in to account, echoing the definition of sound as a “modality of emotion” (Hemsworth 2016). Discussions between the writer-in-residence and I on a rather testy day illustrated how excessively loud music on an otherwise flat-feeling day could be sufficient to elicit concern: “*loud, what’s it hiding? I can come on here and know something’s up. See, I don’t like that. Straight away, why isn’t anyone telling them to turn it down?*” (Bear). Loud music, or an abandoned

television with the volume excessively high could denote a number of activities associated with disorder such as testing the reaction and organisation of the staff, displacing attention from something going on elsewhere, or a desire to irritate. Exuberant enjoyment tended to be accompanied by other sounds which distinguished it, such as singing along. In this sense it was the collection of sounds – the key of the “*tune*” (Derek, Officer) - as well as what was absent, which denoted a “feeling”.

Conversation with one of the prison psychologists indicated how sound acted as a way of gauging the ‘feel’ of the day: “*It feels kind of feisty today, something’s off*” (Claire, psychologist). Claire’s choice of language was interesting as it imbued the atmosphere with an anthropomorphised identity of its own. Conversations like this illustrated reactions to what we were hearing through discussion of the feelings a ‘bubbly’ atmosphere elicited. While sound provided a means of assessing the mood of the day, it also impacted on the way others experienced emotion, sending waves of feeling around the community. Emotional responses could be heard, echoing around the wings in a “ripple effect”, reverberating on others and affecting the group dynamics (Barsade 2002). Sound then, conveyed emotion which could influence other individuals “*It can make you suicidal. It can put other people’s problems in your head and you don’t need that cos you got your own. It’s very noisy. When it’s quiet something’s going on*” (Pete). Emotions were air born in sound, carrying around the wing and, where resistance was low, infecting others.

People’s emotional state could, of course, be resistant to other’s. Whether the influence was likely to spread or elicit corresponding feelings depended on a number of factors including role of the individual/s in the community and the nature of the interaction: “*Sometimes they’re shouting at you like they’re stressed. You can hear like they’re stressed but what have they got to be stressed about?*” (Ray). Ray indicated the tone of communication with staff could elicit a correspondingly agitated reaction. “*The way they talk to you*” (King) was a frequent point of complaint and grievance amongst the prisoners, although staff had similar complaints, sometimes directed at one another. Managerial staff also referred to one or two colleagues with a reputation for moaning and lethargy which sucked good feeling from the atmosphere as “*mood hoovers*”. Working and living in close proximity with a relatively small team of community perhaps heightened sensitivity to those whose emotional state had an adverse effect on the

working environment. Transferring to another wing or unit was not an option as it would be in other prisons.

While emotion could spread rapidly around the prison community, it was frequently unintentional spill over of frustration or distress. This was not always the case however. Sound was a way of exercising power over others by exerting influence over their feelings and shifting the emotional temperature. Banging was perhaps the most prevalent example of this. Depending on the force and context this could give rise to a range of feelings as discussed above, from fear and anxiety to agitation, frustration, irritation. All of these feelings and the emotion they elicited could have a negative impact on order since they threatened the tone of social interaction. On one occasion, a disgruntled prisoner kept up his banging for the entire length of association. My fieldnotes are filled with references to it that afternoon “*still banging.... still banging.... Beginning to fray the nerves...*”. I was speaking to several distressed people for much of this period, and listening intently, with a backing track of incessant, loud banging made for an exhausting afternoon. On another occasion I spoke to an officer as they were being whistled at who responded “*oh yeah, they know what they’re doing. They can change a whole atmosphere*” (Irfan, officer). Assessing the temperature of the prison community by reading the soundscape was an unacknowledged aspect of jail craft, requiring an ability to ‘read the room’ for signs of imminent disruption and/or threats to safety.

While prisoners were frequently confined to their cell, rendered invisible by the locked door they were stuck behind, they could nevertheless make their presence keenly felt by assaulting other’s eardrums, and thus affecting other’s emotions. This adds complexity to the relationship between power and order by illustrating the diversity of forms disruption and contestation could take. Power could be exerted over another by imposing sounds which altered emotion and mood. Listening to the fluctuations of emotion in the soundscape emphasised the fluidity of power as it was exercised in the short term, through the day, indicating the need for conceptions of power which more fully account for the way in which it is exercised through interactions bounded by time and space. Considering sound also leads to a closer examination of the significance of emotion in prison spaces. More usually emotion is treated as a means of considering individual experiences of prison and how this impacts their trajectory rather than the way in which emotion has a broader, social dimension (e.g. Laws and Crewe 2015). Utilising the ‘sociology of the senses’ beyond the mutual gaze, reveals how the members of the Midtown community

engaged in social processes of meaning-making which influenced their social environment, or ecology. Harnessing emotional contagion to explore the ways ‘feelings’ could spread within the prison is useful for describing the mechanism but is of limited value for providing a theoretical basis for explaining why this happens or what effects it has on the order of prison life. This is a subject to which I return below.

7.4 Arrhythmia

If a “good” day has a particular set of sounds, so too does a “bad” one: *“The noise, innit like heat rises, noise rises”* (Lugs). Arrhythmia refers to rhythms in a discordant state. Lefebvre defines arrhythmia as rhythms in dissonance, “there is suffering, a pathological state (of which arrhythmia is generally at the same time, symptom, cause and effect)” (2004:16). This is a useful means of conceptualising what is indicated by the soundscape of a day which was not running smoothly:

“The atmosphere in the jail? Yeah, definitely. Yeah. I can relay a story to you. This happened on the 12th of July 2015, and we’ve got a lot of new staff... and I was on landing three with one of the other more experienced staff...and I walked on and I said: There’s sommat not right here. It doesn’t feel right. I said who are you working with today and he told me and I said, I says look, I’ll watch your back and you watch my back even though we’re on different landings. And that morning I got assaulted three times, broke my ribs and was involved in five incidents...and that was just a feeling as I walked on to the wing. I don’t know how I can explain that tension, or how you can feel that, but you could. Sometimes there is no sound. It’s just a nothing. It’s just a void but you sense it, you sense that there’s something amiss. Because it’s different. The noise is different...” (Officer Rose).

There was, in other words, a different aural quality to the day which conveyed the emotional climate, indicating whether the regime was ticking over as desirable (though there were a number of other markers for the latter, once familiarity with the regime was established):

“An ordinary is sort of a nice, bubbly noise. You might hear a little bit of music in the background, and people are chatting and that. And sometimes the

prisoners'll shout to you, and you know, it's a happy noise that is. But when things get a bit, you know, strained, it's a bit more, like I said the noise drops, and it's a different sort of noise. I can't explain to you what I mean..." (Kathleen, Officer).

While staff, to a greater extent than prisoners, expressed discomfort, or exasperation when invited to describe what a good/bad day sounds like, they nevertheless were able to identify sounds which signalled the 'mood' of the day both in interview and passing conversation. Given the near unanimity with which people in HMP Midtown were able to describe feelings, emotions, moods in terms of sound it seems more likely that initial discomfort was born more of a lack of immediate vocabulary for doing so, and the unusual nature of the task. They frequently spoke of a "feeling" before reflecting on its aural qualities. Both staff and prisoners had a distinct and definite means of articulating what it sounded like when things went wrong:

"Sharp, sharp sounds. You can feel it. The wing feels there's a bit of a stress... people walk around differently, there's certain prisoners who walk around in a certain way. There's certain sharper, louder sounds that are out of sync with everything else... cos when everything's running correctly there's like a pattern of noises that just fit in together; people are moving around all this kind of stuff, and then if something kicks off, if someone kicks off then there's a peak in that noise and then certain, in a certain pitch and you Bang. Straight away, you know? "Oi YOU" (Derek, Officer).

"you just see everyone running, watching the fight. And it's just stupid. And then you see the way it is, so the atmosphere goes quiet, and after they start going Raaaa, or it goes up" (Jack).

Type of movements indicated something was afoot. Movement in discordant rhythms indicated interruption to the daily routine. These different behaviours disrupted the usual rhythms of everyday life inside. At Midtown these cues related directly to safety. There was a whole symphony of sounds which indicated trouble or shady activity. When people clustered at the door to the first night centre it generally indicated the anticipated arrival of someone packing³². These huddles would happen during the evening meal when those

³² The practice of smuggling contraband, usually inserted in the rectum. Some prisoners talked about others coming back to prison specifically to trade - particularly in spice or mamba because the price was so high - to make extra money or repay debts.

on the first night centre came through to collect their dinner. The effect was marked as it disrupted the rhythm of men from landing, to servery, to landing.

The development of a violent incident had its own soundtrack. Hushed, prickly quiet, subtle changes in movement and disruptions of rhythm followed by a woosh of voices and movement. Men's voices, rubber soles struggling for purchase on shiny floors, congregating in groups and corners. Much 'business' was conducted behind cell doors, away from cameras, prying eyes and the risk of punishment, as indicated by testimony of numerous prisoners. What could be seen was either a spontaneous flair up or performative. Instrumental at least as much as it was expressive. Staff were not immune from this, a hard line taken in a rushed moment would have to be backed up with action. "Face" was all. Feet on lino was a significant aural marker of trouble. Staff shoes, being part of the uniform are made from a narrow range of materials. When they moved in to twist someone up³³ they scuffed shoes on the floor, their chains jangled as they moved in concert. It was also apparent when the rhythms of the day had been disrupted to the point of interfering with staff's ability to work together: *"Not in rhythm with themselves. Bumping in to one another. Not working in concert, desynchronized"* (fieldnotes).

"...Sitting in the office in the segregation³⁴. And, you can't hear what people are saying if they're on the threes.. but when there's a certain sound of, erm, jeering I suppose... Jeering is just never good. So You're trying to respond to that, you can identify that quite quickly... And then the movement of feet. The rapid movement of feet. So literally when you're downstairs you can hear somebody upstairs moving faster than they should, so you start to pick up on it" (Tone, Officer).

This demonstrates the extent to which Midtown Officers used their ears in the course of their day. They listened for anomalies or disruptions to the usual rhythmic ebb and flow, for movement out of speed and out of place. What this demonstrates is the extent to which hearing forms part of the officer skill set. Sound is used to interpret aural cues to action

³³ Prison term for controlling and restraining someone, referring to the act of twisting arms painfully behind the back to secure compliance.

³⁴ "Segregation" refers to the care and segregation unit. Segregation is a process by which a prisoner is removed from association with other prisoners under rule 45 (good order and discipline – GOOD, or own interests). A prisoner can be segregated and placed under an amount of separation and protection without being removed to 'seg' in some circumstances, but it usually – and in the case of Midtown, always – referred to the unit as well as the state.

for staff, implicating sound in processes of security and safety implicating sound within the ecology of survival for staff as well as prisoners. Sound alerted staff to the precarity of their circumstances, though they were not necessarily as attuned to the same aspects of the sonic environment as those who lived within it.

While Jack maintained the response to violence was determined by its recipient, observations and discussions suggested this was an over-simplification; An ‘us and them’ which reflected Jack’s particular relationships with staff (and in Jack’s case it did appear to be reciprocated). Violence might be part of the fabric of prison life, but it had a complex moral code attached, as Stretch illustrated. This code had an aural quality too. Depending on the circumstances it could reset the tone of the community or ratchet up tension. The precise conditions which determined which days were ones where things settled and “order” was resumed quickly, and when “bubbliness” was sustained remained a puzzle. Differences between sustained bouts of disorder and disruption, and isolated incidents aside, a bad day had a sound and both prisoners and staff were able to tell me what it sounded like:

“Like a rattle Cccggghrrr.. like, imagine a radio that’s not on the right station. And you got to pick through it. I can decipher it some way. I don’t know why. I can decipher it. I was on the fours last night yeah and it was kicking off downstairs. No one else could hear it but I was like – the block’s getting smashed up. They went shuddup. They went how do ‘you know? And I were only leaning on the wall. I was leaning but I knew from the vibrations, cos there’s different vibrations from music to damage and they say to me how can you? And I can smell things as well. I smell trouble. I’ll stand there and I don’t know why but I’ll start sweating and then I’ll be - there’s gonna be an incident” (Stretch, prisoner).

In a place where violence is commonplace, knowing what is going on and where it is happening could prove key to avoiding harm. Sound performed a useful means of doing this, alerting members of the community to changes in the emotional climate as well as conveying sounds of violent interactions through the walls, pipes etc. In this way sound was a necessary component to the ecology of survival in prison in Midtown (Toch 1992). This seemed to hold for those who had been inside for some time, whether their preference was to get stuck in, or - *“nothing to do with me”* (Will) – to avoid confrontation.

I took extended notes relating to particular incidents where events conspired to disrupt the normal regime. These were amongst the limited occasions I was free to write, but were removed from the steady routine of a better day:

On the netting

Lone figure at height, loitering, bouncing on netting. Pacing. Tense waiting. Peering. Speculating. Men remain behind the door. Growing frustration as day is disrupted. "Fucks with your mental health when you have people like that twat" mutters Finchy as he passes (a cleaning orderly). "Get off the fucking netting!!" a disembodied voice shouts. Bang. Bang. Bang. "Okay, go and get kitted up and then round the back way" staff murmur to one another, as they strategize his forced removal, patience exhausted, time spent. Angry voices, agitated. "Do me a favour, go sweep him off the netting would you?" Orderly prisoner says to officer, officer: "I'd love to, he'd come straight through like a chip". "As soon as he's off there it's all gonnnna kick off!". And then he toddles off as unremarkably as he walked on. Talked and gently walked... ten minutes later, music resumes. Only then do I realise the absence of sound. Men listening behind doors for cues to regime. Non-conversations resume. Irked boredom between doors. Two fights, both on the threes. Rhythms erratic today. Residual tension (from fieldnotes).

'Going on the netting³⁵' was classed as an incident at height, which sent in motion a whole chain of action, not least of which was restricted movement and suspension of the regime for most of the prison. Prisoners tended to have little sympathy for those engaging in this behaviour because of the disruption to the regime. The day ground to a halt, eliciting impatience from staff and prisoners. There was little movement, but audible tension (often very literally in the sound of staccato expletives issuing around the landing). Here there was a convergence in the irritation between staff and prisoners. Everyone wanted to get moving. Humour was often exchanged between prisoners and

³⁵ Netting is hung from landings to prevent harm/self-harm from falling, being thrown or jumping over the railings. Climbing over the handrail to walk on the netting was a disciplinary offence. In Midtown this was the area where dirty laundry, toilet roll and other items were thrown for sharing or collection. Orderlies would often walk across it as a short cut or to retrieve said items. This generally passed without comment or censure. Like many prison rules it was a bit more complicated and arbitrary than appeared.

staff. In this way incidents at height often offered a means for staff and prisoners to express solidarity and shared purpose.

Cell fires were less common than going on the netting and elicited a significantly different response given the higher stakes involved in deliberately setting your own cell alight (with you in it):

Cell fire

Officer comes in, meeting suspended, all back to cell. Distant panic sounds, disruption to routine. We re-enter unit and stand around. Library suspended. Cell fire, Lugs as he walks by; “says he wanted to kill himself, poor sod”. More sympathy than I expected. Banging. Lock in. Feet on metal... most away, just a few dawdling... subdued. Not the noise I expected. One says: “my cell’s right by there, I don’t want to get locked in”. All is hushed when last men away. Officers in fire hoods, obscuring features, banging on door to get in. Roof opened but smoke gets around quickly. Stings my eyes, bitter in my nose. Staff taking it in turns to wear hoods (“it’s hot under there”). Still battling to get in. Hose makes sound as drips on to floor below where one or two wait to mop it. Fire brigade troop in but will not enter cell until prisoner has been removed. Staff will douse him with water/extinguisher along with everything else, someone tells me. Four officers in full c&r gear approach. Banging against the door. So quiet... all listening. Everything suspended. All focused on this scene. Battle quick, hard, brutal. They are in. I can’t hear much from my vantage point: “MOVE THAT FUCKING MATTRESS NOW. MOVE IT. THIS IS HOW WE DO IT” prisoner brought out of cell, bare chested, shaven-headed. Small next to uniforms. “I’m not even resisting though. I’m not resisting”. “FUCKING SHUT UP. JUST BRING YOUR KNEES UP IN TO YOUR FUCKING CHEST”. Prisoner taken, twisted up (head immobilised, arms behind back) to segregation. Quiet. Chatter subdued as men reappear. “Now they’re going to try and put the smoking ban forward”.

Here there is less convergence between staff and prisoner motives though it is reasonable to assume that most would prefer to avoid burning alive, very possibly this extends to the individual who has set their cell alight. The presence of fear, the silence as men listen

behind the door renders power asymmetry palpable. Here every man who is behind the door is reliant upon officers to unlock them in the event the fire spreads. Sound here forms the only means of gauging threat: *“My cell’s right by there, I don’t want to get locked in”* (Davey). The disruption to normal operations was here linked to genuine fear and distress. Staff were antsy and agitated, prisoners subdued and anxious. It took me a moment to understand why there was an absence of shouting out for information or for unlock; the men were listening. Not only were the rhythmic rituals of the regime disturbed, but the emotional climate was heavy and uncomfortable.

7.5 ‘Phasing’

The prison environment was likened to a ‘pressure cooker’. When disorder occurred it might be fleeting or part of an ongoing spate of raised levels of violence and disruption to the routine. Where residual disruption took some time to dissipate, resuming a steady rhythm was a process, a series of steps which reset the rhythms of the day (Sparks *et al.* 1996). This movement “from tension to peace” has received considerably less attention than might be predicted given its relation to order (Liebling *et al* 2010:8). The process by which order, and a steady emotional climate were restored, or lessened had an aural quality: “phasing”. Phasing is a musical term which relates to gradual moving in to different time signatures before moving back in to rhythm. There is little uniform about this process, nor the events that precede it. More serious, prolonged events may take longer to resolve, whereas minor incidents might be sufficient to alleviate the tension. In this sense, unlike within a piece of music, there is nothing predetermined once set in motion (Epstein 1984). Getting things back to ‘normal’ – the “everyday tune that’s normal for here” - could be initiated by staff, by prisoners or a combination of both, but it did have an aural quality, as did the restoration of a “good” day. Phasing is a useful way of describing the aural qualities of the emotional climate as shifts between disruption and regulation. The fluctuation between greater and lesser degrees of order in the prison environment could be interpreted as a necessary tension, the means by which cohesion is reaffirmed and the dialectic which maintains equilibrium (Durkheim 1895).

“Sometimes in the morning, when we unlock, you can hear how boisterous it is, when they all come out of the cells and they’re running round doing their dodgy deals and they’re all getting off and doing whatever they need to do...then some

mornings they'll come out and its subdued, and you just know. Somethings gonna go. Don't know what it is, it'll probably be somebody's gonna come out and batter somebody else, something like that. But you can sense it's gonna happen but you just don't know what it is. And then it happens. You deal with it and then everything goes back to normal...racket and noise and banging. Just the way it is" (Officer Rose).

Here Officer Rose was explaining the process of phasing, there is a heavy expectation in the air, the incident occurs and then *"everything goes back to normal"*. This pressure valve sensation has an audible quality. The skill deployed in restoring the regime could be likened to the methods used to address a biorhythmic dysfunction – such as a panic attack, or a palpitation – kicking the normal rhythms back in to place by lowering blood pressure and measuring breath to restore normal rhythms. Lefebvre terms this *"eurhythmia"*: healthy interaction between two or more rhythms (Lefebvre 2004). While not explained in those terms by staff, the necessity of getting things back to routine was repeatedly referred to as a core requirement for those in charge of the wing (e.g. Officer Rose, Officer Derek, Officer McKie).

The second 'potting' that occurred during my time at HMP Midtown was Kayleigh's. It was a meticulously planned and therefore particularly unpleasant incident. She was pelted with faecal and urinary contributions from a number of prisoners with bleach tablets thrown in (she was fine and returned to the wing almost immediately, earning her much respect). Potting is highly unpleasant. Despite this, when I came on the wing I was struck by the level-mood. The wing sounded in good humour and staff appeared relaxed. I couldn't work out why this should be, particularly given this was the second such incident in a relatively short space of time. What I was hearing was in fact audible relief, no one had been hurt and it 'felt' like the tension had cleared. Richey described the sound of tension: *"I keep on thinking it's kicked off cos the sound keeps dropping"* (Richey). In the case of an isolated incident, once it had happened the sense of relieved tension was palpable/audible. The after effect of an isolated incident in which no one has been seriously harmed, sounds like an audible release of pressure. On a side note I would argue potting, however unpleasant, was about assaulting the dignity rather than the person, as a warning to rebalance respect. It had a specific, instrumental purpose and was part of a wider code of penalties to deliver a message for perceived unjust behaviour, albeit with a brutal method of delivery.

More concerted and extended periods of disruption might require staff action. These varied depending on severity and range of actions available to the officer in charge of that shift, as well as their distinct styles. One such technique was to control and slow unlock, like adding eggs slowly when making a cake, to avoid curdling:

“...people are feeling tense. Prisoners are frustrated cos they’ve been locked up so much. But we need to get them out... what we would do then would be a controlled unlock, so instead of half the landing you might do 8 or 10 cells... and try to keep it under control, and then just gradually get back to normal” (Officer McKie).

The reverse also offers a means of recalibrating the rhythms of the day, locking up the prisoners in order to reset the daily rhythm:

“I’ve shut the wing down just to deal with it. Cos I think sometimes the staff need a break when things are a bit hairy. And I’ll shut the wing down I will, I’ll put everybody, give the staff ten minutes just to get themselves back together again, and we just start again. Go right back in to it”. (Officer Rose).

Officer Rose suspended the day in order to allow the staff a moment to regain composure without the additional pressure of a wing full of men. This represented a temporary disruption to the day and more time behind the door, neither of which was ideal or greeted with enthusiasm. Having been present in the case of both delays to unlock, and unscheduled but short periods of time behind the door, both were considerably easier to tolerate for the men than prolonged, additional time behind the door that could result from more major acts of “indiscipline”.

In a piece of music, phasing concludes with a realignment of competing rhythms. It is this “movement from tension to peace” (Liebling *et al* 2010) which the officers describe above, echoing the assertion that order must be “worked at” (Sparks *et al* 1996). Liebling *et al* point out that this aspect of prison officers work is largely uncharted, leading to the mistaken belief there is something unknowable about the process of restoring order. Without sound this aspect of prison life may well have proved elusive. A good day is characterised by the atmosphere of the prison (Liebling *et al* 2010: 8). As demonstrated above, sound is bound up with the expression and interpretation of emotions; feelings. Exploring the way in which sound operates with regard to emotional contagion is a useful concept for exploring how emotions are transferred in prison spaces. This explanation

offers useful instruction on the mechanics of emotional transference but is inadequate for assessing the social significance of these processes in prison; emotions are social things (Doyle McCarthy 1989). If the sonic environment conveys moods and emotions, affecting and inducing particular emotional responses, this raises the possibility that sound is intrinsically bound up with the social relations which allow for the maintenance of order (Leibling 2004). Emotions and their construction are central to long-standing conceptions of social solidarity in general and criminal justice in particular (Fisher and Koo Chon 1989; Loader 2011). If we accept that sound is the primary means of gauging emotional climate, and that emotions are social, this intimates that sound may be instrumental in processes of social organisation. Emotions are part of “a continuum of affectivity that links human bodies to their physical and social environment” (Fox 2015: 301). Sound was a vital means of mediating emotion at HMP Midtown as well as assessing the emotional climate. This observation intimates an instrumental role for sound in processes of social organisation within Midtown.

For Durkheim society is both a fact and a force. The collective is both a source of constraint and of a sense of belonging for the individuals who comprise it (Durkheim 1893). Durkheim afforded emotion a central social purpose in binding the collective and reaffirming social bonds (Durkheim 1915). Ket expresses the desirability of a sense of collective solidarity amongst staff when he says: *“It really has totally changed...that move as one. They don’t move as one now. They do, but not how they used to. They try to but you’ll never get that again. Never”* (Ket, Officer). Prison can be understood as a collective society, bound by shared beliefs and feelings which characterise mechanical solidarity (Durkheim 1893). Emotion could be used to reassert the sense of the collective and dissipate tension by asserting the mechanical solidarity on which the society of Midtown was based. This could also work in the opposite direction. Riots and disorder are not uncommon in the prison system, which could result in a ship in of a number of prisoners on rushed transfer. There was distrust and animosity between prisoners from neighbouring towns, and an unplanned influx often led to disorder and/or violence. The disturbed equilibrium could be felt/heard, as could ratcheting tensions. Earlier in my visit a number of prisoners were moved from London. The stark contrast in rhythms, both in movement and speech were immediately recognisable as was the disruption to the general sound ecology. I recognised these as rhythms of home but discerned a discordant effect which was commented upon by staff and prisoners. A particularly volatile period in

recent history, there were a number of incidents of disorder and unrest in prisons resulting in groups being decanted to Midtown. The arrival of groups of prisoners overnight, following disruption at other prisons had similar effects, altering the delicate emotional balance. This could result in a variety of problems which the newcomers would be blamed for. “*It’s them new Birmingham lads*” for example, was a response to a query about why the day felt spikey.

Affecting particular emotional responses shifted the emotional climate and could invoke a sense of solidarity. This had the effect of uniting the community in a sense of contributing to the collective soundscape. Adding to the sounds accompanying the rituals and routines of daily prison life manufactured opportunities for collective effervescence which reaffirmed belonging to the group and the sense of community within the prison (Durkheim 1915). This collectivity could be a potent force. While I was at Midtown the staff began staggering men back in from exercise after sixty or so men failed to move back to cell as instructed. Staff found this “scary” (Lena) feeling the sudden, unscheduled force of a group whose collective strength far exceeded their own. There was no subsequent explanation for this episode, but there were a number of instances as well as individuals who used sound and action to shift the emotional climate and shore up order. Individual members of staff consistently acted as rhythmic pace-setters, alleviating tension with laughter, singing and joking. Mitzy was a long-serving officer who was very well regarded by prisoners. She was a strong communicator, not always in a good mood, but she would often sing around the wings. Others, more usually junior, female members of staff would often join in which lightened the mood and contributed to a sense of stability. Ket, a long-serving officer who had begun in CARATS³⁶ and retained a sense of separateness perhaps as a result of former suspicion from the “black and whites”, was unfailingly good-humoured. His laughter had a particular function, boosting morale in the community: Trina spoke of how the staff could “*hear his laugh over the comms, it keeps us all going*”. When I asked what would happen if he went quiet she told me “*we’d all worry*”. In these ways these members of staff infected the emotional climate, phasing the mood back in to a settled, rhythmic thrum.

Phasing then, was often (though not exclusively) affected by deliberate actions which served to shift and lighten tensions as well as to restore order; processes which could be

³⁶ CARAT stands for counselling, assessment, referral, advice and throughcare

discerned aurally. In this way sound signified particular operations of power which worked to restore order and equilibrium. While phasing occurred on a larger scale as part of formal prison procedures, these also constituted frequent micro-acts the result of which was potentially to dissipate tension before it erupted, or to assist in the restoration of peace in its wake. Ket explained how he used his mood to influence others:

“When I first started I was on a mission. There was this lady and she was just miserable. Miserable as sin. I thought you know what? I’ll put a smile on her face;” “Good morning love, how are you?” Everyday. Slowly but surely, a smile! Got ya!” (Ket, Officer).

Davey shared an appreciation of Ket’s upbeat temperament: *“It’s a good laugh is that. Yeah, he always is like that, Ket”*. When interviewed Ket spoke of generally positive and cooperative interactions with prisoners, I made an automatic association between that and his manner which may have reflected my appreciation of his friendliness as much as the effect I observed, though his tone was consistently warm and upbeat. There were also examples of prisoner’s deliberately working to evoke collective sentiment to alleviate tension and restore stability:

“Laughter’s good in here isn’t it? “You need it. It diffuses a lot of situations... there was a situation in here a couple of months ago, just before Christmas, and it was getting out of hand. So I just stripped off and ran down the landing. It just diffused it...” (Stretch).

Accounting for the association between sound, emotion and order enriches understanding not only of this subject of sustained scrutiny, but perhaps more informatively, the activities and interactions occurring at its peripheries. The maintenance of order and the ‘work’ this entails can be understood as encompassing a far broader scope of social life than might otherwise be supposed. At HMP Midtown, ‘order’ comprised both officially sanctioned, and formal staff practice, alongside micro-interactions which could have profound, rippling effects on the wider emotional climate. These processes worked to reaffirm social cohesion, as well as to disrupt it. Phasing allows for an appreciation of the ambiguity and complexity of the fluid continuum of degrees of order. Rather than echoing the degree to which power is exercised, or made manifest in the regime, order is a complex symphony of interactions, activities and emotions. Phasing seemed to more closely describe the process of movement between levels of stability. It was less clear

what contributed to discrete instances of disorder and more concerted episodes of instability, perhaps because these relied on complex and shifting recipes of community and individual behaviour.

7.6 Polyrhythmia

A good day in prison has an immediately identifiable soundscape. When asked what a good day sounds like in interview people offered remarkably similar accounts, though prisoners tended to be more location specific and their response to depend on where they wanted to be (though only one responded that there was no such thing). The degree of agreement between some staff and prisoners over what constituted a “good” day is illustrated by comparing responses to this inquiry. This revealed a broad convergence in the desirability of a day passing predictably:

“Long as I know everybody’s away and I know them females are going home, or them males are going home to their children, cos they’re only here doing a job. I can go to my cell and lay down and know the day’s gone smoothly. Even if there’s been an incident, as long as everyone’s gone home, I’m happy” (Stretch).

“So when I ring that bell for that last time, get everybody behind their doors, everybody comes in and signs for their numbers, it makes you feel good... Nobody’s been hurt, staff or prisoners, we’ve got the right number of people we’re supposed to have, job done” (Officer Rose).

Not only was a ‘good’ day discernible but so was a return to a steady rhythm following disruption, as suggested by those above. Lefebvre assigns the concept of “polyrhythmia” to the everyday rhythms of life: “The analytic operation simultaneously discovers the multiplicity of rhythms and the uniqueness of particular rhythms” (Lefebvre 2004: 16). Polyrhythmia refers to the uniting of rhythms in healthy, normal, ‘everydayness’. The state of steady multiplicity of rhythms working together is a useful means of describing a good day in prison. Staff work to keep the regime to timely order while there is enough slack to accommodate the men’s dawdling, tactics of diversion and queries (Jewkes 2012). In music polyrhythm may refer to the simultaneous combination of contrasting, or conflicting rhythms within a piece of music, not necessarily working in harmony (as in polyharmony) but comprising one piece (Cowell 1996). These multiple, independent

rhythmic lines can be discerned when listening to a ‘good day’. There is room in the tune for complimentary rhythms, and constructive unruliness exists alongside cooperation, bartering and bantering; a rhythmic ‘give and take’. In the sense that this was broadly interpreted as an instance of rhythmic cooperation the extent to which power and authority were present was not clear:

“I used to enjoy lunchtimes cos you get the men out and the staff are working and I’d be standing at the top of the landing and you’re almost like a conductor because you’re getting the staff in certain places, and you’re moving them down and you’re unlocking in certain areas, and you’re getting the regime going and you’re driving the regime, and it’s great and you’re seeing the prisoners and they’re bouncing off you...” (Derek, Officer).

Derek’s likening his role to that of a “conductor” was similar to Officer Rose: *“If you’re on the wing then it’s your job to drive the regime. This gets done then”*. Observations written in my fieldnotes recount a good, lively day where everything appeared to be ticking over as expected and the mood was generally positive:

‘Feeding time’

The bell is rung signalling evening meal. Men go to collect their food half-landing by half-landing, queuing in an ever-moving line in to the servery, slurping stray peas and surplus gravy from the sides of impractically small, plastic, prison-issue plates as they emerge from the other end. More practiced hands carry tupperware boxes in which food can be more confidently swaggered back to cell via snatched conversations and hurried business meetings en route. Crescendos of dawdling... officers shouting, footsteps – officers purposeful, measured rubber-soled boot on metal, scurrying prisoner plimsole, elusive two-at-a-time step with surplus energy, swerving and scurrying for snatched conversations. Cheery greetings as men pass me, making their way down the stairs to join the queue. Down, around, in the servery entrance, reappearing with collected food out the other end and back to cell in a seemingly endless stream of institutional greys, splashes of colour, expensive trainers, and institutional blues. Huddles and murmurs, hurried exchange of cigarette papers before bang-up. Bartering, bustling, hustling and hanging back. Jostling at the medical hatch, some vaulting the gate on the

walkway between meds and servery, positioning themselves mid-queue; slow moving and loud. Gravy in spilt, interrupted trails, on floor, on rails, stairs, surfaces, inexplicably appearing on officers starched, white shirt arms as they cajole and shunt the men back to cell. A prisoner slips on stair spillage, his cheery hello supplanted by anger at being laughed at once balance is regained: “if I wanted to fucking split my head open then I’d come down there and do it to one of you!” Budging along on the ledge to accommodate another for a moment of snatched sociality, a row of men, convivially chatting, precariously balancing plates on the thin ledge. Snatching up chips. Using hand to scoop while other holds on to plate. “Come on, move along. If you’ve got your dinner back to your cell. MOVE IT”. Bang. Bang. Bang. Only when quiet descends, “feeding time” is over and all are behind the door are the veeps escorted up from the bowels of the prison to collect their meals.

This was a good day. A bustling, “organised chaos” that characterised the ebb and flow of daily life in HMP Midtown. The men snaked around the prison, between landings, stairs and servery. Banter and business were conducted in good spirits (as far as could be heard). There was sufficient confidence in the sturdiness of the days’ rhythms to accommodate the counter rhythms of the men’s dawdling, and various activities; last minute searches for Rizla before bang up, the redistribution of various necessities, shady dealings. Snatched moments of commensality were accommodated, for which there are rare opportunities in prison, but which are fundamental to social life (Kerner *et al* 2015). While a good day had an ordered rhythm of sorts, this did not indicate a singular pulse but rather a number of steady rhythms accommodating one another within a shared sense of collective daily life. The greater whole was working in concert, albeit to a multitude of rhythms. The mood was positive and generally harmonious as these rhythms worked within, around, and through one another: a polyrhythmia

On a smaller level, Ket talked about the difficulty of maintaining harmony in the laundry. Particularly fastidious prisoners were often drawn to this opportunity for work (such as Lugs who took great pride in his appearance and cleanliness). For a time, Stevie also worked there. In contrast to a number of established members of laundry orderlies who guarded their respective piles and systems with regular threats of violence, Stevie had ADHD and anxiety amongst other conditions, and as a result had a rather chaotic approach to work. He was also rather boisterous. Ket told me: “*he’s just too much, I told*

them we were pretty much finished just so I could have some peace and quiet... they complain to me – “he’s messed up my pile, I can’t deal with it” – and I tell them you have to tell him”. Having observed militaristic operations between the prisoners in the laundry (violence was narrowly avoided over a dispute over sock piles) it was clear how Stevie’s manic chaos might threaten harmony. His unpredictable spirals in to distress and self-harm however, meant that he needed to be out of cell and occupied as much as possible. This presented a challenge. Nevertheless, these rhythms within rhythms were discernibly harmonious in that the plates were kept spinning, just.

It is this multiplicity of living rhythms to which people refer when asked what a “good” day sounds like. In the social context polyrhythmia acted as a means of affecting social cohesion, setting a steady predictable pace for the daily rhythm. The reassurance this provided for members of the community proved contagious, maintaining a steady equilibrium to the emotional climate on the wing. A “good day” was “*just everybody getting along*” (Davey). In this way, sound can be understood as a source of social cohesion, reinforcing the mechanical solidarity which enabled the prison community to rub along together.

7.7 “The everyday tune that’s normal for here”

Derek, a senior officer with twenty-seven years’ service likened a normal day to a piece of music: “*the everyday tune that’s normal for here*”. Elsewhere he compared his role as officer in charge on the wing to that of a “conductor”, indicating a number of different components to a rhythmic prison soundscape. This everyday tune of the normal day - a steady, predictable regime - echoes Liebling’s (2004) definition of order (See “listening to order, Chapter 2). Order had an audible rhythm to it, a marker for a good day and a baseline against which deviation is measured:

“Some normal, chaotic unlock, everybody’ll go back to their cells so I can progress with the regime. Get everybody off to work, get those out that need to go out, they’ll just have their biting and bobbing. Just general chat, noise” (Officer Rose).

While disorder - and the threats to safety it posed – were central to concerns around which Midtown was organised and operated, it was order which comprised the point of

departure. In contrast, it is disorder which frequently forms the focal point of academic inquiry. Shaped partially by the wider political context of the time, and the research brief to “consider the social context within which control problem behaviour arose”, disorder has been the preoccupation of a number of prison studies emerging in the wake of the Strangeways riot (Sparks *et al* 1996: 3,13). Order is studied in negation, its absence providing insight in to what has gone wrong (e.g. Carrabine 2004). This raises questions about how using a “normal” day as a baseline comparison, as both staff and prisoners at Midtown did, alters the way we understand processes of social organisation there:

“It’s your own prison in my experience... You get a sense of a normal day. You know what the day is, you know how it’s gonna pan out, you just know. You have your normal noises, your regular sounds, your normal behaviours, and then if something’s different, it’s noticeably different” (Officer Rose).

This was significant both for what it indicated about the nature of order and its maintenance as well as what it revealed about life at HMP Midtown. Focusing on disorder rather than order deviated from the practice of those I spoke to, and aligned order, understandably, with processes of control. Social life at Midtown was fluid and complex, the relationship between order and disorder were far from directly antithetical. Rather, order was characterised by the multifarious activities and interactions which characterised the ebb and flow of social life on a ‘good’ day. At HMP Midtown, order was a complicated business. Not only did it require being “worked at” as Sparks *et al.* (1996) identify, but that work took many forms and was undertaken by numerous members of the community. Within the expanse of variety between a perfectly attuned day and one in which all semblance of control has been lost (see Scott p38), is the rich assortment of distinctions within the broad range of an ordered day. Keeping the “everyday tune” playing, in rhythm and key was the key preoccupation of staff on the wing. While prisoners were often understandably ambivalent about unquestioning compliance, their participation in shared rituals of meaning-making signalled assent to joining in with the chorus, albeit with personalised lyrics. While it was clear that the forces at work compelling compliance were present (See Crewe 2007 on p26), there was a considerable degree of cooperation in setting the pace for an orderly day. There was comfort and companionability in contributing to the rhythms and routines of the day, which, while not unrelated to the fear of violence identified by Crewe was as much about the desire for a “good” day. Compliance and cooperation with order was explicitly linked

to survival, and the desire to get everyone away safe. There was a link too, to survival in a broader sense; the desire to prevent “meaning deprivation” (pp. 31-34) and retain a sense of normality, of “just everybody getting along” (Davey).

‘Arhythmic’ states were also complicated, the result of shifting recipes of personalities, moods and events. I found this underlined the broad range of behaviours and incidents which, at times, fell under the umbrella of ‘disorder’. While “disorder”, strictly speaking, refers to concerted acts of ‘disobedience’ or ‘indiscipline’, at times it was elided in this wide spectrum of behaviours. It is also worth noting that, on occasion, acts which were technically against the rules and therefore disobedient or undisciplined - such as Stretch running along the landing in his birthday suit – worked to re-establish order and relieve tension. This extended understanding of the delicate balancing act undertaken by staff as they sought to maintain or re-establish a polyrhythmic state to the day. Recognising the value of behaviours working to improve the emotional climate could involve an absence of authority. Rather than exercising discretion or ‘good authority’ this reflected the wisdom in a willingness to relinquish control, and one which often partially rested on what could be heard.

When asked what a good *prison* sounded like, many I spoke to had difficulty and often fell back on the rather vague ‘quiet’ (below). A good *day* however, was considerably more tangible and people tended to have a fair amount to say about this:

“You know it’s running well cos everything’s going to plan. Everything’s happening on time, or certainly within a few minutes of on time. Without any interruption, er, without anybody sort of messing about and doing stupid things, just everybody behaving and doing what they’re, staff as well. Not just prisoners behaving but getting staff to do their job on time, and do it right as well, but yeah, it just all drops in to place” (Officer Rose).

For Officer Rose the process of understanding and managing the rhythms of everyday life was dependent on a familiarity with what a ‘good’ day sounds like. His account resonated with the disappointment expressed by a number of officers at what they interpreted as a reluctance to assimilate amongst a group of new officers from a closing prison. A number of those officers expressed discomfort at their new workplace, stating a preference for “order” (the inference being that Midtown was disorientatingly chaotic). They settled in after a time, but initial discomfort was caused in part by a lack of

familiarity with the “everyday tune that’s normal for here”. They were unfamiliar with it and mistook their unfamiliarity – and therefore their difficulty ‘reading’ it – for an absence.

Officer Rose’s account of a good day, with “everything going to plan” echoes Liebling’s definition of order and its inclusion of predictability. The importance of predictability and its association with order were recurring themes in interviews and conversations with both prisoners and staff: *“It would be better if there was more order. More things to do... if there was more of a structure. There has to be more order or else nothing’s gonna get solved”* (Tommy). Tommy clearly identified order with purposeful occupation. Interestingly for him this was the bedrock of solutions to prison problems. Again, routine and structure were identified as key (and related to survival – Cohen and Taylor 1981; Liebling and Arnold 2004; Tait 2011 – see pp. 3-34). Davey reinforced this sense of importance. While he anchored predictability in knowing in advance so he could organise himself, there was a comfort in predictable rhythm: *“I prefer to know what’s going on. I just don’t like not being told. Say, if there’s bang up for one day, I like to know there’s bang up before that day so if there’s things I need I can get them”* (Davey). Routine and rituals were a source of ontological security; a means of deriving meaning from the day. People engaged in the routine not because of some adherence to the ideological principles which found it, but because there was comfort derived from engaging in familiar spatial practices (Giddens 1984). This accounted for consistent difficulty in getting people to answer what a “good prison” sounds like (beyond “there isn’t one”, “there’s no such thing”). Legitimacy rarely featured in conversations with anyone in the community beyond the abstract application to the plight of others, or the reasonable acceptance of a fair refusal from staff. Processes of legitimation on the other hand, to the degree that rules and routines became accepted in to the everyday, were fairly routine. Predictable practice formed the rhythms and routines of a stable community which united its members in reaffirming a sense of mechanical solidarity at HMP Midtown.

What does this mean for how a good day is understood? Underpinning a number of accounts of the maintenance of order in prison are particular conceptions of legitimacy. Sparks and Bottoms draw heavily on legitimacy as a source of disorder, quoting Woolf: *“They [prisoners] felt a lack of justice... the failure... to act with justice created serious difficulties in maintaining security and control in prisons”* (Woolf 1991: para 9.24, in Sparks and Bottoms 1996). This intertwines order with particular conceptions of

authoritative modes of power. Order is maintained because those subject to it broadly acknowledge and accept the fairness of the regime and thus the authority of those who maintain it to do so. This was not a clear factor in accounts of cooperation and/or compliance for those I spoke with at HMP Midtown (Harkin 2015):

“A good prison sounds like officers on the wing with a positive vibe about ‘em. Yeah, like when you first hear in the morning “Alright lads, alright”, “morning mate, morning mate” that sets the tone. But when you got the wrong screw opening the door, that can set the tone like... fuck I’ve just come out my cell and that can set a bad, you know what I mean? ‘Specially when you’re in a bad mood as well... the best jails are when staff sound positive, cos it makes the vibe come through the prison. Yeah, we’re here, we don’t wanna be here and you don’t really want to be as well, but it’s a job and we’ve all got to get along... let’s just get on with it”. (Tonk, prisoner).

Tonk’s circumstances made perceptions of legitimacy less likely (as mentioned elsewhere, he was recalled having been release after serving a long indeterminate sentence for public protection). It is significant however, that he viewed questions of legitimacy as somewhat separate from his interactions with staff. Prison, for him, was far from ideal for all within it. Despite raging about the injustices of his case and subsequent treatment at the hands of “the system” and its agents, Tonk was resolutely stoical about “*get[ting] on with it*”. Tonk also perceived a connection between positive sound and spreading a sense of good feeling. For him, shared cooperation and sense of community were conveyed via sound, and central to a good day and the order it brought. This interpretation of what made a good, ordered community was not limited to prisoners, but could also be seen in staff accounts, where the rhythms of a good day depended on a shared sense of cooperation and community:

“The staff there, even though they were hardcore, they made it safe... they all had their back, they worked together, they all knew what was going on...run so smoothly...so smooth. I’ve never known anything like it and I just thought, wow, this place is different... the prisoners knew where they stood...They knew what, who to speak to, who not to speak to” (Ket, officer)

There were, of course, a number of reasons for compliance, many of which related primarily to a pragmatic awareness that this was more likely to ensure rights and

privileges were accessible. Lugs illustrated this succinctly when, during our interview a man lumbered past the room shouting: *“everybody riot!!”*. Lugs responded: *“Why do that when everybody’ll get banged up? Why do you want a riot mate? Idiot”*. Jack illustrated how this could work the other way when, in another prison he had attempted to lead a riot, only to find he was on his own. What was not clear from talking to people in Midtown, was that legitimacy - perceptions of fairness or acceptance of authority- were necessarily connected to order. During Tommy’s interview I was attempting to unpick what he meant by “order”. He firmly told me what it was not: *“Respect doesn’t come in to it cos you’re in jail and you’re there as punishment so a lot of it’s gone already, so what it is, you just have to do”*. This sense of getting on with it, reflected other assessments of what constituted good and fair practice, where again predictability featured: *“If they say something they’ll keep to their word. Like that’s what a good officer is, innit”* (Stevie). *“If it’s ‘no’ then fair enough”* (Mooch) – *“if they’re entitled to it I’ll do it. If they aren’t, tough”* (Officer Rose). Repeated identification of even-handedness as the mark of a good officer echoed Mathieson’s (1965) assessment of the importance of regulated staff decisions, but also further underscored the desirability of consistency. These accounts reinforced the sense of an overarching importance of predictability as a basis for maintaining order and the stable emotional climate with which it shared a symbiotic relationship.

Using legitimacy as a conceptual framework for exploring order implies a particular conception of the relationship between power and order, and authority; the form in which much power in prison manifests. In contrast, the social life at HMP Midtown flowed on the predictability of ontologically reassuring rituals and the emotionally stabilising soundscape which lent them social meaning. This is not to say that perceptions of a deficit of legitimacy were insignificant in providing the impetus for acts of ‘disobedience’ or violence. Fieldnotes and interviews included repeated references to inconsistencies in treatment or unfairness (see social hierarchy above for examples). What was indicated by those I spoke with at HMP Midtown, was that legitimacy was not a predicate of order. Crises in processes of legitimation might feature in concerted disorder at Midtown as elsewhere and there is much work to suggest this would be the case (e.g. Carrabine 2004). That the reverse was always true was less clear. Listening to the rhythms and routines of the day expanded understanding of the multiplicities of power relations at work in the course of their maintenance which sound mediated between people and prison spaces.

Listening to the soundscape at HMP Midtown articulated the partial detachment of agency from the contextually-specific significance of its impact. In revealing greater nuance in the multiplicity of power flows, attending to the soundscape also worked to define greater separation between power and order.

Reconsidering the relationship between order/disorder and legitimacy also allows for a more nuanced consideration of the array of behaviours which are loosely characterised as threatening order. Stripping these complex processes of the dichotomies to which they have been assigned is helpful for understanding. Many of the instances of violence I witnessed or discussed with staff and prisoners (perpetrated by prisoners) were described or explained as working to uphold or maintain order, rather than seeking to undermine it. While this reflected the omnipresence of violence in prison, and its broad acceptance in prison culture, it was also the case that a number of instances of this behaviour were about restoring breaches (perceived discourtesies or wrongs) as a means of maintaining social order, rather than in an effort to disturb it.

7.8 Discerning rhythms

The process of unpicking the relationship between power and order was facilitated by focussing on sound. Listening to the ebb and flow of daily life at HMP Midtown added clarity to the complex nature and operations of power, which in turn more clearly delineated between power and order. In so doing, an exploration of the significance of sound challenged representations of a straightforward, unmediated relationship while articulating their distinction from one another. Sound was implicated in ordering processes in a number of ways, marking the daily regime, and signifying arrangements of social hierarchy. Sound also functioned as a barometer for gauging the emotional climate; the primary means of assessing the ‘mood’ of the day and a way of identifying likely interruptions to the rhythms of daily life.

The rhythms of daily life at Midtown were discernible in the hubbub of the soundscape. Jarring interruptions to these daily rhythms, likewise had an identifiable ‘arhythmia’ in contrast to the ‘polyrhythmic’ tempo of a ‘good day’. Not only was sound the primary marker for gauging the temperature on the wing, but also featured as an instrumental means of ‘phasing’ daily rhythms back in to place following disruption, indicating a

social component to order and the desirable predictability it signified. In these ways an exploration of the soundscape at Midtown and the ways in which it was interpreted by those living and working within it presented a challenge to conventional acceptance of legitimacy as central to the maintenance of order. Rather, an exploration of the soundscape revealed contributions to the ‘everyday tune’ of daily life as being motivated by something infinitely more fundamental; the imperative to belong and to be a part of the social world of HMP Midtown.

Sound provided a means to explore and extend experiences of power and its operations; power is felt beyond the immediately interactional, infused with the social significance attributed to the prison. Acknowledging the wider mechanisms of power partially separated power from the maintenance of rhythms and routines of everyday life at Midtown, order was maintained by much of the community, working together. These distinctions between power and order served to illuminate the different ways in which time infuses these experiences; power derives force from memory and experience, order exists within a series of presents, bound by prison spaces. Using the soundscape as a lens through which to listen to prison life alters the way power and order are thought of as operating within multimodal conceptions of time and space. This has implications for what is understood about the experience of time and space – or the “Warp and Weft” of prison life.

8 Warp and Weft

What comes together through sound is emergent and passing time – a sense of duration, the field of memory, a fullness of space that lies beyond touch and out of sight, hidden from vision. Sound must be trusted, cannot be trusted, so has power. When sound that should be present seems to be absent, this is frightening (Toop 2010: xv).

Time is “the essence of sentencing and imprisonment” (Wright *et al* 2017: 232). Time is generally understood as the “basic structuring dimension of prison life”, lying at the heart of punishment and the deprivation of agency which it involves (e.g. Sparks *et al* 1996: 350; Morin and Moran 2015; Kotova 2018). Time, and its passing is intimately connected with order and the imposition of temporally and spatially bounded routines which comprise it in the prison context. Time then, is not only associated with the substantive elements of punishment, but with its normative components – the form the experience takes, as well as the experiencing of it. Time is intimately bound with order; rhythm, time and space lend grammar to the routines of everyday life. The ways in which time and space inform how order and the power of the prison are experienced is the subject of the following chapter.

Time was central to power relations and their disparity which lent form, if not exclusive content to relationships between staff and prisoners. In the sense that ‘doing time’ is specific to prisoners, this is focused on what they had to say about that. Staff contribute to everyday life in ways which lend additional clarity to how time and space function as sites of and are reinforced by power relations. Sound, in traversing spatial and temporal boundaries, illustrates their intrinsic connectedness: “space is in its very nature temporal, and time spatial” (Parkes and Thrift 1980: 12, cited by Crewe 2016). Sound alters the way in which these relationships and their association with power are understood. A full account of the ways in which sound announces order therefore necessarily requires a consideration of the particular relationship between sound, time and space within the social world of HMP Midtown.

I begin by laying out the ways in which sound was interwoven with the marking of time of the ‘everyday tune’, before going on to explore the ways in which deviating rhythms of behaviour combined to form the warp and weft of the daily fabric of life in HMP

Midtown. I then talk about the ways prisoners used sound to explain how they experienced time and place in ways which differed from more common depictions of ‘doing time’. Sound was bound up with elicitation of memory for those at Midtown, and I explore the ways particular relationships with memory, people, time and space were relayed to me. Space and time were not passively experienced but subject to complex processes of remaking in which sound was heavily implicated. I explore this before moving on to describe the ways in which elisions of public and private spaces were compounded by sound. Those I spoke with offered accounts of how place itself, its meanings and its impact shifted over time, implicating sound in complex and shifting relationships between people, place, time and stigma before concluding with the ‘special’ social role of prisons as a means of defining other social spaces, and what this means for how sound is interpreted in the context of Midtown.

8.1 Polyrhythmia and the ‘everyday tune’

The prison regime incorporated triadic notions of space (Lefebvre 1991). Conceptions of the prison in practice are informed by the ideological impetus which lends them form and meaning while these are undermined and complicated by the reality of everyday spatial practices. The regime as it exists on paper, has different schedules which cover Monday-Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Since Monday- Thursday covers most of the week I have included this here. This is the form of the prison day as it is listed on the wing office wall:

The regime

7:30: Roll check/courts unlock

7:45: Auditing/ briefing

8:00: Unlock, treatments, moving, domestics

8:35: Clear landings, kitchen workers to work, all others lock up

8:45: Education and Work according to lock up/activity lists

9:00: Domestic periods, IDTS – move only

10:00: Exercise – all others locked up

11:00: Cease exercise. Lock up

11:20: Serve lunchtime meal

11:45: Return from activities

12:20: Lunchtime roll check

12:30: Staff off duty

13:30: Staff on duty, movement to education and work according to lockup/activity lists

14:00: Cease activity, movement. Commence domestic period

15:00: Commence exercise, all other prisoners locked up

15:30: Early finish kitchen workers, showers and phone calls

16:00: Cease exercise, lock up.

16:00: Tea, meal and treatments

16:45: Movement back from activities

17:45: All prisoners locked up

18:00: Staff duty

18:00: Commence kitchen showers

18:30: Cease kitchen showers

18:30: Complete any agreed phone calls via apps, auth Oscar 1

19:00: Cease evening duties, final roll check

19:30: Staff off duty

19:30-20:45: Court returns, FNC duties and patrol

20:45-21:00: Handover to nights

(Tues, Wed, Thurs, Sat, Sun. Visits 14:00-16:00).

Ostensibly the prison ran on this strict schedule with no deviation, the day shaped by lists and counting, punctuated by the bell, keys in locks, shouting and movements around the

prison. Conceptions of the prison adhered to this routine. The reality differed markedly; Staff numbers and experience fluctuated causing disruption, lists reflected a version of entitlements which may or may not differ from agreements or prisoners' expectations (cue daily round of banging), and prisoners worked to impose rhythmic variations on the theme of the daily regime. Graham, an officer who left towards the end of my time at Midtown, described the day shift as: "... *like tipping up a box of frogs and trying to get them all back in again... It's a small space but there's plenty of places to hide...*". Despite most of the prison sharing one, large space, prisoners were adept at keeping a low profile if their priorities differed from those of the regime. A number of members of staff were similarly adept at disappearing from view. As Ket observed, everyday hustling to get by involved a fair bit of ducking and diving on all sides. Meal times, the loudest points of the day, were subject to the most audible riffs on the regime as men rushed to obtain sought items, conduct shady dealings and socialise. Many expressed a dislike of the food and a practice of cooking their own meals in cell, via their kettles (noodles and/or mackerel and curry seemed popular). In short, listening to the rhythms of the day provided a means of demarcating the distinctions between triadic notions of space to reflect the 'tune' of daily life at HMP Midtown (Lefebvre 1991, 2004; Lyon and Back 2012).

While the regime offered some distraction and shape to the day, it was perceived as far from sufficient to keep the men occupied. Keeping busy, and finding ways to do so, within and outside of the rules, was a full-time occupation in itself but recognised as absolutely essential: "*You have to keep yourself busy, else your head will pop*" (Mooch). The successful 'doing' of time, involved some ingenuity and innovation. It sometimes appeared that getting away with it, or bending rules was at least as central as any specific reason for doing so. Prisoners regularly thanked me for helping them "*kill*" some time. Lugs was quite adept at keeping busy: "*I like being banged up most times. Sometimes I don't like getting banged up if you've noticed. When they shout bang up though, I just put my gloves on and go and collect something then walk back down*". Lugs was a cleaner when he wasn't working in the laundry. Like a number of others, he carried a seemingly endless supply of plastic gloves wedged in his pocket for dawdling purposes. Painting was another activity creating opportunities for orderly work, but despite a number of changing hands, progress was hard to discern. There was considerably less painting than seemingly random distribution of 'wet paint' signage and abandoned equipment. Since signs in no way reflected the likelihood of encountering wet paint, in the rare event there

was some, a number of handprints would also appear, requiring re-painting. Evasion and creation of ‘work’ had its own rhythms of dawdling and delay which underpinned the regime.

The alternatives to keeping busy out and about were finding forms of amusement in cell. These included an array of activities:

“People just want drugs in this place to get them, it takes the bars away for the night. Does that make sense?... If I was smoking drugs I’d just want to take them bars away for a day or two, or three, and sometimes it does. It goes rapid sometimes, do you know what I mean? Behind the door” (Lugs).

Drug use was rife and could be smelled upon entering the wing more often than not. Those in an affected state had their own rhythms of movement; slow, sluggish and distracted. Mooch and his padmate (and Co-d³⁷) Sammy sometimes indulged in all night betting-based monopoly from which they would emerge bleary-eyed and out of sorts. The lived reality of the regime was markedly different, more messily complicated than it appeared on paper. Spatial practices of everyday living bore little resemblance to the imaginary order of the prison.

Observations of the polyrhythmic deviations and variations of daily life at Midtown revealed divergence between staff’s use and experience of time and that of prisoners. Adherence to the regime was the goal of a ‘good day’ for staff (as various staff make clear, see above and chapter 7). While prisoners wanted predictability and order, some sought latitude and as much time out of cell as could be eked out from whatever slack could be utilised from the regime. Upsets to daily rhythms sounded discordance between the intermittent goal of exercising agency within the constraints of the prison and the comforts of security offered by a predictable regime. This reflected a wider difference in the way these groups were situated in time. Staff largely operated in the present. The No.1 governor expressed frustration with his staff sometimes failing to dig at underlying reasons for behaviour: *“there’s often an ulterior motive but staff don’t always see that. Staff will see a behaviour and respond to that behaviour without necessarily understanding the cause”*. Staff culture imposed a particular emphasis on the now, dwelling on past mistakes was frowned upon: *“yesterday’s in the past, it’s history, it*

³⁷ Co-D’ refers to the term Co-defendant; the person or persons with whom you face a criminal charge, with whom you have been joined together in a single action

doesn't exist, let's deal with today" (Officer Rose). In contrast, prisoners were focused on past mistakes, the steps that brought them there, and hopes and anxieties about the future. Staff sought to guard against the distancing of time and space, while prisoners sought to enhance it (discussed in chapter 6). This temporal dialectic between staff and prisoners was a significant site on which power relations were articulated, acting as a means of demarcating the absence and presence of control over time.

8.2 "He's never even seen a Magnum ice cream!"

In addition to the ways power manifests in restrictions on what prisoners could do and when they could do it, being subject to the constraints of the prison had the impact of distorting time. Sound was a central component of the experience of the warp and weft of time inside and out. Dawdling and killing time could emphasise the sense and sound of time passing or of failing to. The imposition of constraints on movement had a corresponding impact on how time was felt as a source of dislocation. While a category b local, Midtown was home to a diverse range of prisoners serving an array of sentences. This variety of experience was echoed by the community as a whole. The ebb and flow of daily life at Midtown was a hubbub of comings, goings and staying puts. Existing alongside people whose conditions of incarceration could differ markedly from one another added a dimension to the ways in which the powerlessness of time passing was experienced, heard, and felt.

Prisoners reported experiencing time as strangely distorted and uneven, contrasting both within prison spaces and between inside and the outside. On the one hand, people reported feeling time passing speedily: *"It does, the week flies by. If I was in another jail pffft"* (Mooch) *"It goes fast behind that door though Kate, very fast"* (Lugs). At the same time, there was a sensation of time warping within the rhythms of the prison relative to the rapidity of the world outside, whistling by:

"Cos when you're in jail, everything's slow. You get out there, and even when my sister picked me up from Bickley, and I jumped in the car, I was scared coming home. Everything's too fast... I'm like that – putting my feet in the footwell like that, pretending to press the brakes and there's not even brakes there. Mad" (Mooch).

When Mooch referred, above, to a fellow prisoner who had spent so much time inside the world had adapted sufficiently to accommodate the arrival of Magnum ice creams, he voiced a keen awareness of the potential for the world to move on without those inside. Mooch was speaking of the sensation of the outside advancing at cracking speed, leaving prisoners languishing in slow motion. For Mooch, this resulted in a jarring effect when he returned to life on the out, these dissonant experiences of time making him keenly aware of the potential for being left behind, forgotten by time – “*cavemen in the era of speed-of-light technology*” (Jewkes and Johnston 2009). It is this enforced waiting to which Sarah Armstrong (2018) refers when she speaks of prison as better conceptualised as “*the cell and the corridor; imprisonment as waiting and waiting as mobile*”. The prison soundscape better evokes this sense of movement without progress; a dislocation from the ways in which time and space were experienced beyond the prison walls.

Efforts to diminish lack of power over time by increasing control over it took a number of forms. Many did their best to sleep as much of the time away as possible, like Will, but were often hampered by the intrusive soundscape. Others sought movement either as necessary steps to advance their sentence plan, like Lamar, or in the hopes that adjustment to new scenery would pass some time: “*I want to move, it makes the time go quicker. I’ve been here a long time now, gets slow*” (Robert). The desire to move, alongside complaints of boredom and frustration at the lack of things to do emphasised the way time and the doing of it lay at the heart of the pains of imprisonment, (e.g. Tommy, and numerous fieldnotes, Wright *et al* 2017). “Temporal vertigo” is useful for illustrating this aspect of experience; “an overwhelming feeling of dizziness resulting from the sense that time was warping and falling away” (Wright *et al* 2017: 232). Wright *et al* (2017) were specifically looking at the processes of coping and adaptation of long-term prisoners, specifically those convicted of murder and it is to their identification of an offence- sentence nexus of lying at the particular pains of this group that this relates. Despite the difference of research focus, this concept usefully describes the way prisoners at HMP Midtown reported experiencing time passing. Where they differed was in reporting a greater degree of dislocation in the unpredictability of the nature of this experience. The bustling hubbub of good days ticking over were contrasted against the stillness of a day behind the door. Depending on degree of immersion in the rhythm of activities these could be experienced in conjunction with or contrasting against the time set by the rhythms of the regime. Adjusting to doing time to the extent that one went with it, while a powerful tool in the

armoury of survival was not always possible. The tide of time was not always sufficiently predictable to allow for following its patterns (Crewe *et al* 2017).

There was a contrast between the way the individual experienced time, and how time was sounded collectively; the warp and weft of time, which together knitted the prison fabric. As has been mentioned in more detail above, the nature of HMP Midtown meant that those within it were from a diverse range of places and subject to an array of sentences. People could ‘land’ there for a number of reasons and then get stuck on remand or parole hold, or because they were nearing release. Locals made up the majority, but all manner of minority sentences and cases existed alongside them, as well as making up some of their number. Many of those I spoke with most frequently were longer-term prisoners, perhaps because of a greater desire to kill time, because they were more settled or more inclined to launch in first if curiosity was piqued. Those who were relatively settled existed amongst a rhythmic chorus of *“I’ve just landed, sort us out?”* or *“you back again?!”*. Robert described this: *“You get the people in here though, who go out, come back, go out, come back. That’s no life man”*. Relations between people and time were experienced in the space they shared with others, in addition to but not always in the same way as they experienced their own time. IPP prisoners, or those with long sentences could experience the impact of their sentence in particularly acute ways which were enhanced by others (*“He has to change cell, his pad mate’s out in ten weeks – he just got 17 years”* (fieldnotes). In contrast, while Tommy felt disadvantaged by his outsider status, he described other prisons as being much harder to inhabit both because of his case and the environment. Tommy classified category A and B prisons as the *“worst”* he had been in: *“It’s quiet, it’s probably the drearier thing and it’s probably the scary bit about it because it’s so silent. And it’s a dangerous environment. It’s terrible, I couldn’t stand it”*. He preferred *“these prisons cos a lot of people ain’t warped, they’ve still got a bit of sense to them and you get a half-sensible conversation”*. Doing time was easier for him amongst the ebb and flow of the local community, where life had more bustle and the environment was infinitely noisier.

Temporal vertigo is a useful concept for exploring how sensations of time were altered by prison. It adds nuance to explorations of how time was experienced when power over how you spent it is removed, as well as how time was meted out in an environment in which all must adhere to a central routine. Returning to the ways in which sound both

echoes and mediates relationships between people and prison spaces disrupts this rather singular portrayal of time.

8.3 The temporal sense

David Toop's (2010) description of sound as the 'temporal sense' serves as a reminder of the complex relationship between sound, time and space. Sound traverses the boundaries of time just as it permeates walls, evoking memory and eliciting expectation. In Midtown, where movement and access to stimuli were constrained, sound could provide a particularly potent means of reconfiguring spatial experience by reminding prisoners of the world beyond the walls. Sound was a means of reconnecting with the outside world, prompting the memory of happier times and loved ones. The function of sound as a powerful means of eliciting memory was not limited to other times and spaces but also existed within the present for those prisoners who talked about it. Focusing on sound illuminated the different treatments space received from staff and prisoners, reflecting their relationships with the space within and beyond the prison to the wider community of Midtown.

Sound prompted memory, carving out spaces for the men to remember other times and places. Duane explained: *"One thing I am acutely aware of are 'normal' outside noises. I love to hear them as it reminds me that life goes on outside these walls"* (Duane). Activating the auditory imagination went some way to bridging the gap between the inside and beyond:

"makes you remember that there is normality going alongside you. D'you know what I mean? Because when you're in here you forget about normality... in the city centre you're more conscious to things like that. And then you're like, it can bring you down, cos you're hearing stuff or you miss home, or miss, or it can, like I say if I hear the football stadium roaring when they're playing I'll be like yay go on Midtown...It kind of brings me up d'you know?" (Lamar).

Both Duane and Lamar refer to the 'normality' of life outside, for which sound acted as a reminder, enhancing the temporal strangeness of their current positions. Listening to the Midtown soundscape extended a feeling of connectedness with the outside for Lamar. When I stayed late to hear the men listening to a home game I was struck by how the

cheers inside reverberated with those I could hear from the surrounding streets as I emerged from the prison. Lamar pointed out these reminders could be bittersweet depending on the memories evoked and the mood he was in. It could remind him of “*miss[ing] home*” which could bring him “*down*”. Robert enjoyed the sound of planes, as it reminded him of times spent going “*to the airport [to] sit and watch*” them. He also spoke of hearing “*a motorbike everyday going past*” this was significant for him because “*I don’t know if it’s the same one, but I hear it every night and I always think it’s my brother*” (Robert). Sound reconnected Robert not only with memories of former, happier times, but with important relationships (he described himself as a ‘loner’, and was not allowed access to his children, his relationship with his brother was one of few he spoke of positively). Boyd underscored the way in which sound elicited memories of times with loved ones:

“Yeah, if I’m listening to CDs, like there’s certain songs, when I was with my partner and the kids all doing funny things, and that song comes on again, it reminds you of good times, when we were all doing silly things, like that, that’s a good thing I suppose” (Boyd).

While it was music that elicited this memory for Boyd, it evoked a wider auditory imagining of other times in the company of his family (whom he spoke of often). Those who talked about experiencing sound, time and space in these multimodal ways present a challenge to treatments of time in prison as a singular though variable and relative flow (e.g. Moran 2013a). Lamar, Robert and Boyd experienced time in the now, the past and the future in complex interwoven ways which were mediated by sound. Prison time did not prevent awareness of traditional ‘markers’ and milestones which are enjoyed in freedom (O’Donnell 2016). Rather they felt their absence, experiencing these enjoyable aspects of life at a forced distance. For them, temporal vertigo was created by the wider relationship with the outside and an awareness of possible and real worlds existing alongside prison time, operating in alternative time signatures. For the men I spoke to at HMP Midtown, the sense of temporal vertigo derived not from a ‘time – offence nexus’ but rather from the nexus of multiple and possible temporalities which imprisonment rendered the prisoner passive within. The imprisoned self sat uneasily alongside the possible self in times with family and freedom, resulting in an ontological arrhythmia between reality and possibility. O’Donnell (2018) speaks about the difficulty of passing time, of disposing of it, in solitude. Comparisons between his correspondents and the

inhabitants of Midtown indicate a social dimension to the management of time and its passing through a prison sentence; a relationship between spacetime/sound and the social.

Thinking of the ways sound informed experience of time had the dual effect of sounding the inextricable association between temporal and spatial experience, and their complexity. If time was simultaneously felt in multiple modalities so too was space (Lefebvre 1991). Sound adds an additional dimension to carceral geography's depiction of liminal spaces within prison, areas between the inside and outside (Moran 2013b). Boyd recalled the value of spending time on visits and the connection of this to sound: *"There's no good sound in prison, is there? A good prison is at night time when it's quiet. Nah, the sound of your family on a visit, that's the best sound you're gonna hear in prison, isn't it"*. Early on I spent some time in visits and was struck by how unlike other prison spaces they felt. Chiefly because of the sound of women and children and the multiplicity of tones of communication these generated. I referred to the soundscape in visits as "emotion soup": anxious mothers and sisters alongside lovers, bored or weeping children and buoyant friends (some of whom greeted the officers with a familiarity suggesting they had not long ago been on the other side of the table). Staff reported the noise as particularly wearing, though I wondered whether some of this was attached to the emotional labour of bearing witness to such an array of emotion. Anna Kotova (2018) explores the broader impact on the experience of time when the temporal pains of prisoner's families are taken in to account. The sound of these more liminal prison spaces reflected the bittersweet, social nature of time and space experienced with and through others. Accounting for 'lost' time better accounts for the multiplicity of ways in which it is experienced (Kotova 2018).

Staff interactions with time and space added clarity to prisoner's experience by offering a point of comparison and contrast. Whereas prisoners actively worked to bridge and diminish distinctions between time and space inside an out, staff actively sought to leave the inside behind, and work at work. In a community prison where many of the staff and prisoners had known each other for decades, had sometimes dated members of the same family and shared the same streets this could prove problematic. Ket's contribution to the sound environment operated as a shield from his personal concerns, strictly delineating between work and home: *"no, no not at all. No one would know if I had problems at home, or if something was going on with me"*. Other members of staff spoke about how sound featured in processes of de-prisoning and guarding against 'spill over' (Crawley

2004). Ket's laughter served performative purposes in displaying aspects of his identity which protected more vulnerable (if no more personal) aspects of his self, linking the social with the personal through sound. Derek spoke about how working to attend to various aspects of the prison soundscape "*builds all your stresses up, so it's nice sometimes just to sit back, close your eyes and listen to nothing*". These distinctions in seeking either to enforce or diminish distinctions between different zones of time and space echoed disparities of power in how these groups navigated and participated in ordering temporal and spatial experience.

Sound worked to add nuance and multiplicity to the vertiginous experience of time and space in prison. Accounting for the ways prisoners experienced time in multiple modalities not only extends the treatment of time (and space) within prison sociology and carceral geography but indicates the ways in which power relations are ordered in various dimensions of space, reconfiguring spatial and temporal experience. If time is intricately connected to space, this has additional implications for spatial experience in HMP Midtown, and the ways in which ideations of self and the social were inextricably linked with it.

8.4 "Are ya listening?"

I was often encouraged to listen to different prison spaces. These frequently corresponded to areas of particular interest amongst the prisoners (Boyd, having landed a prestigious kitchen orderly position was most keen for me to hear how different it was there), but was also born of the recognition that: "*different places sound different*" (Officer Stillman). As with time, spatial experience was bound up with power relations – nowhere more starkly illustrated than by entrance and exit rituals: "*coming/going through*", "*let me through?*". The former was a ritualistic expression of intent to follow, uttered by most staff and operating as both a greeting, a sign of movement and a direction not to lock the gate. The latter was frequently expressed in growing volume and levels of agitation as a prisoner waited for someone to let them through in order that they might move around on the wing, perform work tasks and get on with their day. In these ways both emotional geography and the differentiated spaces these consisted of were bound up with power relations which lent them form and order. Carving out personal space in an environment

where no one was ever far from other people, and in which all aspects of human life were conducted presented additional contestations to order and power.

Ben Crewe *et al* (2014) point out that prisons are differentiated emotional spaces where different ranges of emotional expression are more or less acceptable. While they evocatively describe the emotional geography of prison, and the “consumptive wariness” which afflicts those serving time in prison spaces, they fail to explain how this works, or why this is experienced so widely or consistently when so much of prison life is experienced from behind the door. Sound offers an explanatory mechanism for how this process works. As they assert, not all prison spaces are subject to the same ‘feel’. I sometimes took refuge in the relative calm of the library. Officer Rose reflected, during interview that this was a much quieter space, he speculated that perhaps this was because the “*books absorbed sound*”. While the softer furnishings – carpet - (and books) undoubtedly contributed, as did the restricted number of men allowed at any one time, both the men and staff generally conversed and moved in gentler, softer ways in this space. They could also be observed doing things – such as crosswords – together in companionable quiet. The chapel was one of the first places I paused in as I attempted to orientate myself. I let myself in when no one was around and sat, listening to disembodied sounds from around the prison. My sight was obscured by the grubby stained-glass windows, but I was also free from scrutiny. Solitude was hard to come by in such a frantic environment. The stillness, relative comfort and socially-prescribed function of the place lent it a somewhat liminal air, some of which was retained even when it was packed with excited men during a music event. The education department also offered space to explore a different emotional range, though I felt unusually uncomfortable and unwelcome there so seldom visited.

As Hemsworth (2016) asserts, and was demonstrated by the community at HMP Midtown, sound is a modality of emotion. Different spaces sounded different, indicating the different ‘feel’ or range of emotions expressed within them. However, these were not passively experienced by the men but actively contributed to by them to exert influence over the spaces and reassert their identities. Tonk talked about sound as a means of expressing himself and carving out his own space:

“I went gym this morning, done some chest, then I come back I was a bit RRRraaaaa Midtown. Y’know what I mean? Released, release, that’s what I do,

like I need music in my cell. I need music. Like, I love to just sing and let it out. You know what I mean? If I ain't got music I'll either bang my door or shout out my window or shout to other lads like" (Tonk).

If prisoners were privy to a partially concealed dimension of prison life, one audible through walls and behind closed doors, they also used this as a means of enacting agency to combat the physical restrictions of the environment. Mooch, Cam, Stretch and others spoke about knowing what was going on from the vibrations through the walls, while Lugs referred to the way he used to communicate with other prisoners by emptying the toilets and talking through the pipes. Mooch illustrated how pivotal the hidden, sonic world of prison life was for those inside:

"'specially if I'm listening to the TV yeah and I can't hear it, and they're all shouting. But that's what it is. That's when you hear the noise, when you're behind the door. You can hear. If people are on the landing and that, you can hear all different noises. That's what, aye. You don't hear it as much when you're out there. But when you're behind the door you can hear it".

These reconfigurations of prison spaces were the site of contestations to the imposition of order, between prisoners as well as staff. "Window warriors"³⁸ are a well-known phenomenon in prison, those who shout, and sometimes bully by shouting at windows. Window warriors were more prevalent in young offenders as Boyd explained of his time there: *"Just shit. Full of idiots as well. All you hear is: "Are ya listening?" That's all you hear all the time. That's what they shout out the window: "Are you listening?" "are you listening?"* (Boyd). It was bartering, borrowing and gossip about impending moves and sentences which formed the constant buzz of window-to-window communication at HMP Midtown. Window warriors could still be heard though; it was not uncommon for the yard to ring out with angry abuse or threats of retribution yelled from the windows during bang up or from 'seg' (segregation – see footnote 30, p136). Sound provided a means of accessing this otherwise inaccessible aspect of prison life, and the social ordering, underscored by power relations conducted within it. When interviewing the No.1 in a cell, he articulated this in a way which echoed the space we were in:

³⁸ Shouting out of windows is part of daily life in closed conditions amongst some parts of the estate. The term "window warriors" specifically refers to unpleasant aspects of behaviour conducted in this way, bullying, threatening etc.

“The noise in here would be terrifying. That fact that him next door might be setting fire to his cell... I worked in young offenders... and they still kind of haunt me, that you’d be on night duties and there’d be the window warriors shouting out the window: I’ve shagged your Mum, her knickers are under my cell bed, or whatever, and this prisoner’s like oh, don’t say that. Sing a song and we’ll stop taking the piss out of ya. Nah, nah. Sing a song and we’ll stop taking the piss. I can’t sing. Well sing a nursery rhyme. And you’re sat there thinking please don’t sing, please don’t sing. And then he starts singing baa baa black sheep and of course they’re just Ba ba ba. They’re on him again and he’s just – what’s the point of me coming out of my cell in the morning cos I’m gonna get a kicking”.

I had heard versions of this tale before from people who had been or were in prison. Like other tales which do the rounds amongst prisoners both within and between prisons it served a purpose. ‘Baa baa black sheep’ was a parable about the dangers of giving in to bullies and showing weakness. The endurance of this tale illustrated how sound was bound up with contestations for dominance over space. Listening more closely also rendered distress more audible “are ya listening?” a call for attention and remembrance as much as a demand to be heard.

Asking the men about sound allowed me to understand some of the more hidden parts of the prison social world and the complicated nature of power and social standing amongst them. Violence was common but performed a number of functions depending on whether it was perpetrated where it could be seen and heard or concealed from prying eyes and ears. Stretch explained his perception of its necessity:

“There’s a saying in life, and if you remember this you’ll always do well: Some people can’t hear, so they have to feel. And that goes for, you’re trying to talk to someone about a problem and they don’t listen so you have to beat ‘em. Not hearing, feel (palm in fist). Not hearing, feel”.

There was a code which extended throughout much of the community in relation to saving face and conducting business. Getting ‘mugged off’ damaged standing and disputes should be dealt with face to face: *I ain’t gonna back down, but as I’m walking out he’s cracked me. Snaked me from right behind. And I think that’s bang out of order. If you’re gonna fight someone, fight someone. That’s dirty fighting”* (Lugs). The No.1 explained:

“People don’t want to be mugged off...if somebody feels aggrieved be it a member of staff or another prisoner, then they have to do something otherwise somebody else will take advantage. And that’s a downward spiral... so I think there is the bravado”.

Though many disputes took place out of view and beyond hearing, as a number of the men made clear to me: *“A lot of fights happen in pads. Like in cells. And staff don’t even know about it. Staff’ll probably see ‘em later on with a black eye and like “what have you done?” “Oh banged it, that’s all” (Tonk). Lugs told me: “whatever I do, I do behind my door”.* On another occasion he was telling me about something that had happened and explained: *“Me and Ghet’ was going in the toilet to chat to someone cos they don’t... there’s cameras. So if we do owt we have to go in the toilet or a cell to say Yo, rarara”.* Davey similarly spoke of having respect for someone who came to his cell to handle a dispute *“like men”*. It appeared that at HMP Midtown a significant portion of these disputes were conducted out of sight, but that when they happened where others could see this had an instrumental purpose. Jack told me:

But me, I’ve always had to fight because I’ve always been happy to fight, cos I’m not letting someone see me back down from one prisoner, and then next prisoner comes. So I’d rather just put him out, give him a combo, bang him out and then that’s it. Go round the prison, that’s it”.

Considering the association between sound, space and contestations of power revealed additional depths of prison life, aspects of prison society largely conducted out of sight. When speaking of a particularly loud prisoner, the No.2 referred to the *“big swinging dick”* on the wing and his perceived need to play music louder than anyone else to demonstrate supremacy. Sound then, was implicated in masculine performance and the search for respect (Toch 1997; Borgois 2002). This jostling for order also provided a means to assert influence over space. Sound and rhythm were used to breach, alter and remake prison boundaries (Russell and Carlton 2018).

Contributing to the soundscape and its punctuations with performative masculinity was avoided by some. Urfan, described by Cam as a “pad rat”, explained his retreat from social spaces: *“Just when we want the peace, open my reading books, start reading. That’s it. Nothing. They are banging anything. I don’t want involved. Stay inside and do with the reading. That’s it”.* The difficulty of carving out personal space in an

environment which offered little respite from the intrusive soundscape was keenly felt: *“Behind your door, you turn your telly up but you can always hear the keys”* (Si). Stretch explained how this could impact on boundaries of the self:

“EEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE All through the night, all through the day. That’s all you hear. You know when you’re having....? I’ve got a thing now, like I never gave myself any time I just went with the flow. But now I take two hours out of the day. An hour out the morning, an hour out the afternoon, or the evening for myself. Give myself a bit of time. An all you can hear is, it’s quiet, your padmate’s asleep, ah it’s heaven.... EEEEEEEEEEEEEEE EEEEEEE What the fuck you ringing your bell for at 3 or 4 o clock in the morning? You should be asleep. Unless you’re like me and you don’t sleep a lot”.

Other people were inescapable and their accompanying noise, as well as that of the prison more generally was unavoidable. For Natty, the intrusion of sound upon his sense of self was a marker that he was finding it difficult to cope: *“I don’t listen to music anymore. I don’t watch TV. Just silence and I hear everything going on around me”* (Natty). Retreating from the bustle of the prison was a necessity for some, whether to counter episodes of distress or as a strategy of survival: *“I just wanna go behind my door. What’s gonna happen to me when I get out?”*. For Stretch, the need to find sanctuary was episodic but urgent:

“Some weeks it gets horrendous you know, I have black outs, panic attacks, I don’t know what’s happening. I sweat from head to toe, have to run to the shower, the shower’s like my saviour cos I used to be able to bolt myself in the shower and no one could get to me. I used to put things behind the door and wash the dirt off me”.

Stretch had been abused as a child and had a particularly complex and intimate relationship with the prison and its soundscape. His need for sanctuary echoed the difficulty of finding personal space in an environment where other people were inescapable.

Sound was bound up with the remaking and re-ordering of space to assert and to retain identity within the intrusive prison environment. Unpicking associations between sound, space and identity adds definition to the operation of agency within the constraints of the prison environment as well as extending the field of enquiry behind the door. Sound was

bound up with efforts to assert strength and maintain respect in prison spaces, both reflecting and adding nuance to accounts of masculinity and identity both in prison and other social spaces (Toch 1997; Bourgois 2002; Maguire 2016). Sound prompted individuals to seek sanctuary as a means of preserving self. While bound up performative masculinities sound also amplified expressions of sensitivity and difficulty coping. In this context, the soundscape was a means of charting internal emotional geography, and of offering it an expression in an environment where avoidance of being mugged off was a constant concern.

8.5 “Going for a shit, Sir?”

Prison scholars have documented the ways in which the lack of distinction between backstage and frontstage zones for performing identity constitute an assault on the self (e.g. Jewkes 2005a). While this is open to the charge of a rather literal reading of Goffman’s dramaturgical analogy, there is little doubt that the lack of space and privacy are a source of continual discomfort. Many in prison are required to share a cell, in which up to 23 hours a day can be spent. In HMP Midtown, with its Victorian build, cramped conditions and single wing design, the sensation of being, quite literally, on top of one another presented a range of challenges. Men discussed a range of associated problems from the discomfort of living with a flatulent or snoring pad mate to the indignity of shared toilets. In daily life the deprivations of privacy and dignity were keenly felt, constituting an additional arena in which disparity of power was contested and displayed. Sound enhanced the constant sense of intrusion upon the private, emphasising associations between sound and stigma. The “nakedness” of prison life was both shaped and reflected by the soundscape; there was an aural dimension to social stigma and strategies of its avoidance.

At Midtown the personal was frequently subject to public discussion in a way which emphasised the lack of distinction between spheres of life. Men frequently sought my opinion or sympathy on a range of medical issues from rotten teeth to a troublesome cyst, offering up their complaint for my bewildered inspection. One prisoner reported vomiting brown fluid, and later updated me to say he was waiting for surgery following a cancer diagnosis. I noted there barely seemed to be a man over forty not complaining of sciatica from the poor prison mattresses. On my first visit to reception, a call came over the radio

from the main wing; officers were to ask a prisoner if he would like to visit the sexual health clinic. Discretely. I noted in my fieldnotes *“the irony of this seems lost...”*. On another occasion, on the wing, officers speculated about the usefulness of a pair of boxers, given their size; *“they won’t keep much in”*. *“I think that’s the point”* responds the second, *“good and roomy”*. The first explained to me a prisoner required an additional pair as he had a boil on his bum. He went on to explain the reason for getting through such high levels of toilet paper: *“they masturbate a lot”* (Officer McCafferty). Showing me self-harm scars, or those resulting from an array of misfortunes were a common element of the day, despite the objection of some (*“Oh, I saw that, I told him don’t do that to her”* (Davey)). This lack of privacy reflects Goffman’s processes of mortification; protective layers of privacy and dignity are eroded by their consistent exposure to the community. Forced proximity is bound up with processes of ‘contamination’ which impact on perceptions of self (Goffman 1961: 35).

Even in this element of the soundscape, social ordering could be discerned. Some prisoners were afforded greater degrees of discretion than others, reflecting and reinforcing their status. When an officer interrupted Tommy and I to chastise him for inappropriate clothing (he had returned from the gym and was wearing a vest, an item otherwise not permitted on the wing), his response suggested this was an unusual event. Complicated rules governing business, discretion and privacy were difficult to navigate. The prisoners, for whom such indignities were fairly commonplace, were keenly aware of how powerful a tool this could be when turned on staff to upend the order. Officers on duty on the wing were usually required to stay there. There was a staff toilet on the wing, receiving a constant stream of traffic. Trips to the loo while prisoners were out were often accompanied by shouts of *“going for a shit Sir/Miss?”*. Depriving staff of privacy was a means of subjecting staff to the intrusiveness of the prison environment in a way which challenged the social ordering, a rebalancing of power which reflected the keenness with which such deprivations were experienced (Shwartz 1972).

The complexity of associations between sound, privacy and order at Midtown demonstrated the significance of distinctions between public and private, dirt and purity which frame social life (Douglas 1966). The nakedness of prison life arising from the elision of public and private distinctions formed an aspect of intrusiveness of the institution on the self for members of the prison community. Pickering and Rice (2017) revisit Douglas’ work to explore connections between purity and danger and sound

studies. Noise, they argue, is “sound out of place”. Their work is a powerful means of illustrating the transgressive, disruptive potentials of sound, but despite observing the ‘political’ and ‘subjective’ nature of noise (and sound more widely) they fail to make explicit the social relations which underpin and reinforce the meaning and utility attributed to sound. Elision of public and private realms through sound could be felt particularly keenly within the cramped and overcrowded conditions of HMP Midtown, deepening discomfort and the sense of stigma associated with rupturing distinctions between public and private spheres of life (Goffman 1961).

8.6 Kakalakas

While sound could work to mediate the social experience of space and time, staying in the prison at night illustrated how time and space could also exert an influence over how sound was interpreted. This was not a straightforward process but one impeded and reinforced as well as resisted by the community. ‘Kakalaka’ was the word given to me for cockroach in Tunisia. More commonly a type of beetle the onomatopoeic sound of the word was reminiscent of the scuttling cockroaches over the prison floor at night. They were considerably more visible when unencumbered by the heavy numbers of the prison community. The noise of their movement was further amplified by the absence of the men. Crewe *et al* (2014) contend that prisons are not monolithic spaces but rather comprised of zones in which emotional expression is more or less tolerated (Crewe *et al* 2014). Expanding upon the time I spent in prison to include the night prompted the observation that the nature of prison spaces also shifts over time. Listening to prison spaces over a wider period of daily activity (and lack of it once the day’s regime had been completed and the prison shifted to night patrol) focused a greater emphasis on the mutually constitutive nature of time and space, adding definition and texture to how these spaces were experienced.

I was told about legions of mice and cockroaches in the prison. While pest control made frequent visits, traps littered the grounds and the men, particularly on the twos, often created makeshift doorstops of clothing and fabric to prevent night time invasions. I saw little evidence first hand until I spent the night. As the volume of the soundscape diminished, and greater numbers settled for the night and relaxed in to evening rhythms of sleeping, watching telly, chatting or listening to the radio, fresh and otherwise

inaudible components became audible. The thrum of cell alarms (and the rhythmic lack of urgency which characterised response to them) assumed a steady note in a soundscape now dominated by rubber soles on metal walkways, the jangle of keys, and later, the squeak of mice. Unable to see in the dark, I found my hearing sensitized to compensate as the lights dimmed. Time altered experience of space in the prison at night:

...expanding the small site to one of uncertain corners and indistinct perimeters. Occasional sounds come from within the cells, escaping across uninhabited grounds. I'm conscious of our chatter, not wishing to disturb the occasional, fleeting shadows glimpsed through barred windows. The prison at night is strangely altered, unfamiliar. (Herrity 2018).

Night time altered perceptions of the contours of the prison landscape, shaping its emotional geography. Correspondingly, time stretched out interminably and I missed the chaotic company of the prisoners. I felt lonely. Listening to the prison at night time illustrated the shifting complexity of the relationship between sound, the social and space/time in ways which dramatically altered the way the environment was experienced. Prisoners were behind their doors save emergency, the concertinaed rhythms of responding to a prisoner who had nearly bled to death through chronic self-harming attracting a flurry of interest, alarm and hissed urgent inquiries from behind the door: *"Miss, Miss, has someone died?"*.

While times and points of the regime shaped the way sound and space were socially experienced, the complexity of this relationship was enhanced by the way different parts of the prison inflected interpretation of the soundscape and the degree of stigma attached to different populations. Units in the basement of the prison were particularly fraught emotional zones. Both the vulnerable prisoner unit (Veeps) and the segregation and care unit (Seg) were in the dark bowels of the prison, separated by metal gates. Seamus, an older prisoner in the Veeps described how being placed near the seg could prove wearing:

"banging, crying, screaming keeps us awake – they can't do their bang up you see. They should leave the doors open and they'd be okay, it's all those hours locked up by themselves, they can't take it, does their head in then none of us sleep. Keeps us awake all night. Big problem".

The subterranean location of these units at Midtown reinforced perceptions of status in the prison hierarchy (the Veeps were commonly identified as being at the bottom of the

food chain, those in segregation either ‘on the numbers’ or vulnerable – See chapter 7). The effects of this could prove significant, as Officer Tone reflected:

“At one point the first night centre was there, where the VPU is, so it was like off the bus, through this portcullis, in to reception, downstairs where there’s no natural light... I didn’t even think about it until someone pointed that out to me, how does that affect a person, going in to the dungeon, down in to the bottom of the dungeon, drab and dreary”.

While Tone did not allude to sound at this point, the closed spaces in the basement of the prison were shaped by their location in the wider prison. Sound echoed around the main body of the prison but here those sounds were distorted by their journey through ceiling and stairs, increasing the sense of enclosure. Boyd echoed this assessment: *“that’s enough to do anyone’s head in down there, it is, does your head in. People screaming all the time and does your head in. I wouldn’t mind but I just couldn’t see anyone...”*. Interrogating the soundscape of HMP Midtown and how it was experienced illustrated the way in which the prison was comprised not of one, monolithic zone of exclusion but a series of concentric, stigmatised layers. Sykes describes the experience of imprisonment as being characterised by the stain of physical and social exclusion from ‘decent’ society (Sykes 1958: 67). Sound echoes a complex emotional topography, separating men from one another and assigning differing degrees of stigma depending on the extent to which the individual was able to navigate the social complexities which shaped and reflected prison spaces.

Impositions of stigma from the prison were not passively accepted. Processes of resistance and subversion abounded. A number of those I spoke to likened Midtown to a local council estate (Tommy, Officer Rose). Tonk and others referred to the prison as “the biggest house in Midtown” and, when challenged for nosiness by an officer reported retorting: *“We’re here more than you, this is our home”*. Rather than internalising the stain associated with geographies of exclusion associated with the prison, this was incorporated in to narratives of sound, space and identity in which the local had undisputed supremacy (Cohen 2012). Interviews were peppered with references to local areas and how they related to the prison, alongside an insistence that I get to grips with local geography. They had no patience for my dyspraxia. Stretch viewed the prison as his domain, asserting his dominance in terms of knowledge and influence:

“I’ve ruled the roost in here for like 25 years. What I said in here went. You know what I mean? My manor. You hit staff without us knowing about it you got weighed in... You beat someone or robbed somebody without anybody knowing about it you got... we’d pass through a little council first, you got done in”.

Lugs illustrated the way Midtown identity was carried more widely between prisons as well as within Midtown: *“We all stick together if you noticed, us Midtown lads.... Anywhere if we go out the country, not out the country if we go... Stafford... that’s the first thing we’d be looking for. If we went Dovegate, or Lincoln...”*. In this way sound was interwoven in to expressions of identity and social order, subverting the stigma represented by the social and spatial boundaries of the prison walls. Midtown was *“home”*, *“our manor”* (Stretch, Tonk). In this way prisoners seized ownership of their prison as a means of expressing agency, subverting processes of exclusion by stubbornly expressing belonging and asserting ownership. Officer Rose echoed this *“this is their prison, they consider it theirs, it belongs to them”*. Geographies of exclusion were disrupted by determined efforts to incorporate them in to narratives of space, identity and belonging (Sibley 1995).

8.7 Bells, whistles, ships and prisons

Only when Bear (Midtown’s writer in residence) pointed it out to me, did I realise how closely the prison resembled a ship. Vulnerable and segregated prisoners languished in the sun-starved, close, subterranean hold, the twos – the ground floor – could be likened to the deck, the netting resembled rigging and so on. The otherness of prison spaces rebounded in the soundscape, evoking the stigma of social memory. The ship shares characteristics with the prison, both having particular social and discursive purposes and properties (Foucault and Miskowiec 1984). English linguistic quirks heighten the heterotopia that prison represents – one *“lands”* as if travelling by plane, and is *“on”* a wing or landing, as if sailing within a separate dimension from the world beyond the walls. This was echoed in the enduring impact of the prison soundscape, an impact which traversed direct spatial and temporal experience of the prison, as Jay indicates: *“The minute I hear keys I’m back inside”*. Both direct immersion within the prison community and memory of it resonated in the soundscape and subsequent exposure to particular

sounds. The power of sound to evoke memory and mediate the social meaning of being “back inside” reflect both the intrinsically social nature of sound, and the potency of the wider social meaning of prison. Sound reconfigured experiences of time and space by enhancing an awareness of the meaning of prison and exclusion from life outside. A prisoner interviewed in Aylesbury neatly sums up this vertiginous sensation:

“...dreaming of keys, I thought I was back in here! But what was worse, was when I was back in I dreamed of the sounds of home, hearing my brothers and sisters running about, kitchen sounds, breakfast being made... but when I woke I was banged up.” (prisoner, conversation in HMPYOI Aylesbury, in Herrity 2015).

The profound sense of loss and exclusion arising from the prison experience is confounded by the dialectical tensions between the simultaneous experience of space and time in the now of prison and the then of home, the carceral present and the hope for future freedom. Sound traverses time and space, amplifying the sense of dislocation arising from the social exclusion languishing behind prison walls represents. Armstrong’s concept of the cell and the corridor perhaps more accurately relates to the sensation of time and space operating both here and there (Armstrong 2018). Like a Piranesi³⁹ picture, the sense of dislocation derives from the dizzying effects of the whole (Gallo and Ruggiero 1991). These accounts of time also echo the wider implications of routinisation and the way memories of former prison life resonate with sound elicited memory. As Cam recounted: *“I’ve been in jail ever since I was fifteen, so all I hear, every day, is keys. Even when I get out, if I’ve been out on the road, all I hear is keys and I think I’m in jail”*. Cam also provided an illustration of how sound, and its links with memory lent an elasticity to time which challenged singular and narrow conceptions of space. I asked him if there were *“sounds in here that remind you of outside”*? He answered: *“Nah, what I hear outside reminds me of inside”*. The soundscape of prison had, for Cam, become privileged in his sense of place, and had therefore come to dominate his memory (though this may well have reflected his circumstances at the time – he on pre-sentence hold).

Enquiring what prisoners and staff listen to, and what it means to them disrupts linear notions of time, reinforcing the sense in which time and space are intrinsically connected, and mutually constituted (Parkes and Thrift 1980; Moran 2012). Sound both mediated

³⁹ Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) painted imaginary prisons (amongst other things). A little like Escher.

time and space and reconstituted it through eliciting memory and social meaning, as Joanne illustrates:

“I might hear people shouting or there’s like a fight, you just automatically turn round and it places you right back in the world of where you work. I can remember, I was out in a Saturday night and a fight was kicking off and you just know the sounds, you know the voices, the shouting, and you can hear running around and things, and in that split second it can put you straight back in...”
(Joanne, drugs worker).

In this instance the potency of the prison and the social life within it operated independently of individual agency. Joanne expressed a sense of mechanical solidarity being evoked involuntarily by particular sounds which reasserted her identity as a member of the Midtown community. Sound illustrated the complexities of order and its navigations through time and space. Sound is the necessary component to understanding the complexity of the ways in the social interacts with and is constituted by space and time. It is the convergence between sound, the social and Spacetime which constitute the experience of prison life.

9 Coda ***Sound 1

<https://leicester.figshare.com/search?q=10.25392%2Fleicester.data.7628846&searchMode=1>

At the outset of the project I sought to explore the significance of sound to the relationships and wellbeing of those who lived and worked in prison. This developed in to an aural ethnography of a local men's prison; HMP Midtown, as a means of exploring the research question. At its close, it became clear that aural aspects of social experience were the means of analysing daily life in the prison community.

The prison soundscape; distinctive, inescapable and laden with meaning, is central to carceral experience. Accounts from those who live and work within prison spaces abound with references to sound, and yet we fail to explore this aspect of experience. Bangs, clangs, jangles and slams may feature in imaginings of the prison, but this facet of social life has remained relegated to anecdote and fieldnote in so far as it has entered the consciousness of prison scholars. This research has sought to bring this aspect of prison life to the fore, in an effort to understand its significance for those who live and work inside. Incorporating sound in method allowed for a collaborative exploration of prison spaces to offer an account of the soundscape at a local men's prison. Sound was of paramount importance at HMP Midtown. Environment, culture and the 'feel' of the place were both mediated and manipulated by sound: the emotional climate was audible. A good day could be heard, an orderly one had a predictable rhythm and disruptions to it could be forecast by attuning to the soundscape. Sound was bound with the ordering of social relations in prison spaces as well as temporal and spatial experience of the institution. Listening to the soundscape rendered processes of order and its impairment audible.

In the course of fieldwork, power, order and time and space were identified as key themes, reflected in the titles of analysis chapters. Attending to aural experience at Midtown annunciated dimensions of power felt beyond the here and now of immediate interaction. In turn processes of order maintenance and disruption were articulated by listening to rhythms and routines. Examining aural aspects of experience presented a means of understanding the ways in which navigations of order were aligned with strategies of survival for staff and prisoners at Midtown. What follows is a summary of the project

and its main findings. Contributions to existing literature are then considered, as are limitations of the project. I conclude by examining questions and implications arising from the research.

9.1 Main findings

Sound was a means of annunciating power in HMP Midtown. The soundscape amplified the impact of the institution and the roles and identities imposed on individuals by the rules and regime which lent social life structure and shape. The totemic significance of the prison was sounded through the bangs and clangs which greeted the community which dwelt within. The force of the soundscape could be imposed on an individual independent of intent on the part of those interacting with the environment. Jangling of keys, for example, could be a nervous habit or one which acted as a performance of officer role. It could be experienced as profoundly disempowering by the listener, rendering them anxious about whether this signalled imminent movement and emphasising their prisoner status – their lack of keys. Sound added clarity and definition to understanding the way power and order operated in distinct ways; order only ever achieved in the moment, power spatially and temporally unbounded within, and beyond, the prison social world.

Sound was integral to processes of prisonisation, providing a means of acclimation to the culture and social life at Midtown. A medium unrestricted by the peripheries of vision, sound offered a means of overcoming physical restrictions as a source of knowledge; a means of identifying the whereabouts of others or sources of disturbance where sight did not reach. Just as sound provided the basis for advancing understanding of the prison in this project, sound was a valuable source of knowledge for the Midtown community. This extended to unconscious assessment of the environment or the “feel” of the day. Staff and prisoners would routinely reflect on whether the day felt like a “good” one and on that basis predict the likelihood of disruption. At Midtown, practices of “sonic agency” worked to navigate and contest power and order. Frustration would often be indicated by deliberate and sustained noise-making which was agitating and distracting for those subjected to it. Wide-ranging meanings of quiet in relation to desired states of order, or signals of foreboding indicated the deep cultural significance of sound as a facet of social relations and a site for their negotiation within the prison.

Ontological security was derived from and enhanced by predictable routines for both prisoners and staff, indicating a cooperative instinct derived from desire for mechanical solidarity. There was comfort and familiarity in the regular sounds of an orderly day which provided a means of anchoring and orientating the community. At Midtown, order derived not from perceptions of valid or benign authority, but from a social motivation and a desire for the ontological security that derives from routinised activity. In this way, a focus on sound reconceptualised the way ‘the problem of order’ at Midtown could be understood. Distinctions between individual contributions to, and deviations from order and the wider collective rhythms of the prison were made audible by listening to the prison soundscape. Processes of order had an audible quality; its rhythms a means of understanding daily life and individual navigations of the regime which partially comprised it. Sound was a site on which order was negotiated, and as such offered a means of understanding the intricacies of social life at Midtown. Significantly, the ways in which certain behaviours were tolerated, not because of standing, but because of *understanding* indicated gaps in knowledge about the impetus for order amongst prisoners. Tolerance of behaviour which might be the subject of legal proceedings in the wider community – such as significant and sustained noise – earned latitude in prison amongst those who recognised the underlying reasons for this behaviour. The impetus for cooperating with the regime was provided by the mutual interest of getting by and getting on with it.

At Midtown, sound was integral both to the expression of emotion and to the ways it was mediated and shared. Sound was both a modality of emotion and its conduit. The way it was listened to, internalised and interpreted could spread and impact on the order of the day. Sound then, had profound implications for processes of maintenance and disruption to order. Sound could echo with emotional threats to safety, constituting an unacknowledged aspect of jail craft. A bad day had an audible quality, an arrhythmia which signalled disruption to the familiar routine. Recognising the significance of sound in these processes has implications for restoring order in the wake of a breach or disturbance. “Phasing”: a term used to describe processes of recalibrating predictable rhythms to the day in the wake of breaches at Midtown, also has implications for how order is understood. These phasing practices were not restricted to formal activity, or those of staff but on occasion encompassed various members of the community. Listening to the ways in which individuals and groups could informally act to alter or infect the

‘feel’ and rhythms of the day has profound implications for understanding the mechanical processes involved in order and its disruption. The polyrhythmia of a good day, with positive relations and predictable practices was worked at by members of the community irrespective of whether they wore an officer’s uniform. Order resulted not from perceptions of legitimacy, but because to work in relative harmony resulted in a predictable routine from which was derived a sense of ontological security and collective cohesiveness. Sound was a site for reinforcing social emotion, and for evoking social sentiment on which an orderly day depended.

Listening at Midtown revealed the ways in which sound was integral to ‘doing’ time. Sound was bound up with the passing and portioning of time and space with which imposing patterns of behaviour and routine are inextricably bound. Time could be experienced as painful, a facet of punishment imposing a sensation of temporal vertigo which necessitated finding ways of both keeping busy and minimising the dissonance between inside and outside time which were both identified as markedly different and threatened by failure to manage or “do” ones time and the vagaries and pains of long or uncertain sentences (the effects of which could be felt far beyond the direct recipient).

While sound was intertwined with the practices and processes of punishment, it was also implicated in the exercise of agency and independence which mitigated its effects. Sound worked to evoke the imagination, diminishing the distance between past happy memories and the spaces beyond the wall, occupied by other lives and loved ones. Sound was central to processes of time-space distancing, sought by prisoners and fought against by staff whose continual battles with spill over necessitated the attempt at erecting divisions between prison life and the world beyond. Accounting for sound offered a means of revisiting the particularities of time and space in prison and of rethinking the way in which time, and the doing of it is experienced. Time and the doing of it was felt not in singularity but rather in simultaneous, multiple modes of experience and imagining. In the context of the prison sentence at HMP Midtown, sound was a means of traversing constraints of time and space imposed by the prison sentence in order to reconnect with other identities and precious relationships. Sound was used as a means of eliciting memory and traversing time and space in ways which were instrumental to repairing ruptures to the self-narrative imposed by a prison sentence.

Sound was central to finding sanctuary within the confined spaces of Midtown and the attempts of both staff and prisoners to carve out quieter spaces for reflection and recalibration these practices consisted of. Awareness of the limits of space and of privacy were enhanced by the intrusiveness of the soundscape. At the same time removal from it, however partial and fleeting offered respite which highlighted the ways in which sound was implicated in gauging wellbeing. Listening to the soundscape at HMP Midtown amplified the harms of prison, more commonly emphasised deprivations of imprisonment in relation to the incarcerated body, as well as adding texture and nuance to the differentiated emotional geography of the prison at different times, and in different locations within its limited confines. Those living and working at Midtown were subject to the imposition of a nakedness extending far beyond the spartan environment. While members of the community exercised sonic agency to lessen the impact of prison spaces, or to increase their impact upon it, this also worked the other way around. Particular meanings of prison spaces could contaminate inhabitants with their potency and worked to shore up particular social orders upon the people within them. The impact of being contained within these spaces was not constant or unchanged, but rather fluid over the course of the day and point of the regime. It was when these spaces were elided, and separations reduced that the potential for infection was maximised.

Sound conveyed the cultural meaning of prison, its specificity and otherness reinforcing its function as a heterotopia. Listening to the sonic environment of HMP Midtown sounded the specificities of space and time, which heightened the sense of otherness imposed by its cultural significance. Sound reinforced and conveyed the contaminative status of the prison as a site of exclusion which corresponded to the social stigma of those within its spaces. The power of the soundscape derives in part, as well as being remade by, the totemic nature of the prison. Its wider power is bound up with these markers of cultural significance which are reinforced by the distinction of its environment and the particularities of time and space within it. Intrinsically social, HMP Midtown remained wedded to the wider community of which it was an integral and important part.

Listening to the ebb and flow of daily life within the walls of HMP Midtown revealed the extent to which these rhythms were a source of security and reassurance for inhabitants of the community. In this way using sound as a means of analysing prison social life illuminated the ways in which staff and prisoners navigated experiences of prison, often securing cooperation as a means of getting through the day.

9.2 Contributions to existing literature

Incorporating sound methodologically disrupts epistemological assumptions about how we know – extending phenomenological contentions about the basis of bodily experience as ways of knowing to emphasise the intrinsically social basis for processes of meaning-making. This better accounts for the shortcomings of phenomenological inclinations to focus on individualised experience. Privileging what we see as a source of knowledge imposes a divisive perspective between subject and object on the focus of analysis. Incorporating the sensory as a source of knowledge has the potential for enriching philosophy of methods, drawing on a wider range of social experience to inform understanding of how we know. While rhythmanalysis (Lefebvre 2004) has received increasing attention as both a research method and means of theoretical analysis (e.g. Lyon 2018), the absence of sound in accounts of rhythm continues to shape partial depictions of time and space. Drawing on the wider range of social experience as a means of understanding how we know, challenges perspectives which privilege the visual, by demonstrating the wider range of understanding employed to make sense of our social world. In this way, this research contributes to literature on the philosophy of social scientific method.

Contributions to sensory methods extended beyond methodology to method. The nature of aural experience as integral to social meaning-making has implications for engagement in the field. Using audible aspects of social experience to inform a theoretical framework of analysis emphasises the collaborative quality of knowledge production, and the mutual creativity required to explore implicit aspects of experience. The approach to this research drew literature from a range of fields and disciplines to inform conceptions of sensory experience. Interdisciplinarity was explicitly incorporated in to every stage of the process from focus, to research design and practice. Interdisciplinarity was embraced throughout in ways which echo and celebrate the creative potentials of criminology, applying them to prisons research in a novel way. In using sound as a means of exploring the prison, the field of inquiry is extended behind the door where much of prison life is lived. This heightens awareness of the dangers of reliance on what falls within the field of vision, but in doing so encourages a broadening awareness of the unseen aspects of prison life within prisons literature.

Exploring the HMP Midtown soundscape offered a means of contributing to prisons literature. Using sound as a source of knowledge contributes to understanding the pains of imprisonment by offering a dimension of analysis to explore how the sense of deprivation is enhanced via the intrusiveness of the soundscape. The inescapable sounds of the prison reinforce the sense of lost autonomy and liberty. Additionally, the sound of keys could induce anxiety and concern, as well as serving as a constant reminder of curtailed freedoms. Jangling keys could invoke the auditory imagination of the formerly incarcerated, transcending time and space to elicit memories of imprisonment. Aural experience deepened the carceral, working through the incarcerated body as well as upon it. Attending to the soundscape extended understanding of how power operates in prison, not only in the immediate relational sense, but through the imposition and reinforcement of culturally-imbued sounds over which there was no control.

The absence of material goods resulted in an ingenuity and innovativeness in adapting to the environment, frequently sound was incorporated in to these practices; creating spaces of sanctuary or communicating dissent with banging. Sound evoked memories of former times with family, which both offered comfort and additional sting to their absence. The rhythms of the day were set by metronomic markers conveyed through the bell, opening and closing of gates, calls and shouts. While these were frequently incorporated in to individual adaptations and improvisations around the regime, they also reinforced deprivations of autonomy. Movement, activities, when to eat, work, wake, make phone calls, were all regulated by the regime, its rhythms kept by the metronomic sounding of the bell. As alluded to above, various sounds intruding upon the relative safety of the cell (depending on pad mate) could induce uncertainty and wariness of what awaited beyond. Analysing sound then, could enhance awareness of insecurity imposed by the prison environment. Listening to the acoustic community also illuminated how staff could be subject to deprivations imposed by the circumstances of the environment (albeit to an infinitely lesser and temporally bounded extent). Processes of prisonisation similarly extended to staff, while in differentiated ways, which were amplified by sound. Staff became accustomed to the sound environment, adapting behaviours in accordance with it and similarly responding to, and taking comfort from an orderly routine. Working with the prison community as a whole contributed to an understanding of the effects of prison upon prison staff in ways deriving from the environment and nature of place rather than their work role.

The culture and social life of prison society were partially mediated and shaped by sound. Listening to the rhythms of social life at Midtown offered a means of extending understanding of the processes of prisonisation. Sound was central to acculturating to the prison environment, but also to practices of adaptation. The soundscape illuminated facets of the ecology of survival. Trouble was often audible, acting both as a claxon summoning staff attention and an alarm bell signalling which areas to avoid. Violence could be felt/heard through the walls and impending disruption was accompanied by a drop in the soundscape. Becoming conversant in this complex and largely non-verbalised system of signification was key to safety and security. Sound was a source of knowledge to all within the acoustic community, featuring in practices of surveillance and sousveillance which formed core parts of the prison day for most of those who lived and worked there.

Sound was central to processes of institutionalisation, imposing particular spatial and temporal experience which formed facets of mortification as well as resistance to these processes. Sound added texture and definition to the relationship, convergence and divergence between power and order. In everyday life at HMP Midtown, both staff and prisoners derived a sense of ontological security from the steady rhythms of a predictably ordered day. This contributes specifically to the extensive literature on prison order and processes of its maintenance. Taking order as the point of departure, and listening to the rhythms of the regime, added complexity to representations of order and its absence as comprising a binary relationship. This has implications for how we consider the way the prevalence of security discourses (in which disorder and disobedience are privileged (King and McDermott 1990)) has shaped our understanding of everyday prison life.

Attending to aural aspects of social experience amplified the role of emotion in the stuff of prison social life, a sense of foreboding and impending trouble could induce concern in those who heard it. Similarly, the feel of the day could be shifted by altering emotions. Spreading good feeling, or imposing regulation through steady routine - 'phasing' - could reset the day. Emotion could spread sonically throughout the wing, altering the 'feel' of the day, and the prevailing mood within prison spaces. Sound offered a means of combining criminology, psychology and geography to form a lens through which to enhance understanding of the social role of emotion and the significance of emotional contagion to prison order. This contributes specifically to emotions literature, annunciating explicit connections between emotion and social control within a criminal

justice setting. In using sound as a means of exploring the emotional geography of prison spaces, explicit links were made between emotion and processes of order maintenance. This forges deeper connections between emotion and prisons literature in relation to order.

Employing interdisciplinarity as a means of revisiting prison spaces through sound, has the potential to enhance understanding both of sound and the object of scrutiny it is used as a lens to examine. Carceral geography refers to a useable past, unlocked through an exploration of former soundscapes to explore the social significance of spaces. Privileging sound further articulates this relationship between people, sound and space to reveal the auditory imagination at work in re-inhabiting these spaces. Sound, and imaginings of it evoked by the social significance of space, or vice versa, work to reproduce social significance. The complex relationship between sound, collective memory and cultural meaning is revealed by more closely attending to the social. It is the space between sound, space and the social which better accounts for the potency of former prison spaces. Attending to this three-way relationship correspondingly reconfigures our sense of time. Our temporal and spatial experience extends to a multiplicity of simultaneously inhabited dimensions rather than a singular sequence of here and nows. A member of the Midtown community could be in the present prison and the one of memory, strolling in the well-known streets of Midtown and at home with their loved ones. This complex interplay of memory, imagination and experience was illuminated by inviting an engagement with the soundscape, revealing the ways in which these facets of reality could be both a source of comfort and pain; a sometimes irreconcilable ontological arrhythmia.

9.3 Limitations to the research

I have identified three core limitations which are inter-related and directly associated with sound and the necessarily exploratory nature of the proposal. In discussing the first and second of these I tackle the theoretical challenges which lie at the heart of this project. There is a fundamental contradiction in attempting to disrupt the pre-eminence of visual experience using text. I explore this along with my attempts to address these difficulties throughout the thesis. I go on to talk about wider sensory experience and the seeming contradiction between arguing for acknowledgement of its role in knowledge production

while exclusively focussing on the auditory. I conclude by exploring the way my focus on sound shaped fieldwork and what the implications of this are for the thesis.

There is a glaring contradiction in attempting to subvert knowledge-shaping cultural practices which privilege the visual through the medium of text (defining sound and the problems of representation are discussed in chapter 3). In some ways this further demonstrates the thesis that our cultural ocular-centrism shapes how we know. The irony of presenting this thesis in a largely conventional form and format is not lost however. Spraying use of sound files, as well as an attempt to draw on the sounds and rhythm of the spoken word through fieldnote writing are partially designed to detract from the visually-bound text. They also work to elicit the auditory imagination in the reader, and in this way are intended to collapse the distance of temporal and spatial boundaries between fieldwork and the community of HMP Midtown. This creativity is an attempt to lessen the jarring contradiction presented by writing about sound, by harnessing the “capacity to invite imaginings” (McNeill 2018:115). Nevertheless this represents a compromise, an attempt to accommodate both the conventions of academia and a desire to explore and extend peripheries of the field.

This thesis presents an argument for closer attendance to the sensory as a source of knowledge. Focusing on sound to the exclusion of other facets of experience runs the risk of substituting one sense for another. It is not my intention to argue that the auditory is a somehow ‘truer’ route to understanding social experience (Parmar 2019). Rather, I argue that the auditory is one means of embracing a more active engagement with the range of sensory experience that inform engagement with our environment, and our means of sense-making. How we touch, feel, hear, see, smell and interact with one another constitute a complex of experiential input with which we construct our social world (Ingold 2000). The task of disentangling this experiential complexity represents a formidable project, and arguably is unnecessary for making the case for more thorough attendance to these facets of social experience. This is not to claim the focus on auditory experience was not deliberate. This project began with a question, nevertheless continued focus on this raises the risk of shifting rather than diminishing the epistemological limitations of privileging one sense above all others. Other aspects of social experience undoubtedly played vital roles in shaping the meaning of prison spaces. I have included excerpts and observations from my fieldnotes below as a means of illustrating the potential presented by a detailing a broader palette of sensory experience:

“Quite apart from the impact of living within razor wire, was the potential effect of a lack of visual stimuli, in a horizon dominated by metallic greys and institutional blues. Midtown was, to my eyes, and those of the prisoners I discussed it with, irrefutably dirty; greasy to the touch. Spending the night, I was not only greeted by the impossibility of finding anywhere comfy to perch but was forced to compete for the rare suitable surface with remnants of several meals; Limp lettuce, crumbs of unknown provenance, uninviting sheens of grease. While interviewing Lugs, he noted the bucket of dirty grates lifted from one of the shower/toilet areas which had been deposited an inch or so behind me in an equally grimy bucket. They remained untended to, coated in an accumulation of hair, skin and assorted slime, I assume mixed with a variety of bodily fluids but did not investigate further. Offices too were coated in black dust and grease. And yet, this was far cleaner than it had been, and this improvement was spoken of with pride”.

Smell was of profound significance to prison life (e.g. p160). The prevalence of the smell of fish food, for example, indicating how much NPS was currently available on the wing and the pungent odour of weed now being greeted with something akin to enthusiasm for the relative stability and absence of threat to health it posed. The smell of spice heads was frequently noted – Cam claimed it oozed from the skin of those who regularly used it. Being in constant proximity to the odour of piss and shit, whether sleeping within a few centimetres of a toilet, having to use drainage under pressure, or being in the vicinity of the aftermath of a potting, implicated smell as central to complex social systems demarcating purity and danger. These remained largely unexplored within the constraints of this project but nevertheless formed part of my educational lexicon, informing my understanding of my environment and the tone of social relations I was likely to encounter that day.

These brief passages illuminate the instructive potential of incorporating a range of sensory experience in to the research process and indicate how enriched depictions of social experience might be by their inclusion. I was frequently struck by just how much processes of information acquisition were informed by sensory experience as I became more sensitised to their epistemological implications. In some ways this sensitivity was prompted precisely by a focus on sound, which was the basis for the research questions I began the project with.

Talking about sound also presented challenges. People are culturally less accustomed to analysing the soundscape (Carpenter and McLuhan 1960). Sometime after leaving the field Ben Crewe advised me that one of his first actions when entering a new research field was devising a short explanation for what he was doing there and why. I struggled to find an explanation which answered calls to account for my presence and “*why sound?*” as well as the research method. I settled on: “*imagine Attenborough observing Wildebeest in the Serengeti, but instead of wildebeest I am studying Jason eating his cheese and onion baguette*”. He responded: “*but I always offer you a chip*”. I remain unsure if I managed to satisfactorily explain or if he simply lost interest with that line of inquiry which was also lacking any direct reference to the soundscape. Working without precedent constituted a steep learning curve. It was challenging to work out how to encourage people to ‘listen’ more attentively without imposing a particular interpretation of the environment or colouring their responses. The change in how people engaged with my questions over time suggested sensitivity to sound was a process. How to affect this more efficiently was a question of art.

Using sound as method involved subjecting myself to the same process of understanding as I sought to discern in the field. On a number of occasions quite early on, I heard what I assumed was violence disrupting. As I looked around I noticed no one else was responding to it. Everyday rhythms continued on. What was everyone else hearing that I was not? Or, conversely, what was the quality of this sound that allowed others to differentiate between this and something they needed to respond to which eluded me? I returned to this question repeatedly, receiving a number of different answers. Prisoners would shrug, “*you just know*”, staff would mysteriously refer to experience and familiarity: “*you learn*” or offer vague speculation in an attempt to satisfy me; “*something about the tone*” “*it’s how long it goes on for*”, “*it’s what goes on around it*”. I would interrupt conversations, my head going up like a meercat. “*What?*” the prisoner/s I was chatting to would ask. “*Oh, thought it was trouble*” I would answer, until I reached a point where I too recognised the difference. I still do not know what it is, but I understand that acclimation to the environment is partially rooted in attuning to its soundscape. This indicates my approach aided my ability to decipher and interpret the soundscape and the facets of daily life at Midtown. Conversely, it also signified a shortcoming of my methodological approach. In order to understand the soundscape, I had to familiarise myself with it, but in so doing I lost some of the ability to define its

finer qualities in a way which allowed for theoretical analysis or intellectual scrutiny. I simply knew. Derek articulates this problem succinctly (his insights are noted in chapter 4, when exploring ethnography):

“if you... asked them what do you listen out for here when you know something’s wrong? If someone, what’s the difference between someone dropping a weight, and someone throwing a weight down? They’ll know the difference, but they won’t know they know. They’ll subconsciously know it”.

The necessity of developing familiarity with the environment was partially why so much time in the field was spent on the main wing. Observations and interpretations are focussed on this area of the prison. While this was also where much of the action was, there is a distinct possibility that the project would have been a very different one had I spent more time in the kitchens, healthcare or education to name but a few examples. Prioritising the main space in the prison made sense given the focus on social relationships, and it is also the case that staying longer would have resulted in an overwhelming amount of data, and an exhausted welcome as well as funding. It is always important to reiterate that as with methods, choices in the focus of research frame some questions and exclude others.

In addition to considering the limitations and challenges raised by this project, are questions arising from it.

9.4 Emerging questions

Using sound as method opened up a wealth of possibilities for responding spontaneously to the sound environment as a source of knowledge in a way which allowed for collaborative inquiry. It remains to be seen how this might work, and whether it would work as well within a larger prison or in different field sites. How much of this research was made possible by the forging of understanding and trust between me and participants is unclear. The relationships and precise circumstances would necessarily be different, and complicated by the introduction of further spaces to reference, perhaps further diminishing the place of interviews. Related to this is the extent to which the findings of this project relate specifically to the particular population and community of HMP Midtown. What these differences might be, how they might manifest, whether different

prisons have differing emotional climates and the particular relationships these might dictate with the soundscape are all matters requiring further investigation. Women's prisons are often described as places of heightened emotion (e.g. Chamberlen 2018). Would this change how the emotional climate might be gauged through sound and what meanings would be attached to the soundscape? Younger prisoners are associated with greater volatility (e.g. Gooch 2019), how would this relate to their relationships with and uses of sound?

One of the central findings of this project amounted to a claim to disrupt interpretations of order/disorder as directly dichotomous, and additionally to the usefulness of approaching an examination of order by considering its absence. Do these processes of order maintenance correspond to those that might be found in other prison environments, and would it be possible (or desirable) to work towards devising measures to more accurately assess their presence/absence? Questions remain about what might be revealed about the part played in these processes by emotion, as well as the role of emotion in troubleshooting on the wing. Developing a language to enable a more systematic and explicit examination of the part played in jail craft by instinct and feeling provide additional areas for further exploration with the prison community. While processes of order were brought to the fore by focusing on sound, using it as a point of inquiry amplified the functions of violence beyond those currently identified by relying on what can be seen. This opened up space for considering the social functions of violence within prison. If much of it goes on out of sight, what does that do to how we understand its prevalence and the reason behind violence conducted in shared prison spaces?

Listening within the Midtown community revealed the extent to which the meaning attached to particular sounds was both subjectively determined and contextually specific. The potency of the prison soundscape partially derived from its association with prison spaces. This raised questions about how the totemic power of the prison is transmitted and sustained through its association with sounds. Exploring this further would theoretically involve working with people without direct exposure to prison spaces, perhaps using additional creative methods such as sound installation. What might this mean for the way we understand the social role of punishment and the way in which it is culturally reproduced? Might this have implications for the way we understand the function of institutions more generally? Schools, for example. What memories are summoned by the sound of chalk on blackboard, multiple chairs scraping across the floor

in unison or playful voices echoing off concrete, and what does that tell us about our consciousness of social belonging and the mechanisms for reproducing it?

9.5 Implications

This research has a number of implications that intersect with theory and practice of various fields. Using sound as a means of exploring the social world of Midtown enhanced understanding, but also comprised a practical demonstration of the implications of imposing an amended theoretical framework provided by a sociology of the senses. The potential presented by placing sound - and by extension broader sensory experience – at the centre of social inquiry rather than being relegated to the peripheries is significant. This research amounts to a case for disrupting epistemological assumptions about processes of knowledge production. If including sound in methodology reconfigures our understanding of social life at HMP Midtown, what might it do when applied elsewhere and would the consequences be of bringing the sensory in to methods more generally? Considering sound opens up a rich vein for further exploration within sociological and criminological inquiry.

Studying the rhythms and routines of HMP Midtown revealed the way in which sound featured in process of acclimation. This has implications for concerns central to prison life, and beyond. Sound was intricately interwoven with safety and security. Sound was a barometer for emotional climate, indicating the overarching importance of acquainting new staff with its soundscape as well as the ways in which this could operate as a means of identifying danger. Attending to this aspect of the prison environment amplified awareness of the disadvantage new staff could be placed in by their lack of opportunity to acclimate to the environment. Not only were they less able to use sound as a means of gauging safety but they were less able to contribute to the steadying rhythms of order and routine. Sound was intimately bound with the acquisition of jail craft and its role in interactions with individuals and the environment. Sound was bound with a substantial if largely uncharted skillset; voice skills (de-escalation by speaking softly, respectfully), using emotional contagion to positively affect mood, phasing, refraining from excessive noise-making.

The soundscape was a useful means of gauging wellbeing as well as comprising a threat to those with a number of conditions which increased sensitivity, many of which I encountered in the population of Midtown. PTSD, insomnia, depression, autistic spectrum disorder amongst others could all be worsened by exposure to the prison soundscape. There was an aural component to entry shock which could be exacerbated by sound sensitivity. Exploring this prompted a consideration of the processes of acclimation to the environment and the ways in which this could result in behaviours which, while adapted to the prison environment were ill-suited to life outside of it. The relentless noise of the day accustoms members of the community to shout, and communicate abruptly, potentially threatening processes of adjustment to open conditions or release and the relative quiet conditions these represent. All are topics requiring further investigation.

Sound also increased awareness of the importance of prison design. Prisons are built to be uncomfortable and harsh, but this shapes the communications within them – enforcing shouting by imposing distance, physical discomfort through loud alarms and persistent clanging and banging. Midtown was falling apart, but its community was relatively cohesive and staff could summon assistance without the need for alarms in much of the building. This raised awareness of the need for lowering capacity as a means of tackling the profound discomfort overcrowding and lack of availability of quiet spaces resulted in. Staff also suffered from the constant intrusion of noise. Overcrowding could be linked to less tangible markers of wellbeing and the difficulty of finding peace for both prisoners and staff, as well as the more usually identified associations between safety and security. The degree of reassurance staff derived from enforced proximity to one another however, added an additional dimension to the wealth of literature – both academically and practically based – which emphasises the value of smaller prisons. An important point worth repetition in the age of apparently ceaseless expansion.

HMP Midtown was unusual in age, size and the degree to which its population was comprised of members of the “local” community; a most local of local prisons. This echoes the ‘limitations’ alluded to earlier in the sense that Midtown was not representative of the prison system more generally. This does little to detract from the informative power of the research for two reasons; first, while my fieldwork was limited to Midtown, the experience of those I spoke with was not. Second, the way in which the community illustrated the significance of the soundscape to prison social life was not

specific to Midtown specifically but prison more generally (in some cases this extended beyond England and Wales). Inevitably, and perhaps to a greater extent given the transcendental qualities of sound (Toop 2010), when considering the significance of the soundscape, participants were drawing on their experience of other prisons in different parts of the estate, as well as the collective “folk memory” of the prison system as a whole (HMIP 2001). The combined knowledge and experience of all those I spoke with covered a multitude of prisons from different parts of the estate (e.g. Women’s prisons, Immigration removal centres, Open conditions, the Youth estate, high security and other locals). When members of the Midtown spoke of, or demonstrated the importance of interpreting the soundscape, it was frequently in the context of becoming attuned to “the everyday tune that’s normal for here” and was therefore equally applicable to all prison environments regardless of their specific conditions.

Acknowledging the more general applicability of these findings has implications for their significance to policy and practice. The soundscape is a source of anxiety for those new to the prison environment, suggesting the value of greater support for staff and prisoners when they first enter, as well as periods of acclimation as they adjust to the specificities of the particular soundscape of the prison in question. The potential value of this is illustrated by the difficulty experienced by the group of staff imported from a nearby closing prison in adjusting to the rhythms and routines of HMP Midtown. Connected to this are the opportunities for training in jail craft and the potential utility of alerting new members of staff to the ways in which trouble can be discerned and sometimes avoided by attending to the soundscape. This potentially extends to inspection teams and independent monitoring boards who tend to be considerably less familiar with the particularities of the environment they are in, as well as presenting staff with a wider vocabulary with which to reflect on the emotional climate of their workplace. As such this demonstrates the value of incorporating additional dimensions in the MQPL and in prison inspections (in addition to survey questions relating to sound which are already included) and SQL, run by HMPPS as a means of gauging the quality of prison life within establishments, or alternatively the utility of developing an additional measure. Greater appreciation of the significance of sound has considerable potentials for improving the prison experience and related outcomes by accommodating the different environmental/auditory needs and sensitivities of those who live and work in these spaces. This is connected with both the quality of relationships (central to a “healthy”

prison) and to improving resettlement by addressing the cycle of miscommunication that can arise around interpretations of interactions with the soundscape (such as in the case of Tonk). ACCT plans could also benefit from the inclusion of issues around hyperacuity and misophonia to improve standards of care and support.

Thinking about sound prompts consideration of the theoretical legacies which inform our approach to investigating social phenomena. It is frequently powerfully instructive to observe states in which the phenomena under scrutiny is absent or at its most extreme as a means of understanding it. This also raises questions about how this might shape the knowledge that results from this practice. Order is a particularly potent example, because while it has been subject to a number of influential projects, it is generally considered with reference to its absence. What are the circumstances in which a ‘bubbly’ feel does not result in eruptions of disorder? What are the processes that prevent this? Similarly, what distinguishes the circumstances in which a minor event is an isolated one, rather than the first in a string of rippling disruptions? Scrutinising a day when things proceed as normal is every bit as informative as examining its operations through the prism of anticipated absence. There is potential here, for furthering understanding of how cultural meanings are reproduced and the social functions of emotion as well as imagination.

Sound prompted a reconsideration of the way we come to understand our social circumstances through inter-related processes of sociality, sound (or senses) and space. The Midtown community traversed multiple dimensions of spatial and temporal experience, expressions of identity encompassed the present, past and the possible. Sound amplified these practices of meaning-making. These dimensions of social life were amplified by listening to the symphony of lived and imagined experience. This suggested our intrinsic sociality is informed by subjectively experienced times and spaces beyond the here and now. These both assist with and hamper navigations of prison space:

“Yeah, I miss everything about the out; My family, my home. I only had a flat for a few weeks before I come in here. Lost that. Lost my dog...” (Robert).

I began by questioning the significance of the “disembodied shouts, screams, laughter joined with bangs, clangs and jangles” which comprise the prison soundscape. I designed a method for exploring the auditory experience of HMP Midtown – the first empirical study of sound in prison, and the first to deploy sound as methodology in prisons research. Listening more closely to the data revealed that sound was operating as an analytical

framework, a means of accessing different aspects of social life: the everyday hustle and bustle. The process of correcting this previous omission results in a reorientation of the field, away from a cultural reliance on the visual and the way in which this constructs our objects of knowledge within the confines of what can be seen.

When Stretch exclaimed: “*if you’ve got no sound, you’ve got no feelings*”, he was not suggesting hearing was a precondition for emotion. Rather he was signalling the centrality of sound to understanding his everyday experience inside. Sound was a conduit for the imposition of power, for its practices and resistance. Exercising sonic agency could work to destabilise or shore up the regime; tensions between the pull against the constraints of prison rules and the draw of desire for maintaining mechanical solidarity were audible. Auditory experience amplified the warp and weft of ‘doing’ time and revisiting places in multiple modalities within the confines of the prison walls; practices which both threatened and supported strategies of survival. Sound rendered processes of order audible, and in so doing revealed the ontological security derived from the rhythms and routines of a ‘good’ day for the community of HMP Midtown.

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