DOES SCHOOL PREPARE MEN FOR PRISON?

The Life Histories of Eleven Former Prisoners

by

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ABSTRACT

Research associated with prisons and schools tends to focus on the connection between educational failure and the onset of offending. This research takes a different perspective by exploring whether school prepares men for prison per se. This focus emerged from the researcher's professional practice as a prison teacher. She completed induction interviews with over 200 prisoners and information from those conversations appeared to indicate that there may be a direct relationship between inmates' school and prison experiences. Observations in prison further suggested prisoners may constitute a community of practice who share a habitus and cultural capitals. To examine these themes in more detail, life histories were collected from eleven former prisoners for this doctoral thesis.

The life history data was explored through Bowles and Gintis' *Correspondence Principle* (1988), Bourdieu's *Reproduction through Education* (1990), and Lave and Wenger's *Community of Practice* (1991). Findings indicate that the former prisoners experienced a unique schooling on the margins of the mainstream school population. Segregations and various exclusions featured heavily and educational content was low. Features of this schooling experience are shown to directly correspond with the experience of being imprisoned. The researcher therefore argues that their schooling did serve as a preparation for prison.

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Thank you all.

KEY TO TRANSCRIPTS

( ) Used in citations or interview transcript excerpts when a word/phrase in the original had been replaced with another word/phrase to clarify meaning.

(…) Used to indicate that sections of the speech or citation have been edited out.

… Indicates a pause in speech.

[ ] Contains in *italics* definitions or descriptions of terms used in transcripts that may be unfamiliar to the reader. These terms could be colloquialisms or language/practices specific to the prison environment.

‘ ’ Single inverted commas either problematise the word or phrase found within, or refer to a technical label.

“ ” Quotation marks indicate speech or an in paragraph citation.

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CHAPTER ONE

FROM PRISON CLASSROOM TO THE UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

1.1 INTRODUCTION

> Well, there was me… and two other guys that hung around (together); we were really close friends back at infant and junior school (…) and we were always in trouble - always, always, always. I remember distinctly, that you used to get sent, if you did really neat handwriting, you'd get sent to the headmaster, show him your work and he'd give you a pen – it was a big thing wasn't it at school? Five of us get sent on one, first time I've ever been sent, you know some kids have been sent five/six times – got six pens; always wrote in pen, but it's my first time. So Headmaster looks at everybody's book, gives 'em all a pen, comes to me and says 'yours isn't quite good enough son just gonna give you another pencil'. And I thought Jesus Christ, you just think... even though it's back then; it has such an effect on how you view yourself and how you then view school and how you view teaching staff – unbelievable. But I don't know if that's cos he'd singled me out as one of those people that was always there really because I was in trouble (…) I call school the war years – that's what I've always called it, cos it was a struggle.
>
> **Bob (36 years old, 2010)**

This thesis presents a piece of qualitative research which explores the school experiences of eleven men who have been to school and prison in Birmingham, England. It asks if a 'typical'[1] male prisoner has a particular experience of schooling and if so, whether this has any

[1] In the main prison population. In the main population crimes are usually violent offences, robbery, burglary, theft, drug offences, fraud and forgery and motoring offences (Berman and Dar, 2013) as opposed to the segregated Vulnerable Prisoner (VP) population, who are predominantly (though not exclusively) sex offenders. The prison population is segregated within individual prisons to ensure the safety and security of the Vulnerable Prisoners (VPs).

influence on a trajectory to prison? There have been empirical studies that consider the plausible link between educational failure and the types of offending that can lead to prison (Audit Commission, 1996; Farrington et al, 2006; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Lochner and Moretti, 2001), but there has been very little research on the possible connection between school and prison per se. The purpose of this research therefore is to examine the nature of the school experience for that significant minority of children who are considered disruptive and challenging; children who often go on to become the significant minority of young and repeat offenders locked up in prisons (see Murray, 2012 for educational background of young offenders). Integral to this aim is to foreground the often marginalised voices of prison inmates in the debate.

The research used life story narratives that were collected through single one-to-one in-depth interviews with each of the men. This data was thematically interpreted and then framed using theories from the Sociology of Education, and the Sociology of Crime and Deviance. The findings of this research compliments existing research concerned with school processes and the inherent inequalities and injustices found within them. This includes work on the complex ways in which race, class and gender can impact on the nature of students' educational experience and outcomes (see Gillborn, 2001, 2008, 2010; Gillborn and Youdell, 2000; Gillies, 2006, 2011; Gillies and Robinson, 2012; Rollock, 2007; Youdell, 2003). My research draws from this academic discourse and extends it through the specific focus on pupils who later become imprisoned offenders.

This opening chapter begins by asserting the relevance of the research in the social-historical context in which it took place. It then describes the origins of the research project, the aims and parameters and sets out the research questions. Finally, it maps the structure of the rest of the thesis, providing brief summaries of the content of the upcoming chapters.

1.2 RELEVANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Education continues to serve as a key area of political focus (Department for Education, 2010; Furlong and Phillips, 2002). Concern around the prevention of crime and the appropriate response to criminal behaviour is also continually debated within Government, the Criminal Justice System and the related institution of Education (Home Office, 2011; Prime Minister's Office, 2011; Ross et al, 2011). There is also an apparent obsession with crime within the media – this is shown in the number of stories related to actual crimes that appear in daily newspapers and the vast array of television dramas and reality TV programmes that have crime as their central theme. This can and does engender a skewed and disproportionate fear of crime amongst members of the public (Bennett, 2008), meaning 'tackling crime' remains permanent political currency. Improving education is also an unending political agenda and when taken together, there is much debate about the connection between poor educational outcomes and future offending.

Socio-political and historic context

During the period in which this research was being conducted, Birmingham saw a period of civil disturbance and looting in response to similar riots sparked by the shooting of Mark

Duggan by police in Tottenham, London on 4 August 2011 (Lewis et al, 2011). Whilst riots, street crime, gun crime and their causes are not the subject of this research, the responses to these recent, high profile events show the government's approach to the types of crime that originate from communities often found "at the bottom" of the class structure (Slater, 2011, p106). In the immediate aftermath of the riots, the Prime Minister David Cameron gave a speech where he re-used the broken Britain rhetoric of previous political parties (Thorp and Kennedy, 2010) to suggest a recent decline in morals and values. He also claimed to speak for a civilised moral majority who wished to see those involved in the disturbances punished for their acts of what he called "pure criminality":

> …I understand the anger with the level of crime in our country today and I am determined we sort it out and restore people's faith that if someone hurts our society, if they break the rules in our society, then society will punish them for it.
>
> And we will tackle the hard core of people who persistently reoffend and blight the lives of their communities.
>
> (Cameron, 2011)

He placed blame on what he positioned as the probably fatherless and otherwise dysfunctional "120,000 most troubled families in our country" and called for a "fight-back" against crime which would include "an all-out war on gangs and gang culture". He also described schools as significant to this fight-back:

> ... part of the social fight-back is what happens in schools.
>
> We need an education system which reinforces the message that if you do the wrong thing you'll be disciplined…
>
> …but if you work hard and play by the rules you will succeed.
>
> (Cameron, 2011)

This commitment to punishment as a way of addressing the problems of the riots was indeed backed by swift action with almost 4000 people arrested and half of those facing prosecution by November of that year (Berman 2011). However, claims made that a large percentage of the rioters were already known to the police and were 'career criminals' has been discredited (Ball and Drury 2012). There has been much criticism of the way in which the political and media discourse of the August riots used highly visible acts of civil disobedience to fuel outrage against a perceived insidious enemy. This process simultaneously moved focus away from the transgressions committed by 'those at the top':

> On 11th August 2011 in Camberwell Green magistrates court, a 23-year-old student with no criminal record was sentenced to a prison term of six months for stealing bottled water worth £3.50. This extraordinarily harsh sentence would normally be cause for widespread denunciation of judicial abuse but, following five nights of fiery rioting across a dozen English cities from 6 to 10 August, the extraordinary turned ordinary for the courts. Whereas the rampant financial criminality at the top of the class structure leading to the near-collapse of the banking system in the autumn of 2008 saw no reactions from criminal justice even as it sent the UK economy into a tailspin, overturning millions of lives and causing hundreds of billions of pounds in damage, street fracas at the bottom estimated to have cost under 150 million

> pounds triggered a lightning-fast and brutal response from the penal wing of the state.
>
> (Slater 2011, p106)

Arguably, the government's response to the disorders demonstrated elements of a classic *moral panic* (Cohen, 2002; Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 1994). Politicians and elements of the media exaggerated the criminal aspect of the disturbances, and defined the causes as a lack of discipline and morals (Ball and Drury, 2012; Moran and Hall, 2011). Whilst these sentiments were heightened following the events of August 2011, they are frequently heard within the mainstream discourse of crime and punishment. They are also paralleled in the negative depictions of families who are eligible for state benefits and children whose behaviour is defined as problematic in schools (Dorey, 2010; Parsons, 2005). It is within these contexts that this research was formulated and conducted.

1.3 ORIGINS OF THE RESEARCH

The origins of this research are threefold. My social position derived from my personal, family and wider social background; my academic background in sociology; and my former professional experience as a teacher in two Midlands adult male prisons.

Social and personal background

My motivation for undertaking this particular research, the research questions and methodology are all closely tied in to my personal and social position. All social researchers bring their own "baggage" to their research in this way, whether or not it is made explicit

(Blair, 2004). One of the aims of this research is to interrupt some of the assumptions implicit in much of the discourse in the areas of educational disadvantage, social deprivation, and social exclusion/inclusion. This alternative stance to the taken-for-granted is only natural for me to take given the ways in which I have been positioned as the *other*.

As I was growing up, a member of a large extended family, I was aware (though it was not openly talked about) of a small number of the men of the family going to prison. When I reached adolescence, some of the boys in my family, and in the surrounding community of the council estate where I lived began getting into trouble. Not long after this they were being expelled from school, going to Young Offenders Institutions and later prison. When my social circle through an inner city college, it was not uncommon to hear of one of my friend's family or boyfriends going to prison for one reason or another. More recently, although those older than me and those in my peer age have long finished with prison, younger generations of my family and friends' families seem affected in the same way.

There is a wealth of research that shows the majority of the prison population are drawn from poor and/or marginalised communities (Williams et al, 2012). Speaking from *personal* experience, this empirical evidence translates into a sense of inevitably that a small number of men that you know will go to prison. From my childhood to the present day, it has not been unusual to learn that someone in my wider family or social network has begun serving a prison sentence. For me, and people like me, the idea of prison is not really shocking or sensational, or surprising even. So it would be very difficult for me to regard the majority of men who go to prison as *other* than me – that is, alien to my history, experiences, culture

and language. I join a number of academics who have either been directly affected by prisons due to the disproportionate rate of imprisonment in their own families or communities, or due to their own imprisonment (Earle, 2011).

Further, the discourse of disadvantage associated with various forms of social exclusion often refers to areas of deprivation such as social housing, living on State Benefits and single parent or step-families. Whilst my status as a post graduate research student may be inconsistent with typical indicators of social disadvantage; I am a tenant on a council estate (not far from the estate where I was raised) sharing a small two bedroom house with my two children and partner, who is step-father to my older child. We rely heavily on State financial support due to our low household income. Whilst these few words do not describe me in any adequate way (no more than they do those who share this type of description in studies of deprivation) they do more often than not align me with the *disadvantaged other* of the texts. I am not outside or above these communities, nor do I strive to be. I consider myself to be an insider (Phillips and Earle, 2010). While I acknowledge that the communities to which I belong are not homogenous groups without differences or complexities, I am concerned about the frequent research objectification and othering we experience due to our position at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy, or due to our non-white and/or non-middle class culture (Young, 2005).

However I also recognise that the insider/outsider dynamic of social research still impacted on my research: I am female and all the participants were male. While men in my family have been to prison, and I spent a few years in prison during the working days of the week, I

have not been a prison inmate. And although I may remain economically disadvantaged (in part due to several years of self-funded postdoctoral study), I have the advantage of professional and academic discourses to supplement my disadvantaged class position (Groves, 2003).

Academic background

I began studying Sociology aged sixteen and chose to focus on sociological theory during degree study in Social Sciences. Many critical theories within this field that examined the roles of Education and the Mass Media in perpetuating inequalities resonated with my own observations as a working class, non-white, female student. I found the theories that consider Crime and Deviance particularly illuminating (these will be discussed later in Chapter Two) and these no doubt influenced my thinking when I later began my adult teaching career within a prison setting.

Professional background

I worked for almost three years as a teacher in two adult male prisons and it was in the first prison that my research imagination was piqued. Part of my weekly role was to lead the induction process for prisoners joining the Education Department. This included a very brief one-to-one interview where they would talk about their prior education, their aims whilst in Education at the prison and any educational goals they might have for their release. I was involved in over two hundred of these induction interviews, and was struck by the similarity of the men's educational experiences. While it may not be surprising that those in prison do not leave school with ten A* GCSEs, and there is research to evidence this (Lochner and

Moretti, 2001, for example), I found it incredible that there was such a consistent pattern of problems with authority, or behaviours defined by the school as problematic at primary school level. This was usually followed by some form of official exclusion from school(s), possibly alternative educational provision, then a secure setting and eventually prison. I say incredible, because there were so many differences amongst the prisoners that I came to meet through teaching, in terms of ethnicity, age, communities, religion, personal dispositions and so on – but yet most seemed to share this trajectory through the school system and beyond. The information gleaned from these induction interviews informed the direction and content of this doctoral study. I therefore refer to these interviews as background information gained through professional practice throughout the thesis.

It was also striking how men in the main population appeared to adapt to life in prison with apparent ease. By this I do not suggest that they were completely content to be in prison and untroubled by their circumstances, but they seemed comfortable. There appeared to be a lack of objection to the regime itself. Whilst I did see tempers flare and witnessed some situations where violence seemed imminent, these were very rare and appeared mostly as expressions of frustration rather than outright objections to the positions they were in. Only once, over the entire period of working in prison did I hear one of the men in the main population object. He said something along the lines of 'Why should I have to come to Education, or the workshops or whatever? I've done a crime, I'm in prison – I'm *being* punished! Why should I have to do this now as well?!'

I began to consider whether the seeming shared prior institutional experiences described to me during the induction interviews had provided a preparation for prison life. Studies on recidivism show that prison does not work very well as a deterrent (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2007 for example). Is it only that once in prison young offenders learn the 'tricks of the trade'; that their chances of 'going straight' are marred by a prison record? Or, is there a process *before* prison that seals their fate? If so, what is the role of school in this process?

So, I came into the EdD programme with these general questions, some personal and professional experience and a background in sociology. The initial broad focus of the research was therefore on schooling and its effects on life courses, inequality in educational achievement and how this affects life chances, and the possibility of a link between poor educational experience (as distinct from educational achievement) and involvement in the type of offending behaviour most likely to lead to prison. As the research progressed the focus narrowed further to hone in on the area that is generally not considered in other research and theory: the possibility of a preparation for prison through a particular type of schooling experience.

1.4 RESEARCH AIMS AND PARAMETERS

The first aim was to get a fuller picture of inmates' schooling than the five/ten minute prison induction interviews allowed. As rich qualitative data from marginalised or so-called hidden populations can be very difficult to obtain this, of itself, is a valid goal. Methodologically, the

intention was to address a space within existing literature and current debate by moving away from creating further quantitative survey data in the shape of school exclusion and truancy tables, crime figures and prison statistics and instead give voice to the experiences of prisoners. Further, rather than concurring with the taken-for-granted concern of the mainstream discourse to identify those at risk of exclusion; offending and re-offending (Audit Commission, 1996; Graham & Bowling, 1995, Loeber and Farrington, 2000 for examples) – a process that takes an external view and tends to presume risks are within individuals, families or communities; this research looks from the inside out. It aims to add depth and significant meaning to the existing statistics on offending and educational underachievement by giving voice to the individuals behind the figures; allowing them to describe their experiences of how schooling worked for them, in their own words and on their own terms.

The second aim was to contribute to theory, to build on varied studies which examine Education as a site of reproduction and social control. These studies and arguments challenge the notion of Education as a meritocracy (as espoused by David Cameron above in **1.2**) and instead offer alternative and critical explanations of the role of the system in producing gaps in educational achievement and therefore life chances; a process that serves to maintain an unequal social order (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, 1988, 2002; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Willis, 1977). Whilst work in this area is often concerned with the inequalities experienced by distinct classes, genders or racial/ethnic groups, my research focuses instead on what has been termed an underclass – one that *to some extent* crosses racial and ethnic boundaries (in Britain at least) and while no doubt has some socio-

economic determinants, is distinct from others within the same groups due to the unique social experience of having 'been inside'. Further informed by literature on social learning, culture and communities (such as Hargreaves et al, 1975; Holland et al, 1998; Lave and Wenger, 1991), the concern was not just to explore *why* but also *how* any identified processes were being experienced by this group.

These aims were limited to the parameters of the data collected. Although the eleven men speak of specific interactions with teaching professionals, and we certainly get a sense of how the men (as boys) perceived they were viewed by teachers, we do not have the perspective of teachers to consider in the data. I have also alluded to the relevance of race and ethnicity: in the UK Black Caribbean men are disproportionately imprisoned, at a rate *higher* than the disproportionality of African American incarceration of the USA (Warde, 2013). Black boys are also more likely to be excluded from school in England (Department for Education, 2012b). Whilst the institutional racisms of the police (Lea, 2000), criminal justice system (see Bowling and Phillips, 2006), and education system (Cole, 2004) are clearly implicated, these are not key emphases of this thesis. Issues of race are not ignored, as they do emerge from some of the interviews, but the research focus is centred on the ways in which 'challenging' pupils, however they come to be demarcated, experience school.

Also, boys and men are the sole focus of this study. While girls identified as disruptive in school do get excluded, it is at a significantly lower rate than boys and the latest figures show that girls are seldom excluded from primary schools in England. In 2010/2011, 60 girls under 10 years old were permanently excluded from English schools compared to 610 boys

in the same age range. At age 11 years the number of permanent exclusions begins to rise significantly for both genders, however, there were 50 11 year old girls excluded in 2010/2011 compared to 350 boys of the same age (Department for Education, 2012b). Women also go to prison, but at a significantly lower rate than men. In June 2013 there were 3,853 females in prison in England and Wales, just 4.6% of the prison population (Berman and Dar, 2013).

These differences in school exclusion and prison statistics may indicate that girls who are identified as challenging in school have a different typical school experience to that of their male counterparts. However, this is not the primary reason that women prisoners were not included in the research. My professional and personal experience in this area is with male prisoners and it was from these experiences that the research questions emerged. More pertinently, it is this background that allowed access to the research participants – I had no similar access to women prisoners. As such, my focus was only on men who go to prison, and quite specifically men who go to prison in the main population. As my personal and social networks are predominantly White working class and Black Caribbean, the research participants were sourced from these communities. Regrettably, this resulted in only these ethnic groups being represented in the in-depth interview data.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research is interested in the role of school in preparing prisoners for prison. This was explored through the following research questions:

1 Is there evidence of a similarity or correspondence between prisoners' schooling and prison experiences?

2 Are there specific behaviours, acts and modes of understanding (i.e. cultural capital) that reflect belonging to a group that share expertise and learn from each other (i.e. community of practice) amongst prisoners?

3 What is the role of school in shaping this community?

These overarching research questions were explored via a life history approach that included discussion of the following:

- Do former prisoners share similar experiences of schooling?
- What influence (if any) did participants perceive their experiences in and of school have had on their later lives?
- Was being in prison easy or difficult (on the whole) for the participants?
- Did individual interviewees perceive any similarities between practices they experienced in school/other educational institutions and practices they experienced in prison?
- Is there a shared *identity* amongst male prisoners, and (if so) what is the role of schooling in shaping this identity?

It is through the exploration of these questions that the focus is shifted from the individual deficit models of educational failure that dominate in political and policy discourse, to a discussion of the structuring effects of school systems.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In the chapters that follow, I begin by summarising the literature that influenced the research questions: **Chapter Two** takes a look at previous work in the areas of education, crime, deviance and prison studies that were influential in the formulation of the research and its findings. I then describe how the research was undertaken and the rationale for the methods chosen: **Chapter Three** describes in detail the research process as it unfolded. It traces the design and practical application including details of the research participants and data interpretation methods used. **Chapter Four** presents the data collected that relates to the men's schooling. It includes an extended description of the background information derived from my professional teaching practice in prison and is then divided into the major themes that were interpreted from the eleven in-depth interview narratives. Each of the themes is introduced with a summary and then followed by examples and direct quotes from the interview transcripts. **Chapter Five** presents the data that relates to the men's time in prison in the same format as Chapter Four. It draws on the observations made whilst working in prison. It then highlights the major themes that emerged from the extended interviews. **Chapter Six** discusses the data collected with reference to the larger research questions – what does the data tell us about the men's school and prison experiences and how have the research questions been addressed? **Chapter Seven** concludes the thesis by summarising the findings of the research and calling for a renewed interest in the school as a site of injustice. It also discusses the limitations of the research as it stands and gives recommendations of how and where it could be taken further.

CHAPTER TWO

THE UK SCHOOL TO PRISON TRAJECTORY: WHAT IS ALREADY KNOWN?

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The association between poor or inadequate schooling and crime, or how poor schooling might be implicated in offending has been a longstanding feature of government policy (Cameron, 2011; Clegg and Grayling, 2014). The media regularly points the finger at so-called yobs (BBC, 2001); parents regarded as unwilling or unable to control their children (BBC, 2002b; Rawstorne, 2012); teachers apparently having to cope with violent pupils (Davis, 2013; Dixon, 2013); policies that do not go far enough to punish criminality (Sunday Express, 2013); and 'holiday camps' masquerading as prisons (Brown, 2013). Underpinning these public debates are policies and reports aimed at predicting the causes of crime and identifying the most effective interventions that might prevent the probability of offending amongst those deemed at risk (Audit Commission, 1996; Graham and Bowling, 1995; Lochner and Moretti, 2001, for examples.) Within the fields of Criminology, Sociology, Psychology, Education, Medicine and Economics there are discussions, theories and critiques of the problem of the creation of the criminal. These disciplines are often concerned with understanding the nature and cause of criminal activity, social control and sometimes the significance of education within this arena.

It is impossible to do justice to such a multi-disciplinary field. Given the focus of my research, discussion is centred on the cross section of arguments relating specifically to the research

aims as outlined in Chapter One (**1.4**). As such this literature review focusses on the connection between school and prison by highlighting work that examines the structuring function of education, the labelling of school pupils as challenging, and the punishment of crime through prisons.

The chapter is presented in four sections. Section one discusses sociological theories and frameworks that position education as a structuring site of unequal reproduction (Bowles and Gintis, 1988; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990; Willis, 1977). Section two considers pupil resistance or deviance in schools (Hargreaves et al, 1975; Swain and Noblit, 2011; Willis, 1977). Section three presents theoretical readings of the *function* of crime and punishment in society and the ways in which its existence arguably serves to manage the working population (Foucault, 1977; Wacquant, 2010). In the final section I outline recent UK policy initiatives and empirical studies that advocate interventions aimed at reducing the rate of school failure and juvenile offending. I critique these policies and the discourse that underpins them with the aid of the afore-mentioned frameworks.

2.2 EDUCATION AS A SITE OF UNEQUAL REPRODUCTION

The education system is often portrayed as the place where everyone has equal opportunities to do well; the place talent and hard work will be rewarded with appropriate qualifications and employment prospects (Cameron, 2011). Those not so academically gifted will still receive a measure of reward, so long as they make the effort. Within this discursive framework, those who fail educationally are assumed to do so through poor attitude or

behaviour and this is typically blamed on home factors such as inadequate parenting (Gillies, 2007). This is a persistent conservative view of education, and although the *quality* of educational provision has been a factor added to what is now an education marketplace (Ball, 2003; Goldstein, 2001; Reay and Ball, 1997; Taylor, 2009), the notion of the school as a vehicle for social mobility remains enduring. The current British government has expressed concerns of the low levels of social mobility in the UK and has pledged to address this. Unsurprisingly, the education system is referred to as pivotal:

> Every child in our country deserves a world-class education. The education system should challenge low aspirations and expectations, dispelling the myth that those from poorer backgrounds cannot aim for top universities and professional careers. Our schools reforms are intended to raise standards across the system, narrow the gaps in attainment and raise aspirations.
>
> (Cabinet Office and Deputy Prime Minister's Office, 2011)

The idea that the school and the education system more widely cannot be the all-encompassing meritocracy it is claimed has been given a great deal of attention. It is argued that schools actually strengthen inequality while professing to do the opposite and the focus on pupils' individual success takes attention away from the effects of policy and structural processes (Clycq et al, 2013). Much of this critical interest is shown by theorists who are concerned with the reproduction of distinct social classes via schooling. They explore how children from working class, poor or marginalised backgrounds on the whole remain working class, poor or marginalised despite mass educational opportunities, and children of the middle classes retain and reproduce their parents' privilege (Ball, 2003; Reay and Ball, 1997; Willis, 1977).

Bowles and Gintis: The Correspondence Principle

Elaborating on Marxist principles that all social institutions are determined by, and act to serve the prevailing economic system, Bowles and Gintis argue:

> …that schools prepare people for adult work rules by socializing people to function well and without complaint in the hierarchical structure of the modern corporation. Schools accomplish this goal by what we called the *correspondence principle*, namely, by structuring social interactions and individual rewards to replicate the environment of the workplace.
>
> (Bowles and Gintis 2002, p1, emphasis in original)

Schools are like the workplace in that they are organised along clear authority lines (teacher/pupil; boss/worker). Students have little say in what they study, in the same way that workers have little say in their job content and conditions. The system of rewards is similar (grades and wages), and the field of competition for either grades/qualifications or higher wages/higher position is also paralleled. Further, children from differing class backgrounds come to learn their position within the hierarchical structure of work due to the structural differences in schooling across the classes:

> Children of workers attend schools (…) which emphasize conformity and docility and prepare them for low-status jobs. By contrast, the sons and daughters of the elite are invited to study at their own pace under loose supervision (and) to make independent decisions (…) which prepares them to boss rather than to be bossed. In short, Bowles and Gintis argue that schools socialize students to occupy roughly the same position in the class structure as that of their parents.
>
> (Macleod, 1995, p13)

The overt school curriculum, aimed at equipping students with demonstrable skills and recognised qualifications, is accompanied by the hidden curriculum which pertains to the additional expectations of the school workplace that prepare students for the adult workplace (Lynch, 1989). In addition to deference to the authority of the teacher (boss), this includes time keeping, and completing tasks in a timely fashion without too much movement or noise (LeCompte, 1978). Relationships and identities developed through the process of schooling further prepare students for adult work roles:

> The structure of social relations in education not only inures the student to the discipline of the work place, but develops the types of personal demeanor, modes of self-presentation, self-image, and social class identifications which are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy. Specifically, the social relationships of education – the relationships between administrators and teachers, teachers and students, students and students, and students and their work – replicate the hierarchical division of labor.
>
> (Bowles and Gintis, 1988, p2)

Bowles and Gintis argue different stages or levels of education track students into different levels of the occupational structure, and the nature of each of the progressive stages corresponds to the level in the hierarchy the students are expected to occupy within the adult workforce. For the youngest children the emphasis is on following rules; post-16 education introduces a measure of independent learning and less strict supervision and higher education adds a focus on developing professional social relationships.

> Thus schools continually maintain their hold on the students. As they 'master' one type of behavioral regulation, they are either allowed to progress to the next or are channeled into the corresponding level in the hierarchy of production (…)
>
> These differences in the social relationships among and within schools, in part, reflect both the social backgrounds of the student body and their likely future economic positions. Thus blacks and other minorities are concentrated in schools whose repressive, arbitrary, generally chaotic internal order, coercive authority structures, and minimal possibilities for advancement mirror the characteristics of inferior job situations.
>
> (Bowles and Gintis, 1988, p3)

Research into the hidden curriculum of medical training provides evidence of the power of the informal aspects of higher education to shape the dispositions and identities of professionals; dispositions deemed essential to successfully carry out anticipated work roles and maintain continuity of those roles across generational cohorts (Cribb and Bignold, 1999; Lempp and Seale, 2004). The hidden curriculum has also been shown to inform young black students of their second class citizenship in UK schools (Gillborn, 1992).The use of the correspondence principle is not limited to a link between education and work. The social relations and expectations developed within the family unit before and while attending school are seen to have a direct influence on the type of social relations experienced between pupils and teaching staff (which in turn mirror the types of social relations experienced in adult work later in life.) Howell and McBroom (1982) made use of the correspondence principle to seek correlations between the types of relationships adolescents have with their parents and the nature of the social relations they experience in school. Using students' own interpretations, they found that punitive parenting tended to

correspond with critical remarks made by teachers. Where parents were deemed to use "control attempts" (p42) in raising their children, teachers were found to employ similar punitive measures. Children coming from families who would favour reasoning over punishment, experienced more openness in social relations with teachers and were allowed more input in their classroom interactions.

Like many theories emanating from Marxist (or indeed other) grand narratives, the correspondence principle has been criticised for its apparently deterministic claims (see Apple, 1988). However, while personal agency and group resistance have resulted in individual successes (see Reay, 2009), massive inequalities do still exist in the UK, and the USA context on which Bowles and Gintis' analysis was based. The structuring processes of education systems are clearly implicated as social mobility through education remains a myth for most (Goldthorpe, 2003; Themelis, 2008). It has even been acknowledged by the current British Prime Minister that more should be done to encourage upward social mobility in the UK (Mason and Wintour, 2013).

Despite this acknowledgement that the children of wealthy families receive better educational opportunities and successes than their poor counterparts, the idea (ideology) of meritocracy is still entrenched and rarely questioned (see McCoy and Major, 2007). The inequalities that emanate from the educational system are made legitimate by the acceptance of the hierarchical system of qualifications – those who do well in education *deserve* to hold positions of power and wealth, whereas those who fail educationally can only expect to receive low paid work, if they can obtain employment at all. The fact that

children from the upper classes consistently achieve the best outcomes through education and go on to secure the highest paid jobs and positions of power (and children of the lowest classes go on to be low paid and relatively powerless) is clearly and manifestly inequity, but through the sanctioning of the 'meritocratic' education system, it is seen to be fair (Augoustinos et al, 2005; Bowles, Gintis and Meyer, 1975).

Bourdieu: Reproduction through Education

This legitimating function of the education system is one of the aspects addressed by Bourdieu and Passeron in *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (1990):

> Surely, among all the solutions put forth throughout history to the problem of the transmission of power and privileges, there does not exist one that is better concealed, and therefore better adapted to societies which tend to reuse the most patent forms of hereditary transmission of power and privileges, than that solution which the educational system provides by contributing to the reproduction of the structure of class relations and by concealing, under apparently neutral attitude, the fact that it fulfils this function. (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970/1977: 178, translation modified)
>
> (Wacquant, 1993, p2)

Bourdieu and Passeron utilise the concepts *habitus*, *field* and *capital* (Bourdieu, 1986) to map the practices and structures of the education system and theorise how these impact on the formation of social groups along dominant/dominated lines. They argue that when individuals engage with the education system they bring to this field the habitus inherited from their family, along with variant levels of cultural capital acquired as products of those fields and habitus. The education system rewards those with particular forms of cultural

capital and it is the capital held and deployed by middle class families which is portrayed as legitimate and therefore rewarded (Ball, 2003; Power et al, 2003).

Conversely, the cultural capitals of working class families are juxtaposed as inadequate, deficient or pathological. These capitals hold little currency within an education system promoting middle class values, and are frequently exchanged for an average education or educational failure. Edwards and Gillies (2004) used Bourdieu's notion of forms of capital to explore the capitals available to parents of different classes. Gillies argues the types of failed educational outcomes experienced by children with so-called challenging behaviour are important signifiers to the legitimacy of middle class culture and middle class educational success:

> (Working class children) must exist as markers of failure or ordinariness. This process of distinction lies at the heart of the education system (...) Middle-class selves are necessarily defined in relation to working-class inferiority, with claims to privilege founded on a notion of deserving individuality.
>
> (Gillies, 2005, p843-844)

Further to this legitimation of middle class capitals, Bourdieu and Passeron identify a widespread *misrecognition* of the practices of education – practices which attribute *objective* value to educational success as though it were natural (Bourdieu, 1996). They argue the system of curriculum, examinations, diplomas and so on is arbitrary and not rational or natural, but rather an exercise in promoting and favouring certain forms of knowledge and behaviours to the exclusion of others (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This misrecognition can lead to individuals and social groups accepting the unequal social

hierarchies produced by the work of schooling, and their position within them. This includes the teachers and other professionals working within the system, who are used along with other products of the field of education (curriculum, qualifications) to continually reproduce the system from which they were themselves produced and made legitimate.

As such, it is difficult to envisage any practitioner action within the field of education that could make any significant difference to the role of the system as described without first recognising the discriminatory knowledge forms used and produced by the field. Similarly, the no-doubt well-meaning interventions and programmes aimed at supporting families deemed to be vulnerable are also unlikely to bring about change (Whitehead and Arthur, 2011). Rather, by reinforcing the assumptions of an 'inadequate' habitus, the interventions serve to remind all of their positions in the increasingly unequal hierarchy, and likewise inform expectations. This can result in a seemingly inevitable route from school exclusion to young offenders institution (for example), or, conversely, progression from successful law graduate to respected barrister:

> (…) individuals organize their future aspirations by internalizing what they take to be the objective expectations of all the members of the social group to which they think they belong. The objective structures controlling entrance to progressive stages of education and employment have no (…) absolute validity (…), but, *de facto*, agents act as if they were true to such an extent that, to varying degrees according to their social position, they acquiesce in making themselves the victims of an apparent social determinism.
>
> (Grenfell and James 1998, p.43-44)

Willis: How working class kids get working class jobs

This apparently consensual taking up of designated unequal roles within society is the main concern of the detailed ethnography of a small group of non-academic working class boys in the final years of formal schooling undertaken by Willis (1977). By exploring the very specific nature and reasons given for their 'anti-academic' behaviours in school and particular expectations of their seemingly inevitable manual working lives to come, a respect for the insights of the *lads* on the realities of their social world is provided. With parallels to Bourdieu's focus on habitus, Willis highlights culture, and also provides a description of the legitimacy producing function of the covertly unequal education system, presenting itself as a meritocracy. What Willis sees, however, is that the misrecognition depicted by Bourdieu does not completely penetrate the cultural sphere of the group. In fact, he suggests the "perspective on work offered by the counter-school culture really is superior to that supplied officially by the school" (Willis, 1977 [2000], p136). The boys reject the notions of individualism and the superiority of mental (academic) activity partly due to the realisation that only a small number of the working class can ever really achieve upward mobility, and partly as a result of a cultural deference to the perceived alternative rewards of patriarchy and masculinity. The lads' awareness of their objective class position, which Willis identifies as a potential site for revolution, is defeated through the divisive nature of the value they place on patriarchal forms of expressions (including machismo, sexism and racism).

At the time of Willis' study (1977) manufacturing jobs were readily available to the white working class boys on completion of their schooling, but the same was not true for the West Indian minority pupils at the same school. For this group a slightly different cultural view of

work as *impossible to acquire* was identified; produced through the objective reality of their inherited poverty, combined with understandings of the workings of the labour market derived from schooling. Willis therefore concludes that this could possibly lead to:

> (…) certain accurate insights about the nature of the future being carried forward not as an affirmation of a certain kind of work but as a *refusal* of all work (…) The question of the cultural reproduction of an underclass is as full of significance as that of the reproduction of the manual working class.
>
> (Willis, 1977 [2000], p.154)

This prediction and concern that an *underclass* could also be reproduced through schooling as the working classes have been is both timely and pertinent to this research. In Chapter One the current British Prime Minister was quoted from a speech which referred to this alleged underclass and a society "fight-back" against them through schools and the criminal justice system (Cameron, 2011). This notion of the existence of a so-called underclass appears in different forms. For example, Marx's analysis described the *lumpenproletariat* as a parasitic criminal and lazy non-class, living off the honest working-class and impeding the revolution (Bussard, 1987). In the 1990s the 'Radical Right' in America and Britain expanded the term to express concerns over:

> (…) an underclass (that) is either emerging or fully formed which now threatens the social and moral order. This underclass is evidenced (…) by the anti-social actions, welfare dependency, moral irresponsibility and deviant cultures of a growing minority of the population.
>
> (MacDonald, 2000, p5)

Those who have committed and been found guilty of a crime are often viewed as a significant part of this underclass. One of the staunchest advocates of this individual deficit underclass theory, Charles Murray, described what he considered to be a plague-like problem of parts of the population (predominantly Black in the United States) who he argued displayed inferior cognitive abilities and were categorised by high levels of unemployment, crime and single parent families (Murray et al, 1996). Parallel debate in Britain placed increased importance on the argued devastating effects of children being raised by single mothers, a debate that is most often targeted at the white 'underclass' or the Black Caribbean community:

> (The) Higher education minister (…) today appealed for black fathers to become more involved with their children. He is aware, as I am, of the devastating consequences of absent fatherhood within the black community: 59% of black Caribbean children live in lone-parent households, compared with 22% of white children.
>
> (Sewell, 2010)

Whilst the tone and validity of Murray et al's thesis has been heavily criticised (see Bagguley and Mann, 1992; Morris, 1994) his claims have been taken up by both American administrations and British governments (Deacon, 2000), and can be heard echoed in the wider media discourse (Porter, 2011; Russell, 2013; Taylor, 2012). Essentially, these arguments blame poor communities for their disadvantage, by labelling them an immoral and irresponsible minority (Dorey, 2010). Resulting policy measures tend to be aimed at reducing welfare dependency by placing tighter restrictions on eligibility (Dwyer, 2004), increased focus on discipline and punitive measures in schools (Gove, 2011) and harsher

punishment of delinquent or criminal behaviour (Hough et al, 2003; Ministry of Justice and Grayling).

Many critics of this type of underclass theory do concede that there may be evidence of a disconnected sub-class. However, they argue the contributing factors are not derived from individual pathologies, but the structural and structuring disadvantages faced by the poorest populations (Macdonald and Marsh, 2001). As such, a punitive approach through social policy arguably serves to reinforce, rather than ameliorate these negative conditions (Goldson, 2001).

If there *is* an underclass as Willis predicted, their cultural capital, illegitimated by the education system, could be equipping them for welfare dependency or offending. For those moving through and beyond school recognising the apparent worthlessness of the cultural capital they possess, engagement in criminal activities could appear to be a rational, or only, economic alternative. Studies using self-reports of offending and interviews with offenders certainly support this (Byrne and Trew, 2008; Lochner and Moretti, 2001). Not only may crime be perceived as a viable alternative to unemployment, but it may be chosen as a psychological response to their social reality as they understand it:

> The social psychological concept of possible selves seems particularly relevant to discussions on crime initiation. Possible selves are the roles people envision themselves fulfilling at some point in the future (…)These imagined selves can exert a robust motivational influence over one's actions. Individuals at risk for initial involvement in delinquency and crime may find many conventional possible selves

> closed off to them (…) Consequently, they approach a criminal possible self for fear that more conventional possible selves are unavailable to them.
>
> (Walters, 2003, p404)

Willis' lads demonstrated personal agency within their schooling trajectories, but Willis (1977) observed how these cultural mediations were shaped by their accurate understandings of their wider class positions and their perceived limited options. In this knowledge, the lads of *Learning to Labour* resisted against conforming to the expectations of their teachers, and opted instead to express their own cultural values and behaviours. They deferred to working class masculinities (which included sexist and racist attitudes) and "having a laff" (Willis, 1977 [2000]).

This cultural resistance continues today with pupils acting in ways proscribed by schools (Wright and Weekes, 2003). This resistance is typically named as deviance, disaffection, disruption and challenging behaviour by teaching staff, politicians or anyone with the power to name such acts. How acts of *deviance* in school are defined and responded to will be the subject of the next section.

2.3 RESISTANCE/DEVIANCE IN SCHOOL

Deviance as a sociological concept is concerned with theorising and unpacking mainstream unproblematised notions regarding actions seen to sit outside of the social contract of norms and values (Holstein, 2009). These so-called acts against the norm might include oppositional gender roles or sexual behaviours (Heimer, 1996). They can also be 'bad'

behaviour in schools or criminal acts. The definition of specific acts as deviant is unproblematised in the mainstream due to what appears to be a simple logic – if something is against the law, against the rules, or against the shared moral norms and values - it is irresponsible, immoral or *wrong.* This can, and often does, lead to individuals performing deviant or criminal acts to be seen as deficient, bad or even *evil*. The sociological concept of deviance permits a questioning of this logic and allows us to ask why one act is illegal, whilst another is legal or why one act is rewarded in school whilst another will be punished (Ferrell and Websdale, 1999). It allows consideration of which groups in society have the power to decide what and, more importantly, *who* is right or wrong, good or bad. It also allows a space for critical discussion of why and how deviant and/or criminal behaviour develops.

Sociologists of deviance consider the social processes and social constructions involved rather than individual traits and deficits. In this section I will discuss the position that punishments apparently aimed at reducing deviance actually produce deviance and deviant identities. This includes evidence of the powerful effect of the negative sanction of school exclusions in the United Kingdom and the even more worrying trend of the criminalisation of school children through punitive policies in the United States. I also examine literature which illuminates why children might continue to behave in ways that are negatively sanctioned by the school.

Labelling Theory

According to *labelling theory* (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 1951) an act in itself cannot be understood to be deviant until it is officially labelled as such. Therefore, labelling in effect

produces the deviance. An acceptance of the label by the individual being so-labelled can result in the person identifying themselves as a 'disruptive pupil' or a 'waster' or a criminal (for examples), an identification that can significantly influence the progression of a deviant, delinquent or criminal career (Bernburg and Krohn, 2003; Farrington et al, 1978; Goldson, 2001).

According to Bourdieu, the *capitals* that are valued within the system of schooling are arbitrary and not based on any natural or intrinsic value. They have much to do with taste, *style* and language and other signifiers of class, and teachers are able to recognise and validate these capitals as soon as pupils arrive in school. Students not in possession of the cultural capitals valued and rewarded by the school system are also instantly recognisable. If these students are not able or unwilling to at least attempt to display the school sanctioned cultural capitals, this could spell trouble – they are likely to be identified (labelled) by teachers as a problem, and this can often result in a negative and sustained response from teachers (Rollock, 2007; Yosso, 2005; Youdell, 2003).

Seeking evidence of the practice of labelling and deviance production in schools, Hargreaves et al (1975) found that teachers tend to speculate on initial contact with individual pupils that he/she may prove to be a difficult or disruptive student. Following a speculative typing of a pupil as potential trouble, teachers were shown to attempt to confirm this first impression by actively seeking evidence of deviant behaviour. If found, a label was placed on the pupil, which led to differential treatment of the pupil by the teacher. Through staffroom discussions of the label, other teachers also began to treat the pupil differently. Gazeley

(2010) found that when a label of behavioural difficulty is placed on a child, teachers no longer consider education to be a priority.

The development of deviant identities by certain pupils is argued to occur through an acceptance and internalisation of the label as accurate and also due to the labelling being targeted at the *character* of the pupil as opposed to the abstraction of the *act* performed. Early labelling theory describes the institutional forces that are often then triggered by an initial label placed in schools as "systematic machinery by which individuals are passed along from one stage to the next" (Schur, 1971, p97; also see Goldson, 2001).

This "systematic machinery" invariably begins with internal school exclusions. These range from being moved to a different space within a classroom, being sent outside of classrooms temporarily to sit outside a Head of School's office, to being placed in school isolation or seclusion units for weeks at a time (Barker et al, 2010; Gillies, 2012, Munn et al, 2000). Children identified as disruptive are also segregated into low ability sets on the basis of their behaviour, often with little regard for their academic ability (Dunne and Gazeley, 2008).

From within-school punishment, to school exclusion to the criminal justice system, the negative labels persist and can be instrumental in cementing the delinquent or criminal "possible self" (Walters, 2003; also Bernburg and Krohn, 2003; Goldson, 2001). However, this is not a purely top down process, with teachers or school systems determining the fate of children. Children who find themselves negatively labelled by teachers exercise agency and may choose to promote their own identities through alternative behaviours to those

mandated by schools (Wright and Weekes, 2003). Unfortunately, the cultural spheres through which these students may represent their identities can reinforce their marginal position in schools.

For example: Black Caribbean boys are more likely than any other group to be negatively labelled in school. They are more likely to be seen as aggressive by teachers, or perceived to be openly challenging the authority of teachers (Youdell, 2003). They are therefore far more likely to be subject to school disciplinary processes which include increased and sustained surveillance and swift and disproportionate action if they are deemed to have contravened school codes or rules, even when engaging in the same behaviour as white pupils in the same classroom. Youdell (2003) argues that both as a reflection of their environments outside of school and as way of resisting the negative status afforded them in school by teaching staff, Black Caribbean boys consciously adopt an alternative 'street' culture in school that gives them credibility and status with other students. This adoption inevitably exasperates problems with staff but maintains and increases their social status and makes them highly desirable and respected amongst pupils. By openly displaying their 'Black cultural capitals' they can also achieve self-worth (Carter, 2003).

Social Learning and Communities of Practice

As an alternative to and critique of labelling theory, *social learning theory* has been applied to the development of deviance. From the basis that behaviour is learned in social contexts, and involves imitation and reproduction of behaviours witnessed to bring rewards to others; social learning theorists argue that some form of positive reinforcement of deviant

behaviour must be occurring for the learning of the deviant act to take place. Akers et al (1979) found empirical evidence to support the hypothesis that drug use was socially learned behaviour and Wintree Jr. et al (1994) used Akers' premises in their examination of gang membership in the States. Given the cultural mediations described by Willis (1977) and Youdell (2003), there is a strong argument that both the effects of labelling *and* the positive reinforcement derived from peer groups serve to develop 'deviant' identities.

Wenger's notion of *communities of practice* may further illuminate the area of learning within a group to be a pupil labelled disruptive, or a young offender or (eventually) a prisoner. In his work with Lave (Lave and Wenger, 1991) he examined the learning which takes place during formal apprenticeships. They describe various sets of relationships through which newcomers move from being on the periphery to gaining various competencies and experiences and becoming a more established and accepted member of the group. "The term community of practice was coined to refer to the community that acts as a living curriculum for the apprentice" (Wenger, undated). Three factors define a community of practice: they must have a shared *domain* of interest; a *community* that shares ideas, knowledge and assists other members; and a shared *practice*:

> A youth gang may have developed all sorts of ways of dealing with their domain: surviving on the street and maintaining some kind of identity they can live with. They value their collective competence and learn from each other, even though few people outside the group may value or even recognise their expertise.
>
> (http://www.ewenger.com/theory/)

This notion of a community of practitioners could very conceivably be applied to young offenders who were negatively labelled as students operating on the margins of the school hierarchy. This marginal group possess competencies, experiences and a body of knowledge that has been collectively learned from primary school age into young adulthood and beyond. It comprises a support network that engages with novices and veterans to learn how to best operate and survive within their lived reality. Whilst this knowledge enables survival, or even mastery within the counter culture of school delinquents or disruptive pupils, explicit displays of the knowledge are likely to lead to exclusion from school.

Research has found the consequence of school exclusion is potentially devastating for the child (Gazeley, 2010). Whatever strategies they employ to resist the status afforded to them by educational systems (Willis, 1977), or to look to other counter cultural affirmations (Youdell, 2003; Carter, 2003); the experience of segregations and exclusions cannot fail to impact on their self-esteem; aspirations and future outcomes. I examine the issue of school exclusion in greater detail in the section that follows.

School Exclusion

One of the possible outcomes that can follow from school exclusion is the involvement in delinquent or criminal activity. When a pupil is permanently excluded and finds themselves between educational placements they are far more likely to get involved in questionable or criminal behaviour, or become victims of crime. Alcohol abuse, drug use and involvement in petty crime are all possibilities when time is available and children are adrift. Police report that crimes by school age children most often take place during school hours, committed by

truants; those on fixed period exclusions; those between educational placements or those placed in alternative part-time placements. Of twenty young people interviewed by Briggs (2010), only two had been in trouble with the law prior to their exclusion from school "but, post-exclusion, seven others had come into contact with the criminal justice system" (p16).

Conversely, obtaining a decent education reduces the likelihood of involvement in crime. As good qualifications have a market value that pupils are very aware of, students who have these (or anticipate achieving these) are less likely to take the risk of diminishing the value they have achieved by getting involved in activity that could lead to them obtaining a criminal record – something that has no value in the employment market and could reduce the value of their earned qualifications (Lochner and Moretti, 2001). Therefore, those who anticipate no returns from their education are more likely to exhibit risky behaviour as they perceive they have little or nothing to lose (Farrington et al, 2006).

In the USA, the relationship between school exclusion and this potential to become offenders is being accelerated by the direct criminalisation of students through public schooling, a process that has come to be termed the *school to prison pipeline* (Hirschfield, 2008; Swain and Noblit, 2011). America has the highest percentage of incarcerated people in the world (716 per 100,000 of their population (Walmsley, 2013)) and their prison inmates have high levels of school dropout, educational underachievement and school exclusion (Swain and Noblit, 2011). Disproportionate fear of the dangerousness of the youth, the widespread use of zero-tolerance policies on school discipline and changes in criminal laws which allow juveniles to be treated as adults have seen the deployment of police officers in

schools and colleges (Casella, 2003). Events that may have previously resulted in a pupil being placed in a school detention, or even suspended, can now result in an in-school arrest and the initiation of criminal proceedings. Students can also be judged as violating their parole and sent deeper into the criminal justice system if they transgress essentially non law-breaking school rules (Brown, 2006; Hirschfield, 2008; Swain and Noblit, 2011).

Whilst such practices are not yet evident in the UK, schools have recently been given increased powers to search pupils for items prohibited by school rules, such as mobile phones (Gove, 2011). And, as in the USA, young people entering the criminal justice system in the UK are shown to have poor educational qualifications and disproportionate experience of official school exclusions (Murray, 2012).

There is a great financial cost to the taxpayer of both excluding children from school (Parsons and Castle, 1998) and sending offenders to prison, and evidence suggests that both practices tend to reinforce rather than deter offending behaviour (Parsons, 2005, Whitehead and Arthur, 2011). As such, there is arguably an altogether different function of such exclusions – this will be discussed in the next section.

2.4 CRIME AND DEVIANCE IN SOCIETY

As discussed in the previous section, deviant acts are not necessarily instantly recognisable, but are required to be designated as deviant by those with the power to do so. In this section, the possible usefulness of labelling behaviour; individuals; even entire communities as deviant will be discussed.

Durkheim's functionalist approach

Durkheim's sociology of deviance views crime as a normal and inevitable feature of a well running society (Durkheim, 1984), providing that the amount of crime is seen to be manageable:

> (…) it serves to 'heighten collective sentiments', sharpen perceptions of moral imperatives, more tightly integrate the community against the transgressor – in short, to clarify and reinforce the norms and values of the group.
>
> (Downes and Rock, 2003, pp88-89)

According to functionalism, a certain amount of visibly sanctioned crime acts to maintain social order by re-emphasising the norms and, therefore, discouraging the majority of society from choosing to act outside of the given rules (Liska and Warner, 1991). Although criticised for its lack of explanation of actually how these processes operate, and also for its uncritical representations of norms and rules, this functionalist view of deviance can form the beginnings of an explanation as to why so many non-serious offenders can be found in prisons. The total population of England and Wales was estimated to be 56.6 million in 2012

(Office for National Statistics, 2013). The total prison population in 2013 was 83, 151 (Prison Reform Trust, 2013) and while that is a significant number, it only represents around 0.001% of the population. Imprisoning a very small percentage of the population for relatively minor crimes (see Berman and Dar, 2013), while drawing considerable attention to it (as discussed in Chapter One) arguably serves the function of maintaining social order. In late capitalism, inequalities are increasing and only a small elite at the top of the social structure are benefitting (Harvey, 2007). By publicising the crimes of a small minority of the lower classes, the dominant group deflects attention from the gross inequalities of society and encourages a cohesive moral consensus to follow the rules of the dominant group (Liska & Warner 1991).

This brings into question the rule-breaking acts of pupils in schools, and whether a small amount of such classroom disruption is similarly desirable in order to maintain the status quo. The act of chastising a young boy for talking out of turn for example, may serve to promote and reinforce the compliant behaviour of the whole class, rather than to correct the behaviour of the individual boy. A well-functioning classroom may need a small number of the pupils to act against the rules in order that the rules are effectively maintained:

> Following Durkheim, we can recognise that there will always be teacher-designated deviants in schools, for deviants are inevitable in social systems where there must always be those who mark the boundaries of our moral rules.
>
> (Parkin, 1992)

In the classroom the pupil identified as disruptive or challenging marks the boundaries. In the adult world of work the unemployed benefits claimant or imprisoned criminal serves the same function (Liska and Warner, 1991). The identification of these embodied boundary markers is argued to be an important element of Foucault's *disciplinary power* (Foucault, 1977).

Foucault: Discipline and Punish

Foucault's discussion of the workings of institutions, power and the production of discourses/knowledge can be useful in uncovering the taken for granted in the discourse of deviance and crime (Foucault, 1980). His analyses challenge the authority inherent in academic and policy discourse and question the power relations of these practices of knowledge production. For Foucault, power is a strategy; a network of relations; a verb, not a noun; not possessed by particular individuals or groups, but performed through every interaction. As such, power is not simply determined by (for example) gender but negotiated via interactions that produce *knowledge* of gender (Mills 2003):

> Thus, where there are imbalances of power relations between groups of people or between institutions/states, there will be a production of knowledge. Because of the institutionalised imbalance in power relations between men and women in Western countries, Foucault would argue, information is produced about women; thus we find many books in libraries about women but few about men, and similarly, many about the working classes but few about the middle classes.
>
> (Mills 2003, p69)

In *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the Prison* (1977), Foucault traces the historical changes in the treatment of criminals from the spectacle of public tortures and hangings to the present, less open penal system. As the social structures began reformulating under the new economy of capitalism, Foucault notes the structural response to criminal behaviour shifting from previously blatant punishments aimed at branding the offender and legitimising the power of the King, to a system serving to protect the rights of the property owning bourgeoisie and quietly control the population. There was a redefinition of many of the survival tactics employed by the masses as illegal, and those convicted of crimes were sent to institutions where they were expected to be reformed (not merely punished.) The expansion of new modes of production also brought a need to manage the working population as a resource in order to maximise profit. This could not be efficiently achieved through forced labour, but by the spread of what Marxists would call Ideology, and what Foucault describes as "a sort of general recipe for the exercise of power over men: the 'mind' as a surface inscription for power (…) the submission of bodies through the control of ideas" (Foucault 1977 [1991] p102). The right to insist on reform of transgressors of the rules of behaviour was a vital ingredient in the new *disciplinary power* of the capitalist economy.

The identification and legitimate exclusion of criminals played a part in the disciplinary practices (and knowledge produced by it) operating towards the production of a mass of "docile bodies" needed to fill the factories; bodies of men not unwilling to undertake training to produce in them the 'correct' attitudes, habits and adherence to rules required by the system. These disciplinary practices of surveillance and "normalizing judgement" (Foucault 1977 [1991] p170) were used heavily in the prisons of the new criminality, and

then extended through practices in other institutional structures, including the hospital, the factory and the school. Hierarchical observation came be an integral component of the practice of teaching in schools: “a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency” (Foucault 1991, p176). This surveillance made visible non-compliance with the rules, which in turn made the question of the legitimacy of the surveillance invisible.

In discussing the formation of the prison in its current form, Foucault notes the birth of the criminological perspective – a group of ideas proclaiming a distinction between the ‘delinquent’ and the ‘criminal’, the delinquent being the *character* of the offender. “The introduction of the ‘biographical’ is important in the history of penality. Because it establishes the ‘criminal’ as existing before the crime and even outside it.” (Foucault 1977 [1991], p252) He points to the ‘dangers’ of ‘an explanatory discourse’ such as criminology:

> He (the criminal) steals because he is poor, certainly, but we all know that all poor people don’t steal. So for this individual to steal there has to be something wrong with him, and this is his character, his psyche, his upbringing, his unconscious, his desires. And with that the delinquent is handed over either to the penal technology of the prison or the medical technology.
>
> (Foucault, 1980, p44)

So, these movements in the material relations of power brought about a discourse creating and legitimising the notion of the identity of ‘criminal’. And the change from torture to ‘treatment’ via incarceration “had less to do with making prisoners aware of their failings, and more to do with actively producing a kind of subject who could be identified, and treated, as a prisoner” (Danaher, Schirato and Webb 2000, p.49).

Foucault's analysis points to the obvious and continuous apparent failure of the prison to reform characters, as, in fact, its success:

> Crime (is) too useful… to dream of anything as crazy – or ultimately as dangerous – as a society without crime.
>
> (Foucault 1980, p47)

The fear of crime sanctions the surveillance of the social body en masse and the prison 'functions' through its clear delinquency producing role, a role that is entwined with the disciplinary practices operating on potential prisoners/delinquents throughout society at any, or all points.

> The carceral, with its far-reaching networks, allows the recruitment of major 'delinquents'. It organizes what may be called 'disciplinary careers' in which, through various exclusions and rejections, a whole process is set in motion (…)
> There (is) a sort of disciplinary 'training', continuous and compelling, that (has) something of the pedagogical curriculum and something of the professional network.
>
> (Foucault 1991, p300)

> The prison continues, on those who are entrusted to it, a work begun elsewhere (…)
>
> (Foucault 1991, p302)

It appears society may need prisons in implicit ways that go directly against what it is proffered to be. The purpose may not be to eradicate, or at least, minimise crime, but rather to promote and discretely benefit from it.

Prison Industrial Complex

Kicenski (2002) utilises Foucault's premises to examine the State of California's huge and ever growing prison system and argue that the privatisation of prisons there has contributed towards the massive rise in inmate populations, as the larger numbers literally mean bigger profits for the businesses running the prisons.

Along with the theorisation of a *school to prison pipeline* as described earlier in this chapter (**2.2.)**, is the conceptualisation of and movement against what is described as a *Prison Industrial Complex*, predominantly discussed within the United States' context (Davis, 2003; Meiners and Winn, 2010). This refers to an economically and *politically* beneficial drive to increase the use of prisons whilst simultaneously reducing investment in education:

> The prison-industrial complex (…) curbed the decline of many white rural areas and, more broadly, pacified the white working class. Criminal justice expansion artificially tightens the labor market, stimulates the economy of ailing rural communities, and affords rural residents greater electoral representation and population-based federal appropriations. Accordingly, many rural politicians stake their political careers on the location of juvenile and adult prisons in their districts and the hundreds of stable, well-paying jobs that they promise to generate for their constituents.
>
> The twin developments of deindustrialization and mass incarceration, through shifting the political calculus of school policy decisions, have important direct implications for state-level education policy (…) Politicians with largely rural and small town bases (…) benefit more politically from expansionist justice and exclusionary school policies – which help keep prisons full – than from generous urban school funding.
>
> (Hirschfield, 2008, pp89-90)

It has been argued that welfare and penal policies are combining to manage the surplus labour force that are the typically poor and disenfranchised populations (Mendieta, 2007; Wacquant, 2010). As these populations are positioned as potentially or evidently dangerous, their treatment through punitive measures is rarely challenged within the mainstream discourse that underpins the social policy (Casella, 2003; Swain and Noblit, 2011).

> The prison therefore functions ideologically as an abstract site into which undesirables are deposited, relieving us of the responsibility of thinking about the real issues afflicting those communities from which prisoners are drawn in such disproportionate numbers. This is the ideological work the prison performs.
>
> (Davis, 2003, p16)

The related social policies that address so-called problem children in school, so-called poor parenting and the treatment of offenders through imprisonment are all located within this ideological discourse of legitimacy and inequalities (Gillborn, 2010; Gillies, 2006). This deficit model will now be looked at again, through a brief summary of the type of research that most often informs social policy in the area of educational failure and offending.

2.5 SOCIAL POLICY AND THE MAINSTREAM DISCOURSE

The findings of two pieces of research undertaken in the mid-nineties encapsulate the mainstream discourse when considering factors influencing why some young people become involved in crime and what the policy response to this should be. The Home Office report by Graham and Bowling (1995) sought to estimate the extent of offending amongst 14 to 25

year olds, describe the nature of the offending and discover what causes youngsters to both commence and cease involvement in crime. In addition to questions on their social and family backgrounds, and current lifestyles, young people were asked about their school experiences:

> Females who disliked school, or who rated their performance below or well below average, were more likely to offend than those who liked school or rated their performance more positively. For males… those who truanted from school, especially those who did so regularly, and those who had been excluded from school, were much more likely to offend than others.
>
> (Graham and Bowling, 1995, pxii)

Whilst Graham and Bowling's findings were based on self-reported offending, the Audit Commission (1996) reported on the nature of officially recorded crime. The report states that some young people are at greater risk of offending due to a number of identified factors: poor parenting; delinquent peers; emotional and behavioural problems; substance abuse; poor training and job prospects and truancy and exclusion from school. In order to prevent crime by young people a number of targeted interventions are suggested. When considering the role of schools, the report states:

> Where parents fail to socialise their children adequately, schools have to cope with bad behaviour among their pupils. When this occurs at an early age offending is more likely to develop later on (…) Poor school performance is also a good predictor of later delinquency (…) The antipathy between school and the disruptive child is usually mutual, and disaffected young people who are not excluded often truant from school.
>
> (Audit Commission 1996, p20-21)

The Cambridge Study in Delinquent Development, a longitudinal study (commissioned by the RDS[2]) has been surveying a sample of around 400 males since aged 8 years in the early sixties. This ongoing piece of research similarly finds that:

> (t)he most important childhood risk factors (…) for later offending were measures of family criminality, daring or risk taking, low school attainment, poverty and poor parenting.
>
> (Farrington et al 2006)

In 2002, the then Education Secretary was reported to blame "Feckless and abusive parents (…) for youth crime and unruly behaviour in school" (BBC, 2002b). She also emphasised:

> …the links between educational failure and teenage crime, she said that 50% of youngsters serving custodial sentences had a reading age of 11 or under.
> And that a quarter of these young lawbreakers had levels of numeracy which were 10 years below their actual age.
>
> (BBC, 2002a)

The problem is seen as located in the individual and his inadequate family, rather than due to structural inequality and its effects (Gillies, 2012). Within this discursive climate, the British Government's "Tough on crime, tough on causes of crime" approach might be considered reasonable in the mainstream. School exclusions are increasingly used where previously an in-school solution might have been implemented (Gazeley, 2010); in spite of the evidence that school exclusions are linked to the increased likelihood of the onset of offending and entry into the criminal justice system (Briggs, 2010; Parsons, 2005). Prison

[2] The Research, Development and Statistics Directorate (RDS) is the research 'arm' of the Home Office.

sentences continue to rise, despite the fact that reconviction rates two years following release from prison are around 70% (Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, 2007).

The conclusions drawn from reports such as the Audit Commission's (1996) are that early intervention and multi-agency approaches will steer the youth away from offending (see Goldson 2001 for discussion). The youth are seen as a potentially dangerous underclass at ever present risk of becoming criminal (Case, 2006). Critics maintain that the findings of such reports are rarely robust and often politically driven. "Some of the conclusions and recommendations are more political than actuarial, and there seems too close a relationship to the (…) government for comfort." (Jones, 2001, p378)

Further criticisms of the government's bias and undue focus on those who commit minor offences can be found in a damning article on the political nature of Home Office (and similar) research:

> … the Home Office, through its biased and skewed research agenda, presents the British public with an erroneous and partial view of crime in British society: that anti-social behaviour is a working class youth/drug problem; that violence has become a part of black culture; that increased prisons are required to rescue a fledgling criminal justice system; that parental irresponsibility and a growing lack of 'respect' are the sources of injustice, inequality and criminal behaviour; and so on.
>
> (Walters, 2008, pp12-14)

The mainstream discourse and the emanating interventionist social policies are deeply problematic on a number of levels:

> Despite all that is known of the counter-productive and discriminatory consequences of labelling and criminalisation (…) early intervention is trumpeted (…) We are literally awash with evidence which confirms time and time again that youth custody is corrosive, damaging, expensive and spectacularly counter-productive.
>
> (Goldson, 2001, p79)

It is argued that not only do interventions through school exclusion, youth justice or other punitive social machinery (such as welfare restrictions) *produce* criminality, but "(t)here is an undercurrent of objectification and dehumanization of young people throughout" (Jones, 2001, p378).

2.6 CONCLUSION

This literature review has drawn together theories of the reproduction of inequalities through education with evidence of the ways in which parents and children are patronised or pathologised due to the education system's rejection of their classed, gendered and racialised cultural capitals. It highlighted work that problematises the use of punitive interventions against pupils, families and young offenders and critically interrogates the wider social control function of prisons.

Arguably, it is only by interrupting these productions of knowledge about so-called challenging children and young or adult offenders that any change can occur. This requires

alternative definitions and positioning of their statuses by young people and offenders, not by politicians or interventionists. It also requires the attention to be focused on the function and processes of schools and prisons, rather than the perceived lacks and deficiencies of the individuals found within them (Dorey, 2010; Gillborn, 2010).

This research pursues that aim by bringing the above critical readings of schooling together with the life story narratives of eleven men who have been to prison. The rationale and justification for this method of data collection, along with a description of the research process as it unfolded is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

INTERVIEWING FORMER INMATES IN LIVING ROOMS:

TRACING THE RESEARCH PROCESS FROM BEGINNING TO END

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One I described the information gathered and observations made whilst I worked as a teacher in two adult male prisons. This chapter details the research undertaken for the Doctoral thesis. Originally the research was designed to conduct in depth interviews with men in prison, and the beginning of the chapter discusses the prison proposal. This original proposal was not followed through, and instead former inmates were interviewed – the reasons for this change will be discussed as the chapter unfolds.

Whilst all research endeavours are rarely straightforward; research involving prisoners brings with it special issues of access and ethics that cannot be taken lightly. This chapter tracks the very difficult processes and decisions that culminated in the collection of data that are presented in **Chapters Four** and **Five**. It is not unusual for proposals to be altered or abandoned during the research process. In my research, I feel it is important to describe how and why the design changed as it speaks to the reflexive nature of the research methodology. Before chronologically describing the research process itself, the rationale for the chosen tool of life history style interviewing will be briefly discussed.

3.2 THE LIFE HISTORY METHOD

> A life story can help the researcher define an individual's place in the social order of things and the process used to achieve that fit. It can help explain an individual's understanding of social events, movements, and political causes or how individual members of a group, generation or cohort see certain events or movements and how the way they see, experience, or interpret those social events links to their individual development.
>
> (Atkinson, 1998, pp13-14)

Given that the research questions explored the possibility of a particular social experience in a specific context (childhood schooling) and how that may have influenced later life *and* the research aim of placing emphasis on the individual's own perspective, the life history method appeared most appropriate. Before committing to this method however, there was a decision making process which included assessing the appropriateness of alternative qualitative methods. This process will be outlined below.

Since the original research ideas came out of a combination of interviewing and observation in prison (see Chapter One) either or both of these methods appeared suitable to explore the research questions (See Chapter One **1.4** for full research questions). However, as the initial proposal was to undertake the research inside a prison (with all of its inevitable restrictions) and it was a self-funded, part time project with limited financial and time resources, the method had to pragmatically reflect this.

Observation was ruled out as it was unlikely to reveal much (if anything) about the prior school experiences of the prisoners**.** Semi-structured questionnaires with the space to provide responses to open ended questions were also considered as they could have been distributed to a very large sample. However, there was a concern about the appropriateness of questionnaires in a prison setting. There was an issue of how they would be distributed, completed and collected. Having wide access to large numbers of the inmate population to administer researcher led questionnaires would have larger resource implications for both the researcher and the prison. The realistic result could have been questionnaires having to be distributed in conjunction with officers and completed independently.

This had serious ethical implications around perceived and/or actual coercion. The researcher would have no control over what information was being given to the prisoners when the questionnaires were distributed. It was possible that they may not understand that their participation was voluntary if officers became quasi research assistants through the distribution and collection of the questionnaires. Additionally, government focus on improving basic literacy skills in prisons (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2005; Secretary of State for Education and Skills, 2005) implies there may be a widespread problem amongst the prison population which could inhibit the effectiveness of a research tool that requires reading and writing.

As such, an in-depth one to one interview appeared most fit for purpose. Whilst committing to interviewing individuals at length would inevitably result in a much smaller number of respondents than a questionnaire survey; the data collected would be far more likely to

elaborate on the view gained of prisoners' school experiences that had been established though the prisoner induction interviews during professional practice.

Life history interviews have been successfully used to illicit narratives from prisoners (Richie, 2001). Traditional life history interviews have little or even no input from the researcher and allow the interviewee to recount their life story entirely as they wish (Horsdal, 2012). Given the focus of the research was the men's school and prison experiences, a life history *style* interview was designed – an in-depth, conversational interview with the space for a recounting of their life course, but focussed on the two specific areas of their lives: school and prison. The inmates were asked to tell their own story of what school was like for them, with the aid of prompts to get them talking and questions of clarification. There was a loose interview schedule, which included themes around the research questions (see Appendix I). This was used if and when the respondent needed encouragement to tell his story. This resulted in no two interviews being the same.

Issues of Power

The main drawback considered with this (or indeed any) interview method was the inherent power imbalance between the interviewee and the interviewer/researcher, as the inmate was in prison and the researcher would instead be a visiting civilian sanctioned by the prison. As the respondents may feel that their histories could be negatively judged, there may have been an increased chance of receiving "accounts" (Scott and Lyman 1968) in the forms of excuses and justifications for what might be seen as questionable or undesirable behaviour. In attempts to go some way to redress this, it would have been useful for the prisoner to

know something of the researcher's own personal background (as described in Chapter One) in order for the best possible environment of trust and rapport to be established. However, experience of working in prison as a teacher informed me that revealing my personal history in order to create the most conducive interview climate was not going to be as straight forward as I would have liked. (I will elaborate on this concern later in **3.5.**)

Even taking these concerns into account, the benefits of this type of in-depth interview to the research aims were clear. Not only due to the respect given to the prisoners' own version of events, but also as a method suited to tracking the contextual social realities experienced over time.

Further, the particular benefit of the life history approach over other in-depth interviewing strategies was in the potential for information not necessarily consciously connected to the subject matter of a 'preparation for prison' coming out in the course of the prisoner telling the story of their schooling. In a life history study of adolescent abstinence, Haglund (2004) observed that direct questions on the subject in the present resulted in brief responses; but when asked to describe their childhoods the respondents produced a great deal of data which was shown to relate to their status as abstinent.

Without directly asking the participants if they perceive their experiences of school to have been influential in a possible trajectory to prison, the life history data would speak to reveal their experiences of school.

3.3 THE ETHICS OF INTERVIEWING PRISONERS

Ethical considerations were partly implicated when ruling out a survey approach to the research, but ethics still needed to be very seriously considered with the proposed life history method. Regardless of the type of research there are longstanding concerns about the heightened ethical implications of conducting research with prisoners:

> (A) factor that has limited prison-based research is the concern that subjects may possess inadequate ability to provide informed consent (…) and also the possibility that prisoners may be coerced into participation (…) coercion can be defined quite broadly, and some would even consider the fact that participation may enable the inmate to leave his or her cell more frequently and interact with people from outside (…) as potential coercion. As a result, some have gone so far as to label the prison setting as "inherently coercive."
>
> (Moser et al, 2004, p2)

> Of course, an objection can be raised as to whether interviewing prisoners may be a form of exploitation of their loneliness and their need to break the monotony and boredom of prison life.
>
> (Helgeland, 2005, p560)

Although both studies carried out by the authors cited above provide evidence to suggest that prisoners are quite capable of providing informed consent, and Helgeland (2005) goes on to argue that suggesting otherwise serves to further marginalise an already vulnerable group; it cannot be denied that very serious consideration has to be given to the possible effects of research when proposing to undertake a project within a secure institution such as a prison.

As a prison teacher, I was very aware that men came to educational classes for a number of different reasons, not dissimilar to those suggested above. There was no doubt that a large number of prisoners chose to come to Education to relieve boredom or as a preference over other activities available in the prison. As they are mostly surrounded by men, inmates can miss the female company they would receive on the outside from wives, girlfriends, sisters and mothers. As the Education Departments in UK prisons are run exclusively by civilian staff, many of whom are female, it becomes a potentially more appealing choice in a male prison. Whilst these were among the influences that brought the men to classes, it did not mean that genuine educational achievement was rendered impossible once they were there.

Given this, it was likely that a number of inmates would be interested in taking part in the research for reasons cited above. However, this would not automatically render any data collected invalid due to 'inherent coercion' or suspect prisoner motives – as in educational classes, once the space has been created and the men turn up, the intended activity could go ahead with every chance of success.

In addition to these afore-mentioned issues, the potential for participant distress during an interview focussing on childhood and other past events was an overriding ethical concern. When I reflected on my time working as a teacher in prison and anticipated the personal information likely to be shared by the prisoners through the interviews, I was mindful of the incidences where it appeared emotionally challenging or sensitive issues had been revealed and I had to leave the prison at the end of a working day, whilst the man or men involved went back to their cells. Similarly, as a member of teaching staff, I was on a very small

number of occasions privy to disclosures or descriptions of incidents that I personally found to be quite disturbing and found that I had little choice but to find some way of my own to cope with this.

This awareness of the potentially far-reaching effects of the research endeavour caused me to consider deeply what the participants and I were likely to gain overall from the experience. Advocates of the life story approach believe that sharing of a life story can be extremely beneficial:

> (…) Sharing one's story is a way of purging, or releasing, certain burdens and validating personal experience; it is in fact central to the recovery process.
> (…) Sharing one's story helps creates community and may show that we have more in common with others than we thought.
> (…) Life stories can help other people to see their lives more clearly or differently and perhaps be an inspiration to help them change something in their lives.
> (…) A better sense of how we want our story to end, or how we could give it the "good" ending we want, might be gained. By understanding our past and present, we also gain a clearer perspective on our goals for the future.
>
> (Atkinson, 1998, p26)

The potential for the interviews to cause some harm was seriously considered. I planned to be mindful of this through the entire research process. However, my professional teaching experience in prisons involved a great deal of pastoral work, and I recalled that when prisoners talked through issues, it was frequently difficult, but ultimately beneficial. There was a great potential for the participants to gain personally from being interviewed and

telling their stories, even more so *because* their life histories may have been difficult.

3.4 THE PRISON PROPOSAL

Informal discussions with former colleagues about the inmate daily routine, the length of time the prison was likely to allow for the research and a realistic appraisal of how much time I could commit to being on site, led to a six week proposal to interview twelve to fifteen men. This small number could not represent the entire prison population, but as already stated, the main aim was to collect descriptive qualitative data, rather than attempt to seek a representative sample as would be the case in quantitative research.

Since there would be no attempt to make any statistical claims or generalisations, any types of probability sampling would not be necessary. However, it would be sensible to avoid creating a homogenous group of participants in terms of ethnicity or age. If, for example, the vast majority of the participants were Black Caribbean, it would be difficult to determine whether their experiences as described were particular for that ethnic group alone. Similarly, if the group consisted of inmates all within a small age range, the data may represent only the schooling of a particular generational cohort. So taking this very loose technique of attempting to obtain a mix of ethnicities and age groups, a combination of opportunity and purposive sampling (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000) was to be employed to obtain the descriptive life stories. The recruitment was to be based on opportunity: who volunteered and who was available. This type of recruitment is not uncommon in prison; when I was working to establish 'outreach' classes in the workshops and on the wings in one prison,

recruitment onto part time classes was achieved by informally approaching the men, explaining my purpose, what time commitments may be involved, what benefit they may see and so on. It was envisioned that recruitment onto the research would be a similar affair.

The main concern with regards recruitment was to exclude any men who might be particularly vulnerable. Those who were being monitored or receiving extra support due to concerns over their emotional or mental state (those on what is often termed 'suicide watch') would not be deemed suitable for interviewing. It would be quite possible that any participant could find the process of going over past events and memories upsetting, it would therefore be irresponsible and unethical to involve anyone known to be suffering trauma at the time. In any case, the prison would not allow it and liaison with officers would ensure I was aware of which prisoners should be excluded for this reason.

During the aforementioned outreach teaching programme, it was typical to have between two and five inmates who would temporarily come away from their activities to take classes for an hour. Usually there were small rooms within the large workshops that were made available for this purpose. So, in the laundry, or the sewing workshop (for examples) I, along with a few prisoners would sit in a somewhat private room away from the noise of the workshop. The room (usually a spare office or small group room) was easily accessible should the men be called back to work, or need to leave for some other reason. This also made it a secure space for the teacher, as officers were immediately available should any issue arise. This arrangement was central to the success of the outreach programme. It held no significant resource implications for the officers running the workshops. They did not

have to transport the prisoners to another location in order for them to receive their classes. The men were being supervised by the teacher, but the workshop still had their required numbers of prisoners at work. Again, in line with previous experience, it was envisioned locations for interviews would be similar spaces.

Having formulated a suitable list of between 12-15 participants, the plan was to interview each man for up to two hours in one of these suitable spaces. Prisoners' time schedules are tightly regimented, with activities outside of their cells and/or wings permitted only at predetermined times. After the interview and loose schedule had been piloted, this two hour maximum was shown to be more than adequate and would be allowed within the prison timetable.

During recruitment and before the interview all potential participants were to be given full information on the research aims, the potential uses of the data collected, their rights to confidentiality, their right to withdraw and their opportunity to collaborate in the research by feeding back on their own interview. (For information sheet and consent form, see Appendix II and III.)

In order to build and maintain the rapport deemed necessary for the quality of data sought, each interview would be recorded, to allow the conversation to flow without interruptions from note taking. The plan was to make a full transcription to ensure initial researcher decisions could not skew the collection. The transcripts were to be anonymised by changing names and any other possible identifiers and then shared with the interviewee a short time

after the initial interview. This follow-up session would give the interviewee the opportunity to express any desire they may have to remove any part of the transcript they did not wish to be included, or indeed withdraw the transcript altogether. They could also add any further feedback or comments they may have as a result of reflecting on the initial interview or reading the transcript.

A tentative aim to return to the prison some months after the completion of the interviews to share findings with small focus groups made up of the original participants was included in the original proposal. However, given the regular movement of prisoners and other unpredictable factors such as how long the data analysis may take, this could have proved to be impractical.

3.5 THE PRISON APPLICATION AND THE ABANDONMENT OF THE PRISON PROPOSAL

The task was now to obtain permission to go back into a prison to conduct the interviews. A colleague spoke on my behalf to a number of senior staff within the prison, who fortunately showed support for the idea in principle and requested further information. I was put in touch with the designated research contact at the prison who advised that all proposed projects had to go through a standard application process to gain permission to conduct any research within a prison establishment. The eight page application pack was more detailed in its questioning than anticipated, bringing the realisation that this was not going to be a simple matter of getting in touch with old contacts, obtaining an up-to-date security check and then being left to my own devices to carry out the research as I saw fit.

Ethical considerations had already been discussed with my thesis supervisor, but now needed to be formally sanctioned by the University as a requirement of the prison application (see Appendix IV). This and all other parts of the application were completed and forwarded to the prison Area Psychology Unit as instructed (see Appendix V). A psychologist then contacted me who had been assigned as liaison. She would be responsible for presenting the research proposal to the appointed committee and guiding me through the application process. She expressed interest in the research focus and was very positive about the proposal's chances of success, which were helped she said by the support for it already existent at the prison (thanks to former colleagues).

After approximately a month of anticipation I received a letter stating that, unfortunately, due to the resignation of the designated research contact at the prison, all research there was on hold for the indefinite future; they therefore could not grant permission for my research to go ahead. Given the amount of time and energy put into the proposal, this came as a somewhat devastating shock.

Eventually, I decided to get in touch with the contact at the Area Psychology Unit to see what she thought my chances would be if essentially the same application was made to conduct the research in the other prison I had worked at? She was very encouraging, saying that as long as I could muster up a similar level of support for the project with staff there, there was every chance the proposal would be successful. I set about doing this, and before long a new application was submitted and proceeding without incident. The liaison then informed me that the proposal was about to reach the final stage before permission would

be granted and that the proposal needed to now be reviewed in detail as there were some small areas that would need refining to ensure its success. Once these amendments were completed she would go forward to the committee with the proposal, and felt certain all would go well. Some amendments were merely a matter of rewording for clarity and some were slight omissions on my part, details that had in fact been taken into account but had not been written into the application. However, some of the details raised proved to be major concerns given the aims of the research.

For example, the proposal stated there would be a loose interview schedule that would not necessarily be adhered to strictly. I was advised that this would not be acceptable to the Prison Service. They would need to know precisely what questions would be asked, and if there were any changes to the questions, they would need to be notified. The proposal also stated that a report on the findings would be produced for the Prison Service; access would be made available to the final thesis and they would be informed of any publications arising out of the research. I was informed that in fact the Prison Service would need to see anything and everything I wrote.

These issues began to concern me. Even if in reality it would be impossible for the Prison Service to know whether or not any interview structure had been adhered to; or impractical for them to see everything I wrote, there was a growing realisation that there was the potential for me to lose control of the data. Even the *idea* that the Prison Service could possibly object to a certain line of questioning would inevitably affect the research process. When I considered the interviews and the rapport and trust that would need to be

established, I became frustrated that I might feel somewhat restricted by Prison Service politics (see Punch, 1986). I might not feel open to encourage the interviewees to speak freely. Questions or prompts which might lead to responses of a politically sensitive nature would perhaps need to be reconsidered. Also, it would surely be impossible not to be mindful of, and potentially influenced by potential Prison Service responses when writing up the research.

These concerns served as a reminder of the effects of perceived surveillance of staff and their conduct when working in prisons. For good reason, staff are constantly reminded of how their behaviour may constitute a security risk. Although I never witnessed it personally there were many stories of both prison and civilian staff being *gated* [physically removed from the prison via the main gate and not being allowed to return back into the prison for *any* reason] and some even prosecuted for such alleged misdemeanours as transporting drugs or being in an inappropriate relationship with a prisoner. What is constantly being reiterated is that prison inmates can cunningly manipulate staff to do such things and the best way to avoid this is to keep very strict boundaries. This would go beyond what would ordinarily be expected of the boundaries in any workplace between a professional and a client, such as those expected between a teacher and a student. To give an example: it was considered a serious problem to give any indication to a prisoner the area in which you live. The logic being that if an inmate had an idea where you lived they could send someone on the outside to intimidate you to (for example) bring in drugs. Despite the fact that I believed this particular premise to be somewhat flawed, as a civilian employee I realised it would be foolish to flout the expected codes of behaviour.

The persistent reinforcement of the need to keep all personal information off limits as it may harm security did place some restrictions on teaching practice. There are times when the sharing of personal anecdotes or other information can be valuable to any teaching, and in prison this can be even more pertinent if this would boost self-esteem or otherwise encourage self-development. For me personally, the fact that members of my family had been to prison would have no doubt helped to establish further rapport and trust with the inmates. It would also have given more credibility to my experiences and choices as I often described to the prisoners as alternatives to theirs. But this fact was something I never revealed. The atmosphere created due to the imagined surveillance meant that I felt compelled to ensure no members of staff found out about this either – even the few I trusted and considered to be friends.

I began to realise that there may be the pressure of this surveillance during the interviews. It was becoming clear that the desired optimum atmosphere to elicit the type of frank in-depth interview data that was the research aim would have to be tempered in the prison environment.

The research liaison had advised me that one of the main concerns of the Prison Service when considering granting access to external researchers is that the research is of sufficient value (given the necessary disruption to the regime) and that the prison setting is important to its aims. Given my growing concerns as described above I began to consider the same question. When employed as a researcher, negotiating with the interests of funding bodies or institutional agendas is now accepted as part of the job (Cheek, 2000); doing a self-

funded, independent piece of research as a doctoral student provides a rare freedom from these possible constraints. I therefore considered whether the prison setting was important to my research aims. The only reason this would be necessary if it were not possible to source interviewees elsewhere.

As is common, the familiar territory of a professional working environment had been automatically sought as the site of research. As the project was looking at prisoners' experiences, prison appeared the obvious place to go. There are however other organisations that have contact with men who have been to prison - the Probation Service or an organisation such as NACRO[3] could be contacted in attempts to gain access to former prisoners who would be willing to take part in the research. However, this would surely also involve political implications, institutional guidelines, and many other working practices to manoeuvre around.

So, where else could former prisoners be found? The obvious answer is living their lives in their communities, not answering to anyone but themselves. It is often the norm for researchers to seek the help of organisations to access research participants, even more so when the participants sought are from a so-called hard to reach population. However, such respondents can be met on their own terms and in their own environment and this would be far more authentic than a meeting contrived through external bodies. Given the difficulties social researchers have in accessing marginalised or hidden groups such as former prisoners,

[3] NACRO is a charitable organisation working to prevent offending by working 'constructively' with offenders. (http://www.nacro.org/aboutnac/aboutfr.htm)

and the reality that representations of their lived experiences are lacking in research and policy, this now became an additional aim of the research method. Former inmates with no connections to formal organisations were the men I wanted to interview. There would be no issue of inherent coercion, or a suggestion that taking part in the interview would somehow gain them some advantage with the external body that had arranged it. The only permissions needed would be theirs and my personal and social history could be revealed if it seemed appropriate. The chances of eliciting full and frank data would be significantly increased. Crucially, there was an increased likelihood of their own voices being clearly heard through the research, as they were not being mediated through the concerns of some external body such as the Prison or Probation Service.

Consequently, the proposal to conduct the research in prison was aborted. Despite the time and effort put into it, it was undoubtedly the best way forward for the research. The research liaison expressed sincere appreciation for the reasons for the decision and wished the project well; she reiterated her interest in the research and hoped that a larger scale project pursuing the same questions may be appropriate in a prison setting in the future.

3.6 INTERVIEWING A HARD TO REACH POPULATION

For many researchers accessing a hidden population such as former prison inmates could be difficult, if not impossible. They may need to spend significant time gaining confidences or using intermediaries to identify possible participants. They would then have to continue to

work hard to establish a snowball or chain-referral sample, whilst not being absolutely certain that those referred actually fit the participant criteria (Atkinson and Flint, 2001). Fortunately, I did not have this problem. As has already been made clear, I personally know a number of men who have been to prison. They in turn know men who have been to prison. Friends, family and acquaintances know men who have been to prison. Although this would require some networking, which would inevitably result in a considerably longer process than the six weeks allowed in the prison proposal; finding twelve to fifteen men who would agree to be interviewed seemed easily achievable. I did in fact locate fourteen men who expressed interest in taking part in the research; ultimately interviewing eleven of them.

It is highly unlikely that these participants would have got involved in this project if it had been conducted by a researcher from outside their own community or social networks. The fact that there were a number of people through whom I was able initiate contact, I was definitely in a privileged position over many other researchers with the same aim. Social researchers often use their personal and professional networks to access participants in the way (see Rollock, 2014).

All other aspects of the research design remained basically unchanged: confidentiality; informed consent; right to withdraw; a follow up interview to provide feedback as per the ethical guidelines already previously detailed. As with the former proposal, an attempt was made to source individuals from varying age groups and differing ethnic backgrounds, though, again, without any strict statistical sampling technique to adhere to. This aspect was only partly successful – had I conducted the research in prison I would have ensured a

number of men with Asian ethnicities were included, as this reflected the racial and ethnic diversity of the inmates in the two Midlands prisons. Whilst I did attempt this via networking and chain referral, it was unsuccessful and the eleven men were either from White, Black Caribbean or mixed (White and Black Caribbean) backgrounds.

There was another small change with regards to obtaining consent: the interviewees were not asked to sign the consent form, or given the written information sheet found in the original prison proposal. Written forms of communication could have made the research seem too official – this may well be desirable when researching in a formal setting, but it can have completely the opposite effect in less formal situations with those who would be identified as marginal or hidden. 'Official' can be interpreted as threatening or untrustworthy, especially for those whose experiences with official bodies have been mostly negative and oppressive. An introduction of paperwork that required a signature could have immediately created a barrier between the respondent and me, possible rendering the entire effort to get to the point of an open interview ineffective (Wiles et al, 2005). Instead, full information on the possible uses of the data was provided and informed consent obtained *verbally* before the interview and in the feedback session as had been previously proposed.

With the change to the design there was also an additional ethical concern that would not have been present had the research been conducted in a prison – extra attention needed to be shown to the moral issues of interviewing people with whom I already had a relationship (Ellis, 2007). Issues of confidentially became particularly paramount, especially when

considering some participants described incidents involving mutual contacts, or an attitude to someone else with whom I have a relationship. Whilst these and many other issues did arise during the interviews, they were not so onerous as to cause any regret about the decision to abandon the prison proposal and instead collect the data in this way.

Research Setting

Through earlier descriptions of the prison proposal, mention was made of informal discussions with former prison colleagues about the practicalities of the research design. Now that the interviews were to take place via a method of chain referral, contact was made with those in my personal and extended network to discuss the specifics of the revised design. It was suggested by a member of University staff that a room be made available on campus for the purpose of conducting the interviews, but my network contacts informed me this would most likely discourage people from participating. The setting could immediately make the research appear too official, possibly intimidating and would probably not be conducive to a relaxed interview should they be able to get passed these issues.

The settings had to be as informal as possible. As the interviews were to be recorded and transcribed these could not be in noisy busy places, plus that was unlikely to encourage honest and open disclosures. The places of interview needed to be fluid, taking each individual participant's circumstances into account. Account also needed to be taken of my personal safety – had the research been conducted in prison this would not have been a concern as there were prison officers and other security measures accessible in a short space of time. As all of the interviewees were men, many of whom I had not met previously,

and I was going to be spending an extended period of time one to one with them it would have been foolish not consider this aspect when planning where meetings would take place. The place then chosen as the interview site sensibly reflected the level of familiarity I had with the participants. Those who had already been to my home, or I theirs (such as relatives) were interviewed in one of these homes. Those who were known well enough by a significant contact and so thoroughly trusted were also interviewed in my home or theirs. Others were interviewed in the homes of a mutual contact and others still in other neutral places such as the private workspace of a mutual contact.

3.7 THE COLLECTION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

In total, eleven men were interviewed. **Table 1** (p75) provides brief biographical information for each participant. Some of the men insisted that their own names be used, as they were keen to establish ownership of their stories. The others chose their own pseudonyms.

The first interview took place in my living room in 2009. The respondent was a relative. He had been in trouble with the law a number of times as a youngster, and after several court appearances for various minor crimes was sentenced to prison once as a Young Offender. I was already familiar with some of the detail of his interview. However, despite the fact that we are very close, and he attended the same primary school as I did, much of his story was completely new to me and those 'facts' that I thought I knew took on different meanings and perspectives when they were described to me in the unusual setting of an interview. He now successfully runs his own small business.

Table 1

Name	Ethnicity	Age at Time of Interview	Completed Statutory Schooling?	Official School Exclusions	Alternative Settings	Arrests	Prison Sentences
David	Mixed Black Caribbean/ White	35 years	No. Left aged 14yrs	2 x permanent	None	Several	1
Anthony	Black Caribbean	49 years	Yes	None	None	Several	3 or 4
Bob	Black Caribbean	36 years	Yes	None	None	1	1
John	White English	33 years	No. In YOI aged 15yrs	Several fixed term, at least 2 x permanent	EBD School (Primary), Boarding School (Secondary)	Several	15 - 20
Brian	White English/ Irish	61 years	Yes	At least 2 x permanent	2 x Secure Approved Schools	Several	3 (incl. approved schools + 1 removal by courts to children's home)
Jason	White English	38 years	No. Left aged 14yrs	Several fixed term, 4 x permanent	Key Centre (Secondary)	15-20	2 or 3
Buster	White English	44 years	No. In YOI aged 15yrs	None? (Undisclosed)	None	Several	12 - 14
Benji	Black Caribbean	29 years	No. Left aged 13/14yrs	At least 3 x permanent	Key Centre (Primary), EBD School (Primary), Boarding School (Primary & Secondary)	Several	17 +
Shortie	Black Caribbean	33 years	Yes	1 x fixed term	None	1	1
Andy	Black Caribbean	44 years	Yes	At least 1 x fixed term	None	Several	1
Brady	Black Caribbean	29 years	Yes	Several fixed term	None	Several	2

The second interview also in 2009 was arranged by my partner with one of his relatives. The interview took place in the 'front room' of my partner's mother's house. Although I had previously met and casually chatted with him, I did not know any of his life experiences, including the fact that he had been to prison a number of times. Although he had not been to prison for a significant number of years, he had struggled to establish a settled lifestyle and remains long term unemployed.

January 2010 I conducted the third interview again in my living room. This was also arranged by my partner, with a long-time friend of his who had only months earlier finished serving three years of a six year prison sentence, the only time he had been to prison. I had not met him before, but had been told (before he was suggested as an interviewee) about the unusual circumstances surrounding his stay in prison. He was a law abiding secondary school teacher who had been caught up in an eight man fight in a bar, one man was seriously injured and he was the only person involved convicted of a crime. I was expecting (given this brief back story) to find that this man's schooling would differ significantly from the others I would interview, and that he may serve as the exception that proved the rule. However, this expectation proved false, and showed me that making even small assumptions about what an interview may reveal is foolish. At the time his status was uncertain (in terms of employment and housing), however, since the interview he has been working with charities and organisations that help prison inmates and those at risk of being involved in gangs. Recently, he has secured his first teaching job since being released from prison.

March 2010 saw another interview in my living room with another relative. He had been to prison fifteen to twenty times since the age of 15 years. As a child I was aware that he was seen as particularly naughty and knew that he had been in and out of prison several times, but his experiences of various types of schooling were all new information. This is again despite the fact that we attended the same primary school and lived on the same council estate. Since settling down with a common law wife and three children he has worked for the same employer for over ten years.

There was a break in the research for just over a year due to a period of my own maternity. As such, interview five took place much later in April 2011. It was in the home of another relative. He had been sentenced to a children's home, spent time in two approved schools and served one two and half year sentence in an adult prison. I was vaguely aware that he had been to prison as a younger man, but it was not something that was openly talked about and so I was unaware of the vast majority of the narrative he shared with me. He has been successfully self-employed for the majority of his adult working life.

The next interview in September 2011 was arranged by a relative, with a friend of his. He grew up on the same estate as me and went to the same primary school. One of his siblings was in my class, meaning I know his name and who is family is and he knows mine; this is really where the familiarity ends. We did the interview in his living room. He had spent time in a Young Offenders Institution (YOI) and served a couple of short sentences in an adult prison. He is settled with a wife and children, but is only transiently employed, usually doing labouring work obtained through unofficial networks.

Interview seven, in October 2011 was as a result of a direct referral from interview six. He was someone I had never met and so I checked with my cousin first whether he thought it was OK to go to meet him at the public house where he worked as had been suggested. Even though we spoke on the phone to arrange the meeting, he also checked with me a couple of times who my cousin was and where I was from before we began the interview. He had spent fifteen years of his life in prison over twelve separate sentences. We at first began the interview in the back bar of the pub, and although we were the only people sitting there, the background noise from the adjoining bar was interrupting the recording so we moved to an upstairs function room where the entire interview took place.

Another relative of my partner agreed to take part, so interview eight again took place in the front room of my partner's mother's home in October 2011. He had been to prison over seventeen times. Unfortunately, he remains unemployed and although he has not been to prison for a number of years, he has been to court on criminal charges since doing the interview.

Interview nine was notably the shortest interview (lasting just over half an hour) and was arranged almost by chance in November 2011. He is someone in our extended network of friends, but I was unaware he had been to prison. At a children's birthday party that we were both attending with our families, someone suggested I ask him to do an interview and he agreed to meet at his home the following week. Not only was his interview exceptionally short (the others lasted between an hour and an hour and forty minutes), but he was categorical in his assessment that his schooling had not in any way influenced his route to

prison. His interview data stood out as an exception in many ways and this will be discussed in the following chapters.

Interview ten also came about somewhat by chance as a customer of my partner happened to casually mention that he had been to prison and so the possibility of being included in the research was introduced. Up until that point, I or family/friends had personally known all of the interviewees. He agreed to take part and we met at my partner's place of business (at the close of business) in July 2012. He had been to prison once. He has a family and full time permanent employment.

The eleventh interview was arranged during another social event, when someone suggested him as a potential interviewee. By this stage, many of my family and friends were aware of my wanting to interview men who had been to prison, so suggestions such as these were on occasion made during social gatherings. He was not someone I knew, or had talked to before, but knew enough of his family and others in our mutual network to be happy to meet him at his home in December 2012. He had been to prison twice. He now has children and runs his own business; he also supports the younger men in his family and community in attempts to prevent them from going to prison as he did.

These interviews sometimes took some time from the initial request and agreement to the actual meeting and recording. Getting participants to confirm was not always straightforward. A number of the interviews took place a week or so after the initial conversation about the research, but one took place almost an entire year after it was first

agreed upon. There were three other people that had agreed to take part, but then either later declined or just never returned my communications. One of the men who did provide an interview was quite sure that another mutual contact would also be happy to be involved, but later told me he was surprised, but this man had wanted nothing to do with it, and was apparently insulted by the suggestion that he would. One other man who I personally know had informally offered information about his schooling when I had told him about my research very early on the research process, long before the data collection had begun. He later could not be persuaded to be interviewed however. He cited a number of concerns, mainly surrounding the shared networks we have and how he would not want to talk about his childhood experiences that would inevitably be uncomplimentary about some of his family, given that I know them. This was very disappointing because some of the information he had given me over a number of informal conversations had helped to inform the research questions and I had looked forward to sitting down to do a full interview. However, as discussed earlier in **3.5**, this was always a potential disadvantage to using personal networks to locate participants.

Data Analysis

As planned, each of the interviews was fully transcribed. As the transcriptions were completed, contact was re-established with the interviewee and they were provided with a copy and asked again to provide their consent to use its contents. A form of initial analysis of the life story narratives spontaneously occurred during the transcription process. Through the listening and re-listening, a number of themes began to emerge from the collected data as several of the men were recalling similar experiences. These themes were noted,

discussed with colleagues and presented in conferences. Following this preliminary 'feel' for the data, a more rigorous process of examination of the data took place through a process of coding.

The semi-structured interview schedule yielded data in two clear separate sections, firstly reflections on their schooling and then on certain aspects of their time in prison. After the process of coding each interview it became clear that most of the significant themes appearing across all of the interviews were evident in *both* the schooling and the prison narratives. These codes were: Family; Violence; Labelling/Othering; Educational Exclusion; Masculinities and Physical Isolation. One other code was identified that was predominantly confined to the prison narratives: Communities of Practice. Each interview was coded by highlighting pieces of the narrative texts that clearly represented one of the above themes. This left sections of each of the interviews uncoded as their stories also included information on crimes that had been committed and other miscellaneous information that was not the subject of this particular research.

This process of coding produced copious data relevant to each of the identified themes across the interviews. The quantity and quality of the narrative data in each theme resulted in a need to strongly edit the sheer amount and choose carefully those pieces of the narratives that best represented the particular themes as they appeared across the entire group for presentation in the thesis. That presentation has been divided into the following two chapters; the first presents the themes interpreted from the men's school narratives and the second the men's prison stories.

3.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter has traced the research process from inception through design to data collection. It has revealed the challenges inherent when seeking to conduct research in prisons. It highlighted the difficulties, false starts and concerns that arose throughout the process. Whilst these issues caused the research to take *considerably* longer than the original prison proposal, the data collected is incredibly rich and the process of interviewing both significant others and loosely connected contacts proved to be an incredibly rewarding undertaking that brought all of those interviewed into the centre of the research. Many of the men thanked me for allowing them to talk about their experiences of school. For most of them their school years had been a difficult and challenging time of their lives, a period when they often felt unable to control or influence their circumstances. The process of putting their side of this story was clearly cathartic for some and thought-provoking for others. They gained the chance to reflect and consider how far they had progressed since that time.

Even though I had some expectation that I might hear stories of various exclusions, I was surprised by many of the narratives. Some of the men went to the same primary school that I attended and it was incredible to think about this separate and distinctive type of schooling experience happening at the same time as my relatively privileged experience. As already mentioned above, the interviews produced a vast amount of data providing evidence of this distinctly different experience of school. This data will now be analysed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

SCHOOLING: DISTURBING THEMES FROM THE DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines, in detail, the school experiences of the eleven men interviewed. It lays out the key and recurring themes that were established through analysis of the interview data: Exclusion from School, Family Influences, Physical Punishments and other Violence, The Effects of Labelling, Masculinities, Educational Exclusion and Physical Exclusion. The significance of these themes will be discussed with reference to the literature highlighted in Chapter Two and the research questions.

The chapter opens with a reiteration of the background information gained through the induction interviews undertaken during professional practice as a prison teacher. It then moves on to the themes that emerged from the in-depth interview data. These sections contain direct quotes from the transcripts. I have sought to retain the expletives and/or other powerful terminology used by the men – the aim is that the tone and energy of the stories is reflected in the text.

4.2 THE PRISON INDUCTION INTERVIEWS

As described in Chapters One and Three, during professional practice as a prison teacher, prisoners provided information that suggested there might be a common schooling

experience among prison inmates in the main population. Whilst this information was not collected in a formal research capacity, it was central to informing the direction of the research and the research questions. Reading of the literature indicated prisoners tend to obtain poor educational standards and have a high incidence of exclusion from school (see Murray, 2012). The information gleaned whilst working in prison confirmed this, but placed an emphasis on the schooling experience rather than the educational outcome.

The information was gathered during induction interviews completed with prisoners coming into the Education Department as new students. At that time new students came onto Education at HMP [redacted] at a rate of approximately eight per week and I completed all of the inductions over an eight month period. The induction process included a five to ten minute one to one interview which covered the inductees' education to date, their aims whilst in the department and any educational aspirations for their release. During the eight month period I therefore estimate well over two hundred induction interviews were completed. Although there existed a great number of demographic differences among the prisoners interviewed in terms of age, race, ethnicity, geographic location on the outside, religion and personality type, the same themes arose repeatedly from these interviews.

I found the prisoners had experienced disjointed schooling, moving between schools usually as a result of permanent exclusions. They reported official school exclusions that began in their primary schools. Many of them reported leaving school before the statutory school leaving age, usually due to permanent indefinite exclusions. This occurs when a pupil is refused re-entry to their usual school following exclusion, and no place in an alternative

mainstream school can be found. Of these, many reported being sent to alternative educational settings that were frequently referred to by the prisoners as 'doss-houses': these settings were described by the prisoners as more like holding pens for delinquents than places of learning.

The majority of prisoners reported a schooling that had little or no educational value; comments such as: 'I didn't learn nothing at school' and 'school never taught me nothing' were extremely common. Significantly, a large majority described their prior education without reference to their qualifications (or lack thereof), or their personal views on school. Instead the descriptions took the form of a chronology of their trajectories through schooling, signposted by the various significant exclusions they experienced. When directly asked about their qualifications the interviewees tended to express apathy regardless of the level of their achievements – those who had taken exams and achieved GCSEs (or equivalent) on the whole appeared unimpressed by that achievement and those who did not complete school and left without any qualifications appeared unperturbed. On a number of occasions prisoners reported not knowing if they had passed exams, or what grade they received as they had failed to collect their results, and again, this appeared to not concern them. Many of the prisoners began by describing these trajectories through schools and alternative educational settings and concluded their accounts with comments such as 'and then I went to Young Offenders'; 'and then I ended up in prison'.

These induction interview accounts inspired the research interest, the research questions and the research method. Eleven former inmates were subsequently interviewed at length

and in depth in order to uncover the possible importance of these seeming shared experiences of schooling, and why the prisoners' experiences of school appeared to be more significant to them than the formal outcomes. Before detailing the themes that emerged from these in-depth interviews, I provide a brief summary of the men's biographies.

4.3 SCHOOL BIOGRAPHIES

At the time of interview, the men ranged in age from 29 to 61 years resulting in a number of different educational eras being discussed. Four of the men were in long term employment when interviewed, four were successfully self-employed and three were not in full time or permanent employment. Four of the men are White British, six are Black Caribbean and one is mixed White British/Black Caribbean. Despite this demographic range, every one of the group had experienced trouble of sorts at some point in their schooling. With the exception of Shortie, everyone had faced punishments or disciplinary action for behaviour transgressions in primary as well as secondary schooling. Shortie was disciplined only in secondary school.

Although there was much biographical similarity across the group, three of the men's school narratives had some unique aspects that are worthy of note.

Bob's educational story was somewhat unusual as he determined to obtain educational success once he had left school. He experienced relentless disciplinary practices and educational exclusion in both his primary and secondary schooling and left school with poor

qualifications, but went onto a Further Education college to “start again” on a different trajectory to educational success. He was incredibly successful in this goal, ultimately obtaining a degree and a Post Graduate Certificate in Education.

Shortie differed from the rest of the group as he was adamant that his school experience had no bearing on his one prison sentence, and his interview data certainly appears to confirm this. Even though he was suspended once, and admits he did not do his best at school, he describes a schooling experience without significant exclusions and being drawn to “the wrong company” for a brief period *after* leaving school. The relevance of Shortie’s exception will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

The final life story that stands aside from the others to some degree is Buster’s – although he experienced a great deal of disciplinary action in school, like Shortie, Buster expressed the position that schooling had a minor impact on his future life course. Instead his narrative was full of references to his family’s criminality and how that influenced him. The data emanating from his interview suggests that both his schooling experiences and family influences impacted on Buster’s childhood, but that his family background normalised trouble to such an extent that he frequently refers to experiences the rest of the group problematized (in and out of school) as “just part of growing up.”

In the next section the themes that were synthesised from the data on their schooling are presented.

4.4 THEME ONE: EXCLUSION FROM SCHOOL

As already highlighted above in the biographical section, each of the men was subject to disciplinary action during their schooling. This took various forms:

Extreme Discipline

John, Brian and Benji experienced by far the most disciplinary action. They were suspended and expelled from primary and secondary schools and removed at different ages and via a range of different official processes (depending on the era) to Key Centres, boarding schools, and children's homes. Their removal from school took them away from their families for varying periods of time. Jason similarly experienced a great deal of disciplinary action, being suspended and expelled multiple times. He was home tutored for a short period following his indefinite exclusion from secondary school and attended a Key Centre, but was never removed from his family and placed in a residential setting. Although John, Benji and Jason were sent to alternative educational settings after being excluded from mainstream schools, none of them continued in these settings until the usual school leaving age, either due to further indefinite exclusions or because they were incarcerated in a Young Offenders Institution before the statutory school leaving age. Despite attending several different schools in both Ireland (where he was sent by his father to stay with relatives) and Birmingham, and the fact that he was living in a large children's home at the time, Brian completed his secondary schooling.

Incomplete Schooling

Neither David nor Buster completed their statutory secondary schooling. David was excluded from two secondary schools, but he was not sent to any alternative settings. The number of official exclusions experienced by Buster was difficult to determine from the interview data, but he reported being sent to a children's home at some point and was serving his first prison sentence in a Young Offenders Institution when he was fifteen.

Permanent Exclusions Avoided

Brady faced a permanent exclusion towards the end of his secondary schooling, but after his family argued the case against this, was instead permitted to attend school part time for the four GCSE subjects he was working towards. Along with Brady; Bob, Anthony and Andy were not permanently excluded from school and so completed their schooling. They did however report a large amount of within school punishments, segregation and educational exclusion as referred to in Chapter Two.

Shortie completed his schooling and did not describe any educational exclusion. He did mention occasions of being disciplined for his behaviour in secondary school (which included being suspended at least once), but made it clear that he felt this did not impact on his education or his identity.

4.5 THEME TWO: FAMILY INFLUENCES

As highlighted in Chapter One and discussed in Chapter Two, the mainstream view found in policy and media representations is that the family background of children who fail educationally is the most significant factor influencing or causing their so-called challenging behaviour in schools (Audit Commission, 1996; Gillies, 2007). A prevailing assumption is that parents from "problem families" do not support the school's approach to discipline or behaviour standards, possibly even encouraging their children to be unruly (BBC, 2002b). The interview data strongly contradicted this assumption. It was found that parents were disappointed in their children's problems with behaviour in school and fully in support of the sanctions placed by the schools. There was evidence that parents took a very firm line with their sons and reinforced the discipline meted out by the schools.

Jason (38 years old) spoke of his father on numerous occasions, often describing the various ways he disciplined him and attempted to encourage him to do better in school:

> I was grounded every day. They would phone my Dad up every day; tell him how I've been, so I was stuck in my bedroom. They didn't just do the bad thing at school – it used to go back home to my house then; you know what I mean; I used to get told off by the old man then. I was always in my bedroom then. So that's why I used to climb out the windows when he used to go to bed.
>
> (…) in the end my Dad taught me. And I had to go to my secondary school, get my school work from them and he'd make me do it. But if I didn't get a hundred questions out of a hundred questions I was grounded again.
>
> (Jason)

Jason's father not only supports the school's disciplinary treatment; but he mirrors their practices at home by grounding him. He does this both as reinforcement of the punishment Jason had experienced at school for behavioural problems *and* as punishment for mistakes made in schoolwork at home. Several other examples of disciplinary parenting in response to reports from school are provided across the interviews.

> Well… I got them 'old-school' parents ennit? So it's kind of whatever the school phone and say, that's what's happened. You know regardless of whatever; that's what happened. So, I always used to be… it was my Mom *and* the school against me. So, you know, I was always dealt with accordingly.
>
> (Brady)

Referring to the fact that he had been beaten at school by teachers, Bob (36 years old) says:

> You couldn't tell my parents that 'cos you'd get beaten on top of it – do you know what I mean?
>
> (Bob)

Anthony (49 years old) explains why he and his friends were only minimally disruptive at school:

> But in school, we knew how far we could go, as long as we keep it at a certain level – we can dodge here, dodge there and we know that there wouldn't be too much of a problem – they wouldn't give us no letters to send home, and that was the main thing. Don't make nothing reach home, 'cos if it reaches home, that's a beating off Daddy we'd get and you don't want that (*laughs*).
>
> (Anthony)

As highlighted in the biographies section earlier in this chapter (**4.3**), Buster (45 years old) gave an account of his childhood that focussed far more on the influence of his family than the influence of school. When talking about his younger days, the criminal activity of his father and two older brothers is referred to several times. He speaks of armed fights between his family and people in his neighbourhood; details several acts of theft (as a child) and describes his contact with police and prison as something that was "just part of growing up". Buster was raised in a family that would most certainly be labelled a problem within the current discursive definitions; he gives accounts of a significant amount of anti- social and criminal behaviour:

> But them things to me that was just the normal growing up. Was just the norm. When we was twelve/fourteen we just had the police; armed police taking the door off *every* month (…) every month; guaranteed the door coming off; armed police flying through. That was when I was about twelve. My little brother John he was like ten – that left an impression on us. (…) My Dad was locked up; they'd got him but they were still taking the door off every month; armed police, guns to your 'ead. I had a gun to my head at twelve years old telling me to get out of bed. Come downstairs and the door's off; gone and they were doing it regular; that went on for a while that did. And then it eased off for about a year and then it all started all again 'cos my older brothers started robbing banks. And it all started all again.
>
> (Buster)

Similarly, he states "school is just part of growing up, that's all it is." His only real detailed narratives about school being about two separate incidents on school trips (one when he and friends went shoplifting in the gift shop and another when he and a friend got drunk at a sports event) and a time when his Mom told him to "refuse the cane":

> Oh I used to get caned regular I did. All the while I did. In fact, the one time, my Mom got that pissed off she goes 'refuse the cane' – this is a funny story this is as it goes – 'refuse the cane'. I was getting caned all the while; it didn't bother me; it didn't bother me in the slightest. 'Yeah go on then no problem'. She said 'I'm sick of this; refuse it'. So the next time I've come to get the cane I've refused it 'Nah; I'm not 'aving it; I'm not 'aving it!' 'We'll phone your house' 'Phone my house then; I ain't bothered!' And it was the only time *ever* that my Mom was out and my Dad was in. My Dad worked; he grafted, he was never in in the day; and for him to be at home during the day was unheard of. Bloody 'ell, the only time they phone up – he's in! He's like that: 'You what? What?!' He's come round (to the school) he's beat me up in the head master's office. And only for the fact that if you get caught you take your punishment.
>
> (Buster)

Buster's was the only story to contain blatant criminality within his immediate family. Even so, Buster's father insisted on his son's compliance with the discipline of school. When he was informed that Buster had audaciously refused to be caned by the head teacher, he immediately went to the school and physically reprimanded him himself.

Rather than coming from family homes that lacked discipline, many of the interviewees revealed an upbringing that was very strictly disciplined. This concurs with the findings of Howell and McBroom (1982) that children who experience punitive parenting tend to also experience punitive schooling. This also challenges the notion that parents of children labelled disruptive do not respect school rules or disciplinary responses and encourage their children to be similarly disrespectful.

It is clear in *all* of the narratives, that parents did not condone any of their children's behaviour or make light of it. Rather, the evidence indicated that parents were concerned, frustrated, exasperated and even distressed by the negative relationships their children were having with the school. Many of the parents took a very stern view of the problems, adding to the children's punishments with their own reprimands. These included "beatings" that were in line with the corporal punishments that were the legitimised practices in school at the time for the majority of the older cohort that were interviewed. As per the incident described by Buster above, Andy (44 years old) also describes being beaten by his Mom in front of a teacher. Whilst Buster makes light of this (as he does most of his experiences), Andy is not similarly jovial. In many ways similar to Buster, his life story traces a history of violence, much of which is experienced in school. He is not alone.

4.6 THEME THREE: PHYSICAL PUNISHMENTS AND OTHER VIOLENCE

Violence in a number of forms was a feature of every interview. There was evidence of routine corporal punishments by teachers and parents, incidents of bullying and fighting amongst school peers and even some reports of fights with teachers. For the majority these various forms of regular violence were unwelcome and problematic, but the men positioned themselves as either unable or unprepared to break the cycle of violence they appeared trapped in.

A number of studies argue that harsh disciplinary practices serve to produce, rather than reduce violence and Bourdieu's concepts of *symbolic violence* and the *conservation of*

violence (Bourdieu, 1991) would suggest that children who are repeatedly punished and marginalised (whether actual physical violence is used or not) will themselves inevitably become perpetrators of violence. This is certainly borne out in the data: the men reported being both victims and perpetrators of violence as children. There were implicit and explicit references for the need to use violence as self-defence and self-preservation. This aspect of the narratives revealed the level of threat to body or self-esteem/identity that was frequently present in their schooling; a threat that literally resulted in fighting for survival. Following on from the accounts of corporal punishment at home from the previous section (**4.5 Family Influences**); this section provides some examples of the violence experienced in school. It also highlights the different ways in which the men were positioned in relation to the various manifestations of violence they encountered.

Corporal Punishment

For the older men in the interview group, physical violence administered by teaching staff in the form of corporal punishment was a persistent feature of their schooling. Corporal punishment was abolished in state schools in England in the 1980s but there have been calls for it to be reinstated due to popular concern for the apparent lack of order in schools since such punishments were outlawed (Stewart, 2011). There are multiple references within the interviews relating to official physical punishments received as pupils: eight of the men specifically detail being routinely hit by staff with a cane; a ruler; a slipper or a pump.

> You go school in the seventies/early eighties – I was caned; I was given the pump I would say I was even beaten at school by the headmaster.
>
> (Bob)

> Oh, and the cane! Oh God. I was in that office when I first went to Secondary School; I was in that office at least twice a week getting Mr... Mr M, he used to run and jump through the air; bamboo stick across my arse and I used to have tramlines all across my arse. Yeah, I used to have that twice a week; sometimes three times a week, depending how he felt about me that week; yeah.
>
> (Jason)

In the era of these official corporal punishments, there was also evidence of teachers using violence against pupils in less controlled and more extreme ways. Andy (44 years old) recalls the school turning a blind eye to the heavy handed treatment of some pupils by a number of teachers:

> (…) he was like old fashioned, one teacher he was nasty; a history teacher, hit you in the head with a book! He was old school, hit you in the head! And you couldn't say nothing 'cos his teaching was, basically, his teaching was very good, if you was in his class – you done well. So basically the top head master wasn't gonna question what he done to kids, because he was getting results regardless of what he was doing. You know what I mean? Taking the piss!
>
> (…) their way of learning is like back in the fifties and sixties and get the boy and beat him; it's that kind of mentality where… it was done to me, and it was done to the other kids; the bad kids.
>
> (Andy)

Jason (38 years old) told a number of graphic stories of violence he experienced in a mainstream secondary school and a Key Centre he was sent to after being permanently excluded from school:

> Playing rugby with the gym teacher, the ground was hard and I tackled him and he's proper come off the ball; smashed his nose off the floor and bust his nose. We were playing rugby, rugby is a tough game. That man kicked me from pillar to post! I went home my face was out there; broken nose; broken lip everything. Where I'd bust his nose he's gotta fucking bust my nose! I had blood all over the place – my lip was out here; my eye was out here. He beat me up like he was beating a grown man up. Yeah and nothing happened to him; nothing at all happened to him. They all shut up shop at the school. They even said that the kids at school on the rugby pitch – that's how it happened.
>
> (Jason)

Bullying

Fighting generally and fighting in response to bullying were very common features in the men's schooling narratives. Every narrative included at least one mention of being involved in fights during their school years, with five of the men providing detailed descriptions of particular incidents when another child or children attempted to bully them; or they witnessed other children being bullied, and they took matters in to their own hands by fighting the bullies:

> See this is the thing about my Secondary School – I had lots of fights yeah, but the fights that I had were always somebody else causing the trouble; and always a bully. There was one kid in the year above me – he was a *right* bully, and I mean he used to bully *every*body. And I used to say to my mates if he comes to me I'm gonna hit him as hard as I can. And the one day it happened and he came to me… and I just did, I just *whacked* him as hard as I could, and, again, it worked, he's gone down and I've just walked off. And I've thought – 'sound'. *But he went to the Headmasters office!!* And like grassed on me, can you catch your breath? So anyway I went to the Headmasters office, I beg your pardon it wasn't the Headmaster it was the Deputy

> Head, and I went 'Look – *he* bullies everybody, and he was obviously aware of this, he bullies all the kids and today it was my turn and I weren't having it, so I hit him as hard as I could'. And he went 'OK, no problem, go back to your lesson'. And then this kid he got into trouble. And even though he had a big fat black eye, he had to sit outside the Deputy Head's office. But as I say, even though I did get into scrapes like that I can't remember any fights that I had that I'd gone and caused, where I'd been causing trouble, it's all against bullies just giving it the big 'un and basically taking advantage of you.
>
> (David)

Bob (61 years old) describes his first days in an approved school:

> I think within the first couple of days erm we'd run a cross country (…) and I won it. And I remember the next day or the next week going out again and two of the guys that were always winning it sort of come up to me and said 'if you win again we'll get you' and I said 'well you'll have to be a bit quicker than you were yesterday!' (…) Well it just never bothered me. 'Cos I've always found that a guy who comes to threaten you if you hit him, he tends not to threaten you the next time; even if he hits you back and does you damage, he just can't be bothered with the hassle of somebody hitting him back. So I've always worked on that premise – that, make sure you hit 'em first and hit 'em hard enough perhaps they won't come back. I've always, as I say, I've always had to look after myself.
>
> (Brian)

The majority of the men told stories about bullying, fighting and other forms of violence in ways that placed this aspect of schooling as a problem but one which was just what happened to, and amongst, a minority of the school population. Two men went further to explore the reasons why they in particular were subject to the attempted bullying and how that shaped their attitudes to school and authority. Bob (36 years old, Black Caribbean) talks

of the racism he encountered when his family moved from a culturally and racially diverse area of Birmingham to a predominantly white area.

> I was first year senior. I think I started school the Monday; on Thursday I'm being bullied on the way home by a year 11, or a fifth year. So again I have to start fighting. Because he's throwing me into this bush; that bush; this garden; that garden; I'm being kicked, punched – he threw me into one garden and there was a stick holding up whoever's tree it was – so I've had to pull the stick out of the ground and bash him with it. So that's my first week of senior school; so then it just carries on. And again you're a minority so you get a reputation for fighting. Again, not that I wanted to – most of the fights I had was down to racist bullying; but you get a reputation and the teachers are like 'well you know that's all he seems to do; he's always in trouble for' – they're not getting down to the nuts and crust. You're trying to tell a European 'look it's because of racism' and they're saying just ignore it. How do you ignore that *every single day*? (*Laughs*) I'm like OK, yeah right.
>
> (Bob)

Andy (44 years old, Black Caribbean) describes in several places that he felt he was singled out by the teaching staff due to 'problems' (both learning difficulties and what he thinks they saw as emotional disturbances derived from his home life), and by his peers due to his poverty, race and being a member of the 'subnormal' Special Unit - all of which combined to place him in a vulnerable position. He often deploys the voice of others in his narrative using the label 'Special Unit' to derogatorily describe himself. The passive use of this label coincides with the tone of his accounts of violence and threats against him, reflecting the powerlessness he felt as a child (Horsdal, 2012). By contrast, when he was narrating his acts of violence against others he positioned himself as a more active protagonist, often justifying his act as an inevitable response to a relentless campaign of violence against him or

someone close to him. This suggests that in these acts of aggression he gained a sense of power and self-agency that he was more often stripped of.

Acts against Teachers

A chronology of violence could generally be traced from corporal punishment by adults, to bullying and fighting amongst children to some acts of aggression or violence against teachers. Exclusions from school in England and Wales are least likely to be as a result of a child physically attacking a teacher (DfE, 2012b) and, similarly, in line with this number, only a minority of the interviewees reported violent acts against teachers. For those that did, the acts came late in their school careers and inevitably led to expulsion or exclusion from school. Interestingly, these few acts against teachers were positioned as both fights and *assault*. The term assault was not used once by any of the men to describe any violence between children. The power of the school and the law to position corporal punishment as necessary, but the violent response of children towards adult teachers as *assault* is an incredible contradiction. This contradiction spelled out clearly to the boys whose version of events is legitimate and this legitimacy is internalised by some of the men who repeat the definition of assault through their own version of events.

These few acts of aggression or violence against teachers were described as occurring within an immediate context of acts of aggression or violence by teachers themselves, incidents which took place within the general and sustained climate of violence (actual and symbolic) experienced by the men in school:

> I had a fight with the teacher; teacher dragged me outside the class and slammed my head up against the wall so I picked the chair up... he threw a... what's his name now? Mr P; I was talking in class and he threw a ball at me; it hit me at the side of my head; cut my head open and I started crying. He said you're not so hard now are you? So I picked the chair up and threw the chair at him. So I was expelled then. So then they sent me to a place called Key Centre – Cor what a hole that was! Mr B and Mr M; yeah, I didn't last there long either. (…) Same kind of thing; yeah but they beat you up in that school. They really did. I left there when I was fourteen and they couldn't put me back into another school.
>
> (Jason)

> We had an assembly (…) and there was this naughty kid kicking off and I met him in life; I met him in prison. And he was really, really small and this really tall teacher was dragging him out because he was being naughty; and he's dragged him passed me. And it's nothing to do with me; he was dragging him from the other side of the room and I just got involved and ended up hitting the teacher and getting expelled for it. But, I wonder why I done it, because I'm not like... if I see trouble now, I kind of stay away; keep my distance like. I don't know why I got involved; it got me kicked out of school, I don't know why I done it. It was just like big versus little that's what made me do it – I seen him dragging him round; *dragging* him as well.
>
> (John)

The labelling of the children's behaviour as assault coincides with the designation of much of their behaviour, and even their characters as *trouble*. Many of the men recalled being specifically labelled or recognised to be a particular type of pupil, both by staff and other pupils. This had negative and long lasting impacts on their school careers, in some cases, self-worth and future aspirations.

4.7 THEME FOUR: LABELLED A TROUBLEMAKER

Common to all of the narratives (bar Shortie) is that the men were all identified as *naughty kids*, *bad kids*, *children with behavioural problems* and *children with challenging behaviour* at an early age. These labels seemed to be widely accepted by the majority of teaching staff, peers and the men themselves. These definitions or labels continued on from primary to secondary school, securing them reputations of *tough kids* or *problem pupils*. David, Bob, John, Jason, Andy, and Brady all specifically describe being misunderstood, having gained a reputation that had been somewhat forced upon them by circumstance, that they wished they could have shaken off, that they perceived had direct consequences on their school experiences and educational outcomes. They were *branded*:

KG Did it change at all when you went up to seniors?

J They branded me at (my secondary school); before I even got (there) they already knew what I was like.

KG So how did that go then? Can you remember your first day there – at (your secondary school)?

J First day yeah; Mr G; his name was... He said 'I've heard about you before you've even come here; if you think you're gonna give me any... I'll give you a smack' and I back chatted him and I swear to God he gave me a smack.

KG Straight away?

J Straight away; I was branded straight away.

(Jason)

Brady (29 years old) similarly recalls being immediately labelled on entering his secondary school, but in this case it was predominantly due to the reputation of his family who had come before him:

B Oh, Secondary School was… that was… the first day I got into school… the first teacher I seen was Mr D, and the very first… the first conversation we had was 'You're Darren's little cousin aren't ya? Oh yeah, and you're Lincoln's little brother; I can see we're going to have problems with you.' That was the… this was like on your very first day *ever* I went to school in my school tie and everything and…

KG Starting afresh?

B Yeah!

(Brady)

And David talks of a labelling that also occurred as a result of his prior reputation from primary school, but that his 'first day problems' began not with teachers:

D I promised my Mom, I said to my Mom 'I promise that I'm gonna do good at this school. And I'm not gonna be naughty. I'm not gonna mess around and I'm gonna do my work.' And on the *first* day, not even the first lesson, the first form class. This bloody kid (…) starts pushing me, saying 'oh you're David Dewey[4], the bad boy from Bartley Green bla-di-bla'. So I said 'look – I don't wanna know. No I'm not. Just leave me alone.' But he wouldn't stop, just kept going on and on, so in the end I just punched him as hard as I could. And it hurt him, and he went crying into the room, and I thought 'Oh my GOD! I Promised My Mom! It Wasn't My Fault!' But he never grassed on me! I was shitting myself outside the class, just thinking 'Oh My God.' But he never grassed. I was out there shaking waiting for the teacher to come and get me

[4] David Dewey is a pseudonym, not the interviewee's real name.

but he never said anything. *But*, on the flipside of that, because I punched (him) that was it – I was labelled in the school.

KG By the kids presumably, 'cos the teachers hadn't got involved.

D Yeah, by the kids.

KG What effect did that have then?

D (…) I was labelled this hard kid (...) So even if… well, we don't know, I'll never know *whether* I would've been good at the school and just been anonymous and nobody know me and just got on with my work. I'll never know that now. (…) Different kids wanna hang round with you. All the good kids obviously think, ooh, keep away from him; he's a bit of a thug. But all the bad kids think 'David Dewey, he's alright ain't he, he's just bashed Rahim'.

KG So how does that affect things in the classroom, in terms of doing your work?

D 'Cos you're hanging round with all the wrong people now.

KG So you're not involved with getting an education then necessarily? Do your priorities change?

D Kind of. I obviously still wanted to be good. But now because I've got a different circle of friends than what I would have had – I mean I don't know this – this is hypothetical; but now I'm leaning more towards messing around than getting on with my work.

(David)

After being expelled from this school aged about fourteen, David was placed at another local secondary school as part of a deal in which troublesome pupils would be exchanged to the potentially mutual benefit of both schools. He describes the attitudes of the teachers to him at this new school:

KG So you've already described the incident that got you excluded, and then you went to the other school on the deal; do you remember much about the other school?

D I do actually yeah. It was just a complete load of bollocks, to be quite honest with you. I was *definitely* labelled at that school. Most of the teachers just straight away didn't want to know you.

(David)

In describing the wider effects of the labelling in his first secondary school, David made reference to an incident when a move to a lower ability stream was facilitated purely due to a poor relationship with his teacher in the top set. This disregard for his educational ability or achievement in preference to a strong emphasis on what was seen by the school as his challenging behaviour, appears as a trend across many of the interviews. It is explained by the men in terms of the negative relationships they had with the teaching staff and the staff's perceptions of them as too much trouble to be bothered with. Indeed as the next section reveals, there were several ways in which the men, as pupils, were informally excluded from receiving official teaching within their schools.

4.8 THEME FIVE: TOO MUCH TROUBLE TO TEACH

David, Anthony, Bob, Jason, Benji, Andy and Brady all gave details about the ways in which they were excluded from meaningful educational activity. They were disruptive in class, or had a reputation for fighting, so the school could then legitimately put them in spaces outside of the classroom where no learning was taking place, neglect their educational needs within class or place them in lower ability classes where academic achievement is not a priority. They were not perceived as legitimate learners by the school (see Rollock, 2007), so were relegated to spaces where educational achievement was not expected.

B … I feel my education suffered; 'cos I've never considered myself a silly person; but to be dropped the sets I was had a massive, massive effect on my education and on my Maths and English – I still struggle with Maths and English now.

KG That was basically due to your *behaviour* then?

B Yeah. That was what I was told. You don't drop someone from two all the way to six…

KG What… they actually *told* you that?

B Yeah, because of your behaviour you're gonna be in with them.

(Bob)

(…) they'd probably put you in a remedial class because they didn't have no time for ya. But at the time we didn't even realise the difference at the time. It's not until when we came to about eleven and that and they're talking about exams and you can just about read (*laughs*) and just about write.

(Anthony)

John spent much of his schooling from a very young age being sent to alternative educational sites, all of which were designated as special provision for children identified as having challenging behaviour. He describes himself as clever and being bored by the curriculum in mainstream schooling and even more so in the alternative settings where they kept repeating the same things over and over, curriculum elements that failed to stretch him and that he had already completed many time before.

J 'Cos throughout school, even in Infants and Juniors I was told I was clever – and I knew. I can remember things now from school… I learned everything before everyone else at school and then I think that's what kind of like – I got a bit bored.

KG This was at Primary school?

J Throughout school; every school I went to – I already knew what I was doing and that's when I got bored because I knew; I could see the teacher teaching the kids stuff that's common sense like.

(John)

All of the men who recalled these various forms of educational exclusion expressed dissatisfaction with the situation ranging from a mild grumble to raging anger:

KG So, in the classroom, what was your relationship like with the teacher, in the classroom?

B I didn't have one. There used to just be me and a girl named Lorraine and we were just in the corner doing our own thing.

KG You were sent to the corner or had you decided to be in the corner?

B That was just our seat.

KG OK, can you remember how that came about… was it very distinctly different from where everybody else was sitting, or was it that you just happened to sit in a…

B Nah, it was *away* from the class, but we chose to sit there, it wasn't we were put there, we just sat there. And once we had gotten ourselves into those seats, the teacher very rarely bothered with us as long as we wasn't being disruptive.

KG So you felt that at the time, or is that looking back on it?

B Nah, at the time it was alright because I wasn't getting bothered to do any work, I wasn't… you know, I didn't have teacher looking over my shoulder every five minutes. But looking at it now, it was almost like neglect.

(Brady)

Some of the men described the way in which they mitigated their low educational status within the school by concentrating more on demonstrating their physical attributes through overt masculinities.

4.9 THEME SIX: AT LEAST WE WERE TOUGH

As already seen in **Theme Three** above, fighting was a feature of all of the men's schooling and there was a tendency in the stories for most of the men (David, Bob, John, Brian, Andy and Brady) to narrate that they not only could look after themselves in a physical fight, but that they could and did fight on behalf of others also. There is an implication that each of these men was one of the 'top boys' in their school when it came to physical combat. This was described mostly as a survival tactic but also as a way of achieving the respect lacking due to their otherwise lowly positions in the school hierarchy:

KG So what advantage to you was there to being a bad boy then?

B I could always get what I wanted. It was almost like a sense of power and respect. So if you didn't respect me I'd beat you up ennit?

(Brady)

KG So at that stage you're talking about when you got to eleven and you started to notice that perhaps you were in a different class to the others, did it bother you at all?

A No, because, most of my friends were there, and we wasn't the weak ones (*laughs*).

KG By that you mean?

A We were bigger and stronger than everyone else...

KG *Physically*?

A Physically. I'm not saying we were bullies, but, you know what I mean, those who (were doing well in school), it wouldn't matter to us – cos they wouldn't be showing off or anything like that. That was our thing.

KG So they couldn't have one over you guys, because you were strong?

A Yeah

KG It sounds as if you're saying – correct me if I'm wrong – that you're self-esteem wasn't affected by it, 'cos your self-esteem was more about the fact that you could hold your own?

A Yeah, yeah.

(Anthony)

As discussed above in **Theme Five**, through a process of segregation and separation the men were moved into spaces were learning was restricted. Further to this educational exclusion was the dominant theme of the school narratives: the **physical** exclusions that separated the men from the rest of the pupils in their schools. These physical exclusions were set aside exclusively for them (as opposed to any of the other children who may find themselves in low ability classes for reasons other than their behaviour). The following section deals with this theme, one that perfectly illustrates the lived nature of an 'exclusioned' schooling.

4.10 THEME SEVEN: PUSHED TO THE WALL

This theme relates to the physical isolation that was a persistent feature of the men's schooling. Given the research questions, this theme is the most significant to emerge from the data. What is described in detail by some, and hinted at or alluded to by others, is a very specifically different schooling experience for these boys. Through their narratives we see a dark, isolated side of schooling. We see what it is to be told to go and sit away from the rest of your classmates, or stand outside the headmaster's office, or to be sent to another school, or to be ultimately told not to ever come back to school again.

Bob talks about his very early primary schooling, referring to himself and a couple of his friends who were similarly placed as boys who were always in trouble:

> We were constantly standing up the wall. You know you stand with your face to the wall outside the headmaster's office, that was just fond memories of crap like that and my friend's peeing and standing in their own pee because we weren't allowed to go to the toilet. Or we'd get battered in front of the whole class. And these weren't smacks – you know, he'd come in with the pump and he'd just beat us. You couldn't tell my parents that 'cos you'd get beaten on top of it – do you know what I mean? I call school the war years – that's what I've always called it 'cos it was a struggle.
>
> (Bob)

Andy (44 years old) refers to both his primary and secondary school and the numbers of different ways he (and children like him) were separated from the other kids 'who so-called wanted to learn':

KG So what was the Special Unit?

A As in like, err, you're in a class with bad kids, you go to a section of the school where you are way from the so-called normal kids. You're *there* on report; you have your dinner in a certain space, so basically… when you think about it was really bad then! You'll have your dinner *over there* with the special kids, all these naughty kids and the good kids were over here. So it's like they're there and you're there, you get treated different.

(….)

KG (…) when you were talking about your primary school (…) you were in the Special Unit at primary school… but then when you went up to the secondary school, you got that *again* but on a different level; tell me a bit about that.

A Well it was upstairs, top room where it was hot and we were put into a room where it just had a small window, to learn, and that was it…

KG It just had a small window?!

A Yeah, it was a small window (…) the top room was boiling and (…) you had a small window open and nothing around, and a door (…)

KG (…) the rest of your classrooms weren't anything like this…?

A You're joking, nah! (…) In the other rooms you had pictures and everything up; this was like being in prison!

Brady (29 years old) also tells of isolations in his primary school:

B (I had) play time detentions (…) in year 5 (…) for my last term, up until I think it was three days before the holiday, the six weeks holiday, I barely had a break (…)

KG (…) You wouldn't be allowed out lunch break either?

B Yeah, not at all.

KG What about going to dinner, would you be escorted or…?

B My dinners were all brought to me.

Benji recalls being sent to stand outside the head teacher's office in his mainstream primary school as though it were a regular occurrence, but goes on to describe the form of equivalent punishment at the Special School he was sent to in his primary years, a school specifically for children with behavioural difficulties:

B Alright, (the Special School) they had a time out room ennit? It's like a cell; a police station cell yeah – where you get locked in there, and you've got one wooden table and a chair and you have to write loads of lines. They would give you a sentence on the top and then they'd say you have to do a thousand lines of these. And you have to write the paper back to front and you're just locked in that room. (…) For the

whole day. You'll get your little exer… your little play time or whatever; to go outside, but you would get that by yourself…

KG You nearly said exercise then ennit? Because the parallels with prison…

B Yeah, the parallels… it's just like the same, 'cos it's just like the same – you're locked in the cell where you shouldn't have been locked in the cell – a kid?! You're in school; you're getting locked in a cell by yourself to do lines!

KG And you're getting let out for five minutes to walk round the yard?

B Yeah, that's what it was like – it was like a little prison.

(Benji, 29 years old)

Jason's narrative was full of images of him sitting against walls for hours, days, months even!

J I just had to sit outside the Head master's office day in; day out; day in; day out. I used to go to school and just *sit*; couldn't go in the playground, couldn't go play in the playground – just sit at this chair *all* day just looking at this wall; just like that. There's the office there, a brick wall there and a table and chair just for me. And all the kids used to come back laughing; and they used to get me angry so I used to fight a lot at school; they used to call me the dunce and 'Dumbo!' all that so I used to get in a lot of fights at school; that's why I was getting expelled from school 'cos I was getting in fights at school (...) I used to have a teacher come sit by me, have my dinner and then take me back to go and sit there (...) I used to a have to sit there for weeks; weeks; months. I think I did a whole term sitting staring at the wall.

KG And what did that teach you?

J Ooh just anger; just angry (...) Putting me against the wall – they used to make me sit outside of the classroom; Mr W did [*in primary school*], argh; and what he used to do an' all – he used to put like a piece of chalk; a square – you can stand in that square. Outside the front so all the kids could see me, looking through the window, and I used to have to stand there… They gave me a skipping rope, 'if you wanna skip you

can skip'; (the other children) used to sit there laughing at me! You know what I mean – 'that's for good behaviour' he said. It's not right is it?

KG So how does this all make you feel now Jason? Talking about it now?

J Still angry; still angry – I'm sweating here.

We can see from these accounts that persistent punishment, isolation and educational deprivation were evident early in these men's lives. As mentioned in Chapter 3, some of the men I interviewed experienced these unpleasant realities at the same school I attended, yet the existence and magnitude of these exclusions was hidden to me; a school-designated legitimate learner (Rollock, 2007). Their experiences were unlikely to provide any useful preparation for further education or the world of adult work. Further, the parallels between this experience on the extreme margins of school and the experience of being incarcerated in a prison are difficult to miss.

4.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the interview data in themes that were interpreted as significant to the research aims. A number of other themes were identified, and some interesting narratives collected on the topics of resistance, non-conformity (which included truancy) and attitudes to work from some of the group.

The narratives described experiences of schooling that were markedly different from that of their 'appropriately behaved' peers. They frequently faced disproportionate and harsh punishments from teachers and parents. Violence in a number of forms featured heavily:

they were physically punished by adults, frequently fought with their peers and even occasionally lashed out physically at teachers. They were labelled as failures and excluded from learning through segregation to spaces of educational underachievement. The boys frequently deferred to overt masculinities and pride in their physical prowess in order to obtain a measure of self-worth and control. Overwhelmingly, the men described an existence in restricted isolation from the rest of the school population. This mostly led them to align themselves with similarly troubled peers and also resulted in educational underachievement across the board. The possible significance of these experiences on the time each of the men spent in prison will be discussed in Chapter Six, but for now, I turn to the narrative descriptions of the men's prison time.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRISON: WHAT THE NARRATIVES TELL US ABOUT GOING INSIDE

5.1 INTRODUCTION

I will never forget the first day I walked into HMP [redacted], I was there to meet the Education Manager for a job interview. The sights, sounds, smells and the emotions I was experiencing whilst walking through the prison on that day are indelibly marked in my memory. I therefore chose to move the men's interview from the accounts of their schooling to the description of their prison experiences by asking about *their* first time in prison. This began their prison narratives - the subject of this chapter. In line with the previous chapter, it begins by summarising the observations made whilst I worked as a teacher in prison. It then presents the significant themes that emanated from the life history interview data: Family; Violence; Labelling of Inmates and Spaces; Educational Exclusion; Masculinities; Communities of Practice; and Physical Isolation. The data reveals a sense of the *normality* of going to prison for these men.

5.2 OBSERVATIONS FROM INSIDE AS A PRISON TEACHER

In the aims and origins of this research as described in **Chapter One**, reference has been made to the observations I made whilst working as a prison teacher, observations about the apparent ease with which men within the main population lived in prison. I primarily came

to notice this ease by way of striking comparison to the marked uneasiness and continued resistance to their imprisonment by the Vulnerable Prisoners (VPs). The VPs are prisoners who are segregated from the main population predominantly due to the nature of their offences. They are typically sex offenders and often paedophiles. They are not segregated as a matter of course, as an prisoner's offences are only for themselves to disclose to others, but they request segregation or prison staff request segregation as a means of protection against the perceived threat to their safety. As such, prisoners who are deemed vulnerable due to threats received within the main population for a reason unrelated to their offences (such as owing money for drugs) can also request to be placed within the VP wing (O'Donnell and Edgar, 1999).

I worked with VPs at both prisons and was immediately struck by the frequency with which a large number of the various groups I taught complained. The complaints ranged from continued protests about their convictions due to their claimed innocence of any offence, to grumbles about the lack of availability of facilities at particular times on their wings. Although I was clearly a civilian member of staff, with responsibilities only towards matters of education and related issues I was often bombarded with complaints about incidents on the wings – the tone with which an officer had spoken to them; the fact that they were released from their cells five minutes later than should have been the case; the fact that they had been escorted through the prison at a time too close to the general route [*the times when the main population of the prison move from their wings to their place of daily activity and back*]. Their complaints often appeared steeped in an apparent strong awareness of their 'rights' and the formal processes by which they could insist on these

rights being upheld. Whilst working with VPs I heard for the first time about a *Request Complaint* form, an official first step for complaining about treatment whilst in prison. I was frequently told by inmates from the VP wing that they would be submitting a Request Complaint after a mundane incident and regularly heard conversations between inmates where they were discussing Request Complaints.

It could be argued that being in prison is inherently extremely difficult and so when the surely only very basic rights are not being upheld, prisoners have every right to insist that they are. My observations suggest that for VPs, being in prison was indeed very difficult for them. By contrast, I *never* once heard a prisoner in the main population even mention a 'Request Complaint' Form, and I spent far more time working with men in the main population, in many more settings. I am not suggesting that my observations are evidence that only VPs used this right to complain, but that as a professional working within prisons I witnessed a completely different manner in which they handled their imprisonment.

I did on occasion witness inmates within the main population discussing the validity of their convictions. However, those that expressed either criticism of the way the law was applied to their case or that they had not in fact committed the crime(s) they were serving time for, admitted that they were guilty of similar crimes for which they had either not been apprehended or had not been found guilty. As such, they appeared to be somewhat 'philosophical' in their approach: 'OK I didn't do the actual crime I'm here for, but I do regularly commit that crime (which the police are obviously aware of) and have done so several times without being caught, so I can't really complain.' This was an altogether

different approach to that generally observed amongst the VPs, who were very pedantic about the exact specifics of rules, guidelines and rights even within their prison confinement, and certainly with respect to their convictions.

Perhaps the casual admission of guilt to the crimes for which the majority of the main population is imprisoned (see Berman and Dar, 2013) is contextually unproblematic, versus the admission of acts of paedophilia or other sex offences in almost any context? Nonetheless, there was an acceptance, a resignation, again an ease with which the general population dealt with their imprisonment according to my observations.

These observations led to the research questions related to what I had perceived as a level of comfort with life in prison for the main population, an ease that caused me to consider whether they had in some way been prepared for their time spent inside (see **Chapter One** for full list of research questions). Through the interviews and the resulting narrative interpretation, the aim was to check whether my observations and perceptions were shared by men that have actually been to prison, and (if so) whether the reasons for this possible comfort were in any way born in their schooling.

The stories the men told of their time in prison will be reported shortly, presented in themes that were significant to the research questions. Before that, a summary of the men's prison biographies will be provided to give a context to the prison and life story narratives. As previously stated in **Chapter Four**, the possible significance of the particular nature of each

of the men's individual schooling and the number of times they went to prison will be discussed in **Chapter Six**.

5.3 PRISON BIOGRAPHIES

In **Table 1**, in **Chapter Three**, the number of times each of the men had been to prison is summarised. It is interesting to note that three of the four men who had experienced the most extreme discipline in their schooling (see **Chapter Four 4.3**) went on to spend a great deal of their adult life in prison, over a number of sentences. Each of these men had so many prison sentences they were unsure of the number – John estimated 15 – 20 times in prison; Benji guessed "over 17 times" and Buster said "I spent fifteen years of my life behind a door… I think I've done twelve prison sentences; I've got a hundred and odd convictions. I think it's twelve; it's about twelve or fourteen. I don't even know."

Anthony, Brian, Jason and Brady returned to prison, but to a much lesser extent, between 2 and 4 times. Despite being arrested, held in police cells and being before judges in courts several times, David and Andy both served only one prison sentence.

Bob and Shortie were the outliers, only being arrested once and serving time for that offence and never returning to prison after that.

The possible significance of the specific school histories on the number of times each of the individual men went to prison will be discussed in **Chapter Six**. The rest of this chapter is devoted to presenting the significant themes as highlighted above in **5.1**.

5.4 THEME ONE: THE EFFECT ON FAMILY

As underlined in the previous chapter, Buster's narrative had several references to his family's criminality. He speaks of his father attempting to discourage his boys from following in his footsteps by physically punishing them when they got in trouble with the police but eventually giving up and instead giving them the benefit of his knowledge:

> (…) my Dad was a prime example – if we got in trouble; the police come to the house; he beat us. No problem – I ain't got no qualms about that; you get caught – you get caught, simple as. You take the punishment. And that's why he come down and beat me at school: 'You get caught you take your punishment, *bang, bang, bang*' (*laughs*). We had all them hidings; had 'em all and they didn't work so then he's gone, you get to a certain age, and he's gone: alright then if that's not gonna work, if you're gonna do it; then do it properly. If that's what you're gonna do; then do it properly – don't get nicked doing stupid things. I've had a right few earners with my Dad. I was locked up with my Dad; three weeks in the [*HMP*] with my Dad on remand.
>
> (Buster)

He later recalls with some regret that two of his own previously estranged sons were now in and out of prison and that one of them had even been on the same wing in the same prison as he was without his knowledge:

KG So, did you have kids young? Were you in prison some of the times when…

B Yeah, well two of my sons I never seen for twenty years. I was with 'em for the first five years and I was in and out of prison. But like, we was young, we was sixteen… it was… if I was her I would have done the same thing. That's no life, I seen my Mom do it all her life; it's no life for her; I don't blame her in the slightest. She done one [*left the relationship*]; I come out of jail and there was nobody there, no kids no nothing. Oh it hurt at the time, but you can't blame her, bloody 'ell if I was in that position I wouldn't want it. I wouldn't want it to happen to my daughter or my sister or anything – to have that life; no it's not right. When I was locked up in Featherstone four years ago I was on the same wing as my son and I *didn't* know; I *did not* know. I was feeding him three times a day.

KG Is this one of the kids you didn't see?

B My first born yeah, my eldest son. I was on the same wing as him and I didn't even know. I was on the servery; [*a prison job involving serving meals to the other inmates*] I was feeding him three times a day – mad ennit?

(Buster)

A number of the other interviews contained expressions of regret as to the effects their convictions had on their family, or the fact that they themselves missed their families whilst in prison. Brady (29 years old) describes the moment when he was sentenced to prison for the first time aged 17 years:

B My biggest thing at the time was seeing my Mom and Dad…

KG (…) they were in the court?

B Yeah… and they both burst into tears and my head's just hit the floor and it's 'Oh my God, you're going jail!' But, I wasn't that bothered about going jail; *actually* going to jail 'cos as every so-called rude boy would say they can look after themselves. It was more the effect that I was having on people around me. And as you are growing up a bit you become a little bit more conscious of things like that.

And Shortie (33 years old) adds:

> …you're missing your family; and your friends who you know – not your friends that are in there; the friends *who* you know. And obviously I had a child then, so I'm missing my kid at the same time and missing my family to be fair.
>
> (Shortie)

There is a large body of work on the effect of imprisonment on inmate families, much of which argues that the prison sentence also punishes families, especially spouses and children (Breen, 2010). Buster's narrative confirms that his father's criminality was a significant contributing factor in his long term offending, a reality that is often used as justification for more severe punitive measures in attempts to thwart the development of offending within families. However, his narrative also acknowledges the negative affect of imprisonment on his family when he was a child and his two eldest sons when he was an adult. A number of the other accounts made reference to relationship breakdowns or other family problems as a result of their imprisonment. Taking into account both the school and prison data, it is clear these men's families did not condone or encourage either their so-called problem behaviour in school or offending behaviour as adults.

5.5 THEME TWO: VIOLENCE

Given the impression created through television dramas, feature films, reality shows and even documentaries it may be imagined that violence is a big part of life in a UK prison. I worked in a Category B local prison, which houses any offender up to those considered the

most dangerous (Category A) and a Category C sentenced prison – I only witnessed two incidents where tempers between two prisoners began to flare and both incidents were quickly calmed down with no physical altercation taking place. Of course, I was only in the prison during the day and not privy to incidents that may have occurred after these hours and on the wings, but nevertheless the image of out of control rampaging prisoners intent on inflicting all types of physical harm on fellow inmates and/or staff did not represent in any way the reality of prison as I experienced it. During the interviews only three of the men talked about violence in prison.

Bob (36 years old) talked about the experience of being in prison as a former teacher and how the environment reminded him of school; he also mentions getting into one fight:

> (…) unfortunately I ended up having a fight in there, which was the only one I had; fortunately. I had no choice; I was left with no choice, 'cos the person actually came into my cell and attacked me; says I disrespected him…
>
> (Bob)

Andy (44 years old) refers to his aggressively defensive approach to being in prison, one which was fuelled by his strong concern about being bullied. He describes two violent incidents where he attacked other prisoners: once after being threatened in the gym and another time after being racially abused on the wing:

> So he came over and said 'do you know who I am?' I said 'nah, I'm not really interested, but you know what… if you carry on, I'll rip your face off.' And everything went quiet, you know like… can you imagine everyone doing weights and it all went

> quiet, and I went 'I'll rip your face off'. So he walked up to me and I head butted him and I started stamping on him, and I got pulled off…
>
> (…) I said 'alright mate' and he's like 'where the fuck you going you wog?!' I said 'you what?! You wog?' He said 'you fuckin' wog!' So… I hit him.
>
> (Andy)

Andy received extra time on his sentence for the first incident, but was unrepentant, telling the prison Governor he would do the same again if the same circumstances arose. He made it clear that any punishment meted out by the prison was inconsequential versus what he perceived to be the potentially catastrophic result of allowing himself to be seen as someone who could be taken advantage of in any way. He believed that backing down in the face of aggression or bullying could only lead to more bullying, which at worst might involve being raped. Andy often refers to fighting and his own acts of violence through his entire interview. Whether he is talking about school or prison, he both problematizes and justifies these acts as a necessary response to actual bullying or a perceived threat of bullying.

Unlike Bob and Andy, Buster (44 years old) refers to violence in a much more casual manner – he frequently places himself as the perpetrator and offers no reasons or excuses for his behaviour. He also reports violence against him by prison officers, but also in a generally unproblematic way. Some of his described violent acts are quite extreme: "I hung a geezer in there and set two people on fire", and whilst he does admit some remorse in hindsight he continues in the vein of his school narrative positioning the vast majority of the fighting and violence as 'just part of life'. Whilst he maintains this stance throughout, it is clear that the level of violence he experienced in prison was not the norm for the majority of prisoners as

it resulted in a large amount of time spent in the isolation of 'the Block' [*Solitary Confinement*], beginning in a Young Offenders Institution:

B (…) I spent a year in the block (…) Cos I hung a geezer in Brockhill. He didn't die or anything, but I spent a year in the block for that and from jail to jail I was block to block to block. At first I got some beatings and that to start with [*from Prison Officers*] and I done some things I ain't proud of you know what I mean? I had a couple of beatings and they come in to do me again and I had to cover myself in my own… shit and they opened the door and that's when the beatings stopped then. They stopped then. And also they called me a fucking animal; dirty bastard, and that's it I got moved out of there and that was the end of that. But I had a couple of hidings first.

(Buster)

He then goes on to explain how he was finally turned away from violence in prison by the threat of being injected with the "liquid cosh" a powerful antipsychotic medication known to be used to subdue 'difficult' prisoners (Scott, 2010):

B …I was on the walkway on my way to work coming off the Crescent; fucking next thing they just appeared either side of me – straight down the block. They showed me that, said 'you're gonna behave!' and I went yeah man; they showed me that needle man they was gonna give me that liquid cosh. I said 'I'll behave'.

KG What was that, just random or because of something you'd done?

B Nah, there was a bunch of us in there and err... we hurt some people in there. They showed me that needle, they bent me up in the block, about five of them and they just showed it me 'are you gonna behave?' and I went 'yeah – too right I am'. I've seen 'em; I've seen 'em – they've been carted off and I've seen 'em two days later and they've been injected and they're shuffling their feet across the exercise yard; two days after. I said 'I'll behave' and I did.

The high level of violence described by Buster in his prison narrative was unusual for the group. As stated, only two other men talked about violence *at all* in prison. This level of violence resulted in him being identified as a particularly challenging inmate who was frequently punished by being moved to the prison's spaces of severe isolation. This labelling of individual and groups of inmates was common across the interviews, as was the identification of spaces within prison by their name or purpose.

5.6 THEME THREE: LABELLING OF INMATES AND SPACES

There was extensive data on the identification of certain *types* of prisoners and the different spaces they occupied in prison. This ranged from labels placed on inmates by the prison regime (such as Buster's identification as challenging described above), to common identifications made by fellow inmates due to previous associations, to the negative *othering* of inmates (usually due to their VP status) by the interviewees themselves. Buster describes a labelling he encountered on his first time imprisoned in a Young Offenders Institution:

B Well my two older brothers had been there all the year; the whole year (…) they run the jail for a year – they terrorised people and everything, you know what I mean?

KG So you knew this before you went in really or…?

B No I didn't know to the extent. But as soon as I've gone in there; I've gone in a cell, I'm with someone in the cell who was there the year before and as soon as I've said my name, fuckin' 'ell he's up the window shouting across! So the fuckin' jail knows that them two who was here last year; the younger brother's in! So that's what I walked into; and I had fights and everything.

KG What trying to back up the reputation of your brothers or…?

B It was threw on me… simple as. It was expected of me (…) So he heard my name; told him my name and he's shouting out the window. He's on A wing, he's shouting to B wing, they've shouted to C wing, so when we've come out now on the exercise and that people are all coming over and like 'bla, bla, bla'. People just wanted to be your friend sort of thing.

KG Did that feel like a pressure then?

B Nah, it didn't bother me. Well (my brothers) had it off a lot in there [*got into arguments/fights*] and they had enemies as well, and they've come to me then. There are people I'm getting on with and I've got people who are like enemies; even though I don't even know 'em. The people are expecting it – and I ain't gonna back down. And that's what happened.

(Buster)

A small minority of the men indicated that they were considered to be 'top boys' that is, at the top of a perceived hierarchy of prisoners. They "ran" the wings they were on either with what is implied or explicitly stated as the threat of violence, and/or by reputation:

B (…) The wing that I went on to happened to have a few man from sides [*the area he lived in, or hailed from on the outside*] in there; well from my sides in there. And that just made everything a lot easier. So as I've got onto the wing I've almost just fit straight into a routine. Got a job…

KG So, because you knew people they told you what the situation is or…? You say that you just fit right in, but how did that process happen – because you knew people there you felt more comfortable so then you worked out how to fit in or did people tell you how to fit in or…?

B Well I didn't *have* to fit in 'cos as soon as I got onto the wing and I had met the two people, like because of the way they had already had the wing – it was kind of 'yeah – this is my bredrin' [*good friend*]. And that was it, you get me?

KG So whoever you are now, however you behave that's just alright…

B Yeah I'm good now, I'm alright; I'm with the top boys of the wing, so he must be a top boy as well.

(Brady)

We used to the bash the bullies we did. 'Cos eventually… I was on remand for about seven/eight months on B wing, and I was on B3; two of my pals was on B2 and two of my pals was on B1, so there was five of us and that was our wing cos we was on there a long time.

(Buster)

Buster is not alone in referring to the different floors of a particular wing that he and his pals were on during one of his sentences and the possible significance of these different spaces within prison. Inmates can inhabit different wings according to their offences (segregated VP wing or wings separated by prisoner category) or different floors of a wing due to their prisoner status. There is a system of rewards and sanctions to encourage what the prison regards as good behaviour: prisoners can obtain *enhanced* status which allows them (for example) the privilege of having a television in their cell or a games console. They can also have these privileges removed if their behaviour or other conduct does not meet the prison's expectations. They can be moved to a *basic* wing or floor of a wing (usually the bottom) where all of the inmates there will have had their privileges removed. Or, as happened to Buster, if their behaviour is extreme they can be placed in the solitary isolation of 'the Block'. This spatial separation and preponderance of prisoner labels is evidence of another similarity with the men's unique schooling. It also concurs with Foucault's argument about knowledge production and inscription of identities on bodies.

5.7 THEME FOUR: STILL TOO MUCH TROUBLE TO TEACH

Not surprisingly, references to education are far fewer in the prison narratives than the school narratives. In Young Offenders Institutions, all of those under the statutory school leaving age should receive education, however after this they are not obligated to continue. Despite all of the evidence that inmates' levels of education are consistently low, prisons are not obliged to provide education to all who request it. As such, education in prison is somewhat of a privilege. This is referred to by a number of the men when talking about their prison terms:

KG When you went to the Young Offenders did they do any education with you there?

J No, nothing.

KG Was that just because they didn't do any at the time – 'cos you were saying it was twenty three hour lock-up at the time – so does that mean that only some people got education?

J Yeah – we was on the bottoms we was so... you've got three different... if you were at the top, they say we take the top first; so if you was at the bottom there was too many places already done in classes so you were just stuck there.

KG Was that just random allocation that you were at the bottom? It wasn't because you were on a basic wing [*removal of certain privileges in prison*] or whatever?

J No… Just random where they put ya.

(Jason)

All my qualifications I've got, I've got from in prison. And that's because I've took my time out to go and find that; not because they've said 'do you wanna do this, or we've got this.' You've had to argue with them and shout and kick off and that just to

get on them course and things like; get you out your cell. 'Cos they don't wanna do nothing with ya in there.

(Benji)

And Bob (36 years old), who was a qualified teacher when he entered prison and obtained an inmate job as a teaching assistant in the Education Department, spoke of the barriers he encountered when he attempted to begin a Masters course:

B Big difficulty when I wanted to do my MA from staff I was working with from within the Education Department; I couldn't *believe* it! Absolute jealousy that I wanted to further myself, better myself.

KG The majority of them probably didn't have a teaching qualification, let alone a Masters.

B No I was more qualified than loads of them, so I couldn't believe it – they weren't happy to help. These were members of staff I was working with on a day to day basis. I'd say 'well look, can you write me a reference?' and they were like 'well, do you really think you're well equipped or good enough to do this? Do you think you're good enough to do this MA?' and I'm like 'well yeah'. 'Well do you think you should have some more time to think about it?' Bla, bla, bla. 'Nah, are you gonna write the reference or not?' So even though I'm teaching with them, I'm still considered third, fourth class citizen who shouldn't really be allowed or they don't wanna see me achieving more than they have who have not committed a crime.

(Bob)

For those men who did talk about education in prison, there remains the general sense that they are people perceived as *undeserving* of education – it is a limited commodity, so you had to fight for it or miss out. It is also recognised that the type of education on offer in prisons, especially in terms of curriculum content, does not always meet the needs of

inmates. The targets culture that exists within the tendered system of prison education by contract can further diminish the standard of education. Prison education departments strive to keep numbers up and can over simplify course content to achieve inflated success figures. The narrow social policy focus on the need to improve inmates' basic skills can also severely restrict the learning possibilities on offer. I witnessed both of these things in my prison teaching practice and as Bob's quote above suggests, the men were also aware that what was on offer was not necessarily meeting their specific needs:

> But I never really learned anything from prison as well like; every sentence I ever got was always too short to learn something in there.
>
> (John)

5.8 THEME FIVE: PRISON MASCULINITIES

Just as with the accounts of school, the theme of masculinities was evident in the prison experiences data. Implicit and explicit references to traditional and also complex forms of masculinities were present in ALL of the prison narratives. The ability to physically 'handle themselves', that is, to successfully defend themselves *should* a fight occur; the dismissal of or sympathy for other inmates who were perceived as displaying weakness in prison; and the importance of resilience, strength of character or 'head strength' to the ability to cope in prison were all represented in the narratives by several men and on several occasions. Quite often this was in response to my questions about how men cope in prison, and whether there were some men that do not cope so well. There were several references to ***others*** who were perceived as showing weakness by crying, self-harming or even committing suicide.

Only two of the men confessed to "breaking down" when they first went to prison, but both added that this was very short-lived:

J Some kids I used to hear cry all the time and the grief they used to get! 'Ooh cry baby' you know what I mean? There was a kid hanged himself when I was there and he was only sixteen; he topped himself (…)
Once you hear 'em crying at night all the other lags, all the inmates will take the piss out of 'em. The ones who were stronger than them.

KG (…) Was that quite widespread then, or was it quite a small number who were crying.

J Well... I'll be honest, I cried when I first got in there; I sobbed my eyes out... But two days later I was fine. If anybody says they go in that jail and don't cry is a bullshitter! Soon as you go through that big open door man it's a bit scary! (*Laughs*)

(Jason)

It was far more common for the men to advocate strength and to disassociate from any emotional response to their imprisonment. Displaying emotions of distress are positioned as dangerous within the prison setting. Either because it could lead to bullying as Jason suggests above, or because this "weakness" could result in their self-destruction:

> I've saw people… well I've been in jail when people have hanged themselves; they've slashed their wrists… I've seen it all ennit? So if you don't cope with it; them are the things it can lead to; so you've got to cope with it. You've got to be strong headed – all you've got to have in your head is *they* cannot keep you in there for ever; regardless of what charge it is, one day you *will* come home.
>
> (Shortie)

As highlighted in the themes on Violence and Labelling above (see **5.5** and **5.6**), a number of the men also referred to the use of physical masculinities as either a method of defence or a vehicle for status. As a former teacher, Bob makes it clear to inmates that despite his professional career, he was still able to display overt physical masculinities:

> People will directly just take a complete utter dislike to your face, you gotta get used to the dirty looks; you gotta get used to being talked about; you've gotta get used to people even wanting to fight ya; especially when they find out what you may have done for a career they consider you a soft touch, but you know I'd done martial arts for fifteen years so I wasn't by any means a soft touch (*laughs*).
>
> (Bob)

References to this ability to 'handle themselves' in the prison environment are plentiful across the interviews, as is the tendency to speak of those prisoners that were perceived as not so strong as *other*. When encouraged to unpack the reasons they perceived a difference between the 'weak' other inmates and them, many of the responses highlighted prior knowledge. Knowledge developed though networks and tough, marginalised living and schooling environments that had indirectly prepared them for the realities of prison. Their time in prison was not altogether different from their time outside of prison, and this was in part due to their lifestyles lived amongst much the same communities in both environments.

5.9 THEME SIX: COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

There were several references across the interviews to possessing some knowledge of prisons prior to their first sentence, knowledge that was (with the exception of Buster)

gleaned from friends or other informal associates. This knowledge was referred to both as direct information provided by people who had previously been to prison and as a more tacit understanding developed through shared and similar lifestyles outside of prison. These lifestyles were not necessarily defined by criminal behaviours, but more the experience of living among similarly positioned individuals, over a long period of time. They had been operating within communities on the margins of society, and knew people who had been to prison. This led them to consider that to go to prison probably would not be too difficult, as friends and associates had done it – so could they:

A A lot of people tell you say jail is hard, but I didn't think it was hard; because I knew people.

KG Did anyone ever actually tell you it was hard? People that had been there before?

A Nah, nah, not really, not really. It's people that haven't been to jail that'll tell you 'nah man, it's hard in jail', but to how I grew up – you must realise that I've lived my side, with the rougher set of people, the not so *meek* (*laughs*).

KG So would it be fair to say that it wasn't too much different to being outside – being inside?

A Apart from you can't go to a dance when you feel like, or have a woman when you feel like.

KG But in all other senses...

A Yeah, in all other senses. It's just like being with the lads...

(Anthony)

For two of the three men who had spent the most amount of time in prison, they described life histories that resembled the training and networking of an apprenticeship or progressive career (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Through their various exclusions from school, stays in

boarding schools for challenging pupils, and involvement with the criminal justice system they gained expertise and built a network:

B … it must sound funny but, say like me going into school, I was more scared of going into school than going into the prison.

KG OK; why would that be?

B I don't know 'cos… alright then me at seventeen, I've heard all my friends and people around me that they've been there and say this and that (…) I've been to boarding schools and all that so me going to prison and that; I'm thinking alright I've been there for a whole year; I can do this 'ennit.

(Benji)

J Actually… before I went to prison – between school and there I had to go to a few bail places like (…) it was the case of, the same as me, it was people that – I was nicking cars at the time, as soon as I was fourteen/fifteen I was nicking cars and they sent me to a place in Erdington (…) and I just met car thiefs there; same again like; naughty lads (…) But obviously that was another stepping stone to prison or young offenders.(…) (Going to Young Offenders) was just a progression – the way I saw it, like I said, I went to school with these people and I just met them in there and it was like – it was life. And it's true, when I got in trouble in juniors and went to that Centre and I had that fight in the taxi with this kid - then I met him at the next school; the boarding school – he was in a different home to me at the time; like they had eight homes they did. I got on with him then after that because I knew him. And then I met him in prison as well, and saying that, I met other people; friends, who knew him as well. And I still hear things about him now, to this day now, about him, because of the people I've met. But I've grew up with it – he's led the same life as me really ain't he really?

(John)

As both John and Benji refer to above, an element to their apparent readiness for their first prison sentence was also born in previous experience of being separated from their family through being sent to boarding school. Young Offenders Institution was the next in a "progression" (John) or career of being isolated from their mainstream peers and family relationships. They were once again pushed to one side, and they were not the only ones.

5.10 THEME SEVEN: PUSHED TO THE WALL AGAIN

Unlike at school, when all children are assumed to be part of the learning community unless they are being isolated as the non-conforming minority, by definition, men in prison are obviously all being segregated and isolated from the rest of the wider society. As highlighted in other themes in this chapter, some inmates can be further segregated in isolation *within* the prison regime due to their behaviour being deemed inappropriate. However, despite the majority of the interviewees referring to either blatant non conformity or a dislike of being told what to do in schools, **only** Buster described being isolated due to his behaviour whilst in prison, with the majority of the other interviewees either silently or explicitly stating their conformity to prison rules:

> But me personally, I just thought you know what – I'm here now, I'm here for a length of time, it's better I just adapt to this system and go home. And so I set my mind that I'm here for a long time and basically I need to *get* on with it. If they're saying to you you've gotta do this; you've gotta do that, then *do* it. They offer you courses to do, so obviously you're putting your mind away from whatever it is and so just concentrating on getting out. Me personally you have to do it.
>
> (Shortie)

What is arguably significant to the men's acceptance of the exclusion of prison when they had previously either fought against or struggled with the school regime, is the reality that by the time they entered prison they had already been isolated so much that this was now the norm. There were a number of references to the fact that the men were so used to being segregated from their peers *before* they went to prison, that this new type of segregation was not new at all, but very familiar. John and Benji's references to their time in boarding schools above in **5.9** clearly illustrate this, and Benji elaborates by explaining:

> Alright then, for me, I think it was different ennit, 'cos I was sent off from a young age to boarding schools and that and had to cope with them things and get on with it, I think that's what made me cope better when I got to prison ennit? 'Cos I'd already been sent away from my family and that, so I know what it's like, being away from them and I've been able to cope there so it's just like the same but you got more people watching ya. Boarding school is like the same as prison, you've just got more people watching ya and you've got a lock on your bedroom door.
>
> (Benji)

And Jason eloquently places the major significance of being "pushed into a corner" in schooling to the later acceptance of the normalcy of being locked in a prison cell. There is a continuity of physical and emotional exclusion as experienced in school:

> I think you get harder and harder the way... because if you're pushed into a corner; you know what's coming. That's what I thought anyway. I was pushed in that corner all the time – I couldn't get out that corner, so I used to rebel. So when they put me in that cell, it was just like being in that corner again. It just brought memories back sitting at that wall, and seeing nothing. Doing nothing; doing no sport; doing nothing

– what all them kids were doing, what I could see myself, and there's me sitting there.

(Jason)

5.11 CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown how *normal* going to prison can be. The data describes a community of prison inmate practitioners who appear to begin an informal apprenticeship sometime before they are given a prison sentence. They are systematically separated from their peers and often their families as children. The separation they face through imprisonment is therefore something they are already familiar with. There is some indication that the climate of potential violence that characterised their schooling is evident in prison, and violence is negotiated or avoided through overt prison masculinities. There is evidence that life in a prison is heavily demarcated by labels of identity and space – again something they experienced in school. The educational opportunities they were excluded from as children are also rationed in prison. And, the physical separation and isolation from society that defines a prison sentence is not the shock to these men that might be expected. For many years before going to prison they have been systematically isolated in this way.

Whilst there were multiple examples of the parallels between the men's schooling and prison experiences, there were some differences. With the exception of Buster, there was very little evidence of resistance or non-conformity within the prison context, versus a significant amount of rebellion in school for most. This contrast will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. In the discussion chapter that follows I will draw together the

ways in which the narrative data presented in Chapters Four and Five addressed the research questions and the ways in which the findings add to the existing knowledge in the area of a UK 'School to Prison Trajectory' as summarised in **Chapter Two**.

CHAPTER SIX

TOWARDS A THEORY: DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the thematic data presented in Chapters Four and Five. I consider the ways in which the interview data addressed the research questions. Did the data show a shared experience of schooling amongst the interviewees? Were any practices/experiences identified that were similar in both the school and prison environments? Did the interviewees perceive of a *community of practice* among prisoners, and if so was this community significantly influenced by prisoners' schooling?

Throughout the discussion I draw on three theoretical frameworks on social reproduction in particular: the correspondence principle (Bowles and Gintis, 1976, 1988, 2002), Bourdieu's theory of reproduction through practice (Bourdieu, 1986, 1991; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) and Willis' cultural reproduction found in *Learning to* Labour (1977).

Bowles and Gintis' *correspondence principle* (1976, 1988, 2002) argues that schooling prepares children for their anticipated adult work roles through a hidden curriculum that emulates the social relations, expectations and physical conditions of their predicted future workplace. They argue children of the elite are encouraged to develop skills and styles of interaction that will prepare them for professional careers. The schooling of working class

children is more rule orientated, with a focus on behaviour management and establishing the authority of the teacher, a process that prepares them for menial work and the unquestioning authority of the 'boss'. Importantly they claim these preparations in schooling result in children occupying largely the same class position in adulthood as their parents without complaint.

Bourdieu's theories of *reproduction* and *symbolic violence* (1990; 1991) similarly state the significance of schooling in maintaining social inequalities. They argue the education system is not a meritocracy as presented, but rather a well concealed method for passing down inherited privilege. It rewards displays of middle class capitals and negatively sanctions all other cultural capitals, therefore legitimising and maintaining the unequal social order. Willis (1977) also highlights the processes through which an unequal social hierarchy is produced and maintained by schooling. However he identifies that the anti-academic 'lads' of his ethnography do not subscribe fully to the idea of a meritocratic education provided by the school. They do not believe they can achieve social mobility via qualifications, nor do they want to – preferring to gain self-worth through working class masculinities and manual labour. They therefore happily 'consent' to occupy the same unequal class position as their fathers.

Finally, I also draw on Foucault's detailed analysis of power and discipline (1977). Foucault argues that power is produced through discursive practices that produce legitimate knowledge. In the case of criminals or 'delinquent' children, knowledge is produced which enables the overt identification, surveillance and othering of the offenders, an othering of

deficit that is inscribed on their bodies and the spaces they inhabit. This inscription on the bodies of criminals (or children with 'challenging' behaviour in schools) works to inscribe on the minds of all of society what it is to be 'normal'. He argues the identification of the 'abnormal' or deficient is an important ingredient in the production of a mass of 'docile bodies' who will act to serve the dominant economic and ideological system.

There are clearly significant differences with these theories that are drawn from each of the authors' larger bodies of conceptual work. However, the ways in which they converge as critical readings of the systematic reproduction of social inequalities through educational processes could be useful to gain a deeper understanding of the key research questions. The significance of marking the boundaries of 'acceptable' behaviour by identifying and applying punitive practices to deficient individuals appears important to the overall legitimating functions of schools and prisons. I shall therefore draw on these different frameworks and indicate how they arguably relate to the former prisoners' experiences of school. Indeed, the men's narratives could be used to shed further light on or update these theories of unequal reproduction through education.

In addition to these necessary discussions, some interesting aspects of the life stories that have been raised in **Chapters Four** and **Five** will be explored. These include the possible connections between some of the men's individual school histories with the length of time spent in prisons and the number of sentences served.

6.2 REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research was interested in the role of school in preparing prisoners for prison. This was explored through the following research questions:

1. Is there evidence of a similarity or correspondence between prisoners' schooling and prison experiences?
2. Are there specific behaviours, acts and modes of understanding (i.e. cultural capital) that reflect belonging to a group that share expertise and learn from each other (i.e. community of practice) amongst prisoners?
3. What is the role of school in shaping this community?

These overarching research questions were explored via a life history approach that included discussion of the following: Do former prisoners share similar experiences of schooling? What influence (if any) did participants perceive their experiences in and of school have had on their later lives? Was being in prison easy or difficult (on the whole) for the participants? Did individual interviewees perceive any similarities between practices they experienced in school/other educational institutions and practices they experienced in prison? Is there a shared *identity* amongst male prisoners, and (if so) what is the role of schooling in shaping this identity?

In summary, it was difficult to state the influence the men perceived school had on their later lives. The majority of the men traced a trajectory from their experiences on the margins

of school to their imprisonment, but they did not provide direct data on the ways in which they felt schooling had influenced them. Instead they positioned school as having little or no influence due to their exclusions from learning and the poor educational outcomes they achieved.

However, the most powerful findings that did emerge relate to the questions about the similarities between their experiences of school and prison, and the ease with which men adjusted to and lived in prison. I found that the men did in fact have a shared type of schooling that was characterised by educational exclusion through segregation and physical isolation from the majority of "legitimate learners" (Rollock, 2007). Violence in many forms was also a typical feature of their schooling. Violence was used against them, but also by them - both as a tool for survival and a strategy for acquiring a positive status among their peers. These schooling experiences were strikingly similar to the conditions of imprisonment; so much so that the men were familiar with many aspects of imprisonment before actually entering a prison as an inmate.

The various ways in which the data addressed each research question will now be discussed in more detail. Where appropriate the summaries of the findings are presented with reference to the aforementioned theoretical frameworks.

6.3 IS THERE A 'TYPICAL' SHARED EXPERIENCE OF SCHOOLING?

I conducted induction interviews with at least 200 inmates during my prison teaching practice. Strikingly similar versions of their education to date were recounted. I heard accounts from a large sample of individual men that suggested a trend among male prisoners. They had been identified as children with challenging, problematic or disruptive behaviour as early as primary school. Through various exclusions, and often a number of schools, they had followed a trajectory on the margins that had little or no educational value. This trajectory led the vast majority to Young Offenders Institutions and eventually to prison.

Of the eleven men interviewed at length for this study, only one - Shortie - described his primary schooling as unproblematic, without any physical or educational exclusions or segregations. Each of the others described, often in detail, a record of punishments administered by the school which began in primary school and continued on throughout their secondary schooling. This included corporal punishment, relegation to low ability sets, internal exclusion via various forms of separation and isolation and official school exclusions.

Although Shortie's school narrative was the only one not dominated by descriptions of exclusionary practices and marginal experiences, he did refer to being suspended (subject to a fixed term exclusion) from secondary school at least once.

While my findings cannot suggest a causal link between problematic schooling and later prison sentences (nor was that an aim), my research concurs with existing reports that a very large majority of those in prison have faced exclusions in school (Murray, 2012). However, the accounts I collected give more detail and breadth to the figures – all but one of the eleven men interviewed described their schooling as *defined* by their unique experiences on the margins. They were demarcated by their behaviour, and knowledge was persistently produced about their 'challenging' behaviour (Foucault, 1980). They were relentlessly moved to physical and pedagogic spaces where teaching and meaningful education were withdrawn. As a consequence, their choice of peers was generally limited to other students similarly positioned at the margins of 'acceptable' and 'legitimate' behaviour; if they had any freedom to establish peer relationships at all. "I didn't really have much to do with all the other kids 'cos I was always stuck outside (the classroom). When they used to do sports and all that I used to have to stay inside and watch 'em through the window" (Jason).

The men provided descriptions of schooling experiences that consistently featured poor relationships with teachers, a high level of violence, frequent and often total segregation, and poor educational content. The interview data strongly indicated a typical school experience for the men and that experience was typically unpleasant. Further, these experiences began occurring before official exclusions took place and quite often escalated afterwards.

6.4 WHAT INFLUENCE (IF ANY) DID PARTICIPANTS PERCEIVE THEIR EXPERIENCES IN AND OF SCHOOL HAVE HAD ON THEIR LATER LIVES?

Whilst there were some mentions by a minority of the men of the negative labelling they received from teachers, which included predictions that they would undoubtedly go to prison when they were older, these cannot be said to have of themselves influenced their later lives. Overall, there was the unsurprising sense that they had learned so little in school that it had failed to impact on their later lives very much.

The only somewhat consistent and perhaps indirect response to this question across many of the accounts is that the men generally expressed a strong determination to prevent their own children from getting into trouble at school and becoming involved in crime. Some of the men went further to state that they also tried to discourage other youngsters outside of their immediate family from offending behaviour. Indeed, Bob went on to work in this field a short time after being released from prison.

> I've kind of tried to use it - you know my life's experience as a deterrent towards… my kids and my younger peers. Try and teach them a thing or two.
>
> (Brady)

For the most part, it was clear that because the positive outcomes that might be expected as a result of going to school were not their experience, the men had come to view their schooling as having very little or no influence over the lives thereafter. Most of the men identified a number of direct negative outcomes but only as they occurred – for example

David described how he became “a bum, getting drunk, going round the streets” following his expulsion from school at 14 years old. However, they did not present a picture of these negative experiences creating significantly long term consequences. At the time of their interviews the vast majority were law abiding, successful men with families and settled employment.

Although the men generally discounted the influence their schooling may have had on their futures, I would argue that their negative educational experiences were internalised to the extent that they did significantly affect their decisions. For Bob this translated into a passion to prove his teachers wrong and achieve an educational route into a profession. For most of the others it resulted in a belief they that had few or no ‘legitimate’ options open to them as young men. Interestingly many of those interviewed still identified to some extent with the marginal position they had in school and prison, despite them having lead successful law abiding lives for many years. This is epitomised by John, now settled in a long term relationship with three children and successfully working for the same employer for ten years, yet feeling unable to completely shake the negative label and identity. He says “I am still naughty John”!

Paul Willis’ (1977) description of the consensual uptake of classed positions following working class schooling could illuminate the response to this question. The men as boys were aware that their schooling had not equipped them for traditional routes into either further education or work. The majority began offending behaviours as children or young men possibly as a direct or indirect result.

6.5 WAS BEING IN PRISON EASY OR DIFFICULT (ON THE WHOLE) FOR THE PARTICIPANTS?

A number of the men interviewed spoke of a sense of trepidation when they learned they were first going to be imprisoned, whether in a Young Offenders Institution or adult prison. But this was expressed as a fleeting anxiety that was soon assuaged when they actually arrived. It was common for them to already be acquainted with some of the prisoners they would meet inside, but if they did not actually know anyone there, they quickly discovered that the other inmates were 'just like them'. Whilst being locked in a total institution was a new experience the first time around, many of the other aspects of the prison experience were very familiar.

As presented in **Chapter Five**, the nature, frequency and number of exclusions they had already faced for a number of years as children gave them plenty of practice for the isolation from the outside world that is the defining feature of prison. Four of the men had already been sent away from their families to boarding schools or children's homes before they faced their first prison sentence and many of the others had spent a good deal of their schooling in some form of isolation away from their friends and peers. Some of them also excluded themselves from school by truanting. This separation from family and/or friends in their early formative years produced in the boys a level of resilience and independence that proved useful when they were entering prison for the first time.

The majority of the narratives also included statements and suggestions that life in prison was only marginally different than the life they were living outside of prison, the only

significant differences being that they couldn't have female company and were confined to the physical space inside the prison. Those aside, they had friends and made friends, had a roof over their heads, food to eat and could easily get marijuana. Anthony said: "It's just like being with the lads", and David recalled "it was no major upheaval to be honest." The networks of friends and acquaintances that appear to overlap both inside and outside of prison are arguably a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) with some connections to criminal activities, but with many more other connections to a shared common habitus and cultural capitals (Bourdieu, 1986).

In addition to the data referred to above where the men confirmed that being in prison was not difficult for them, there was consistent *othering* of the prisoners who were evidently finding coping with prison more problematic. They were identified as weak. Accounts of weak *other* inmates crying, self-harming and even committing suicide are in the majority of the men's prison narratives. Whilst these stories clearly speak of the great difficulties experienced by some whilst in prison, the narrators all placed these as a minority at a distance from and as a comparison to the majority 'normal' inmates. These normal inmates are classified by the interviewees as 'growing up like them' (learning within a community of practice) and mentally strong.

The consensus across the interviews appears to confirm my original observations that for the majority in the main population, prison is not uncomfortable. I would argue that this has a great deal to do with their life histories and life styles, and that like most people their life

histories are significantly influenced by their educational outcomes and experiences. This will be explored further during the next question.

6.6 DID INTERVIEWEES PERCEIVE OF ANY SIMILARITIES BETWEEN PRACTICES THEY EXPERIENCED IN SCHOOL AND PRACTICES THEY EXPERIENCED IN PRISON?

All pupils in schools are generally heavily supervised and escorted from one area of the building to another and only given a small, but still monitored degree of freedom during play or break time – very much like a prison. Similarly, pupils who are deemed model students are often given extra privilege or responsibility which may allow them to walk more freely through the school building to relay messages or undertake monitor duties. This mirrors one of the best inmate jobs in prison – that of the prison orderly. They are inmates who are cleaners either on their wing or in a workshop or other prison department who are given far greater physical freedoms within that specific space than other inmates. It is considered a position of responsibility and only inmates with enhanced status are eligible for these positions. In both settings, those who display the cultural capitals designated as exemplary, will be sanctioned by the teachers/prison officers and rewarded with these privileges of increased trust and freedom of movement.

By contrast, pupils who do not excel by deferring to middle class values in school, and prisoners that do not conform by complying with the prison rules and deferring to the authority of the prison officers will be more strictly monitored and more likely visibly punished. In schools and prisons the management of behaviour is high on the agenda.

To maintain a constant surveillance over every student in a class or every member of a society is impossible, but to place heavy surveillance on a small minority is achievable and arguably more effective. Before interviewing former prisoners I carried out a pilot interview with a man who had not been in trouble at school, or involved in crime, or been to prison. He described being very aware of teachers unfairly targeting specific pupils who would get blamed for everything – quite often when they were in no way involved. Given that the rest of any class can see that these students who act outside of the rules get the roughest deal even when they have done nothing to warrant punishment, it is likely to have the effect of successfully encouraging conformity for fear of similar treatment. A number of the eleven men interviewed recalled being blamed by teachers for acts they had not been involved in. Brady describes being so heavily scapegoated as the chief trouble maker that the teachers found a way to apportion blame to him for an incident in his primary school that occurred when he was away on holiday!

Using Foucault's critical analysis (1977; 1980), the targeting by teaching staff described by Brady and others is useful on a number of levels. It produces knowledge about children with 'challenging' behaviour – what they look like, how they behave, why they are different from 'normal' children, and why this difference makes it appropriate to punish them and restrict or deny their education. The relentless and open surveillance of the marginal group causes other students to believe that they too are being surveilled and results in a docile student body who conform not only to the expected behaviour standards, but also accept the forms of knowledge delivered by the school. These knowledge forms include the legitimisation of the reproduction of inequalities through education described by Bourdieu and Passeron

(1990) and the privileging of middle class cultural capital. Within these conditions, the 'disruptive' pupil, their parents, their community and the teaching staff are all more likely to accept the knowledge produced about them – they are undeserving of education, deserving of punishment and expected to fail. This knowledge is so pervasive that professions have been born to deal with the phenomenon that is the child with challenging behaviour. Psychologists and Special Educational Needs professionals; social workers and medical doctors can now all become involved in the treatment of the problem that is the disruptive, disaffected, maladjusted, naughty kid.

> I used to have to see a psychiatrist and he'd just talk and ask me questions for an hour every week or so and it was stupidness like. I (also) had to go and see a psychiatrist at the hospital (…) when I might have been in Infants, it was Infants/Juniors (…) and it was stupid. They'd put me in a room and watch me play! What are you gaining from that?
>
> (John)

As alluded to above, it could be said that for all students in schools there are similar practices to be found to those experienced in prison. However, the practices encountered through the specifically unique experiences of the children designated as disruptive in schools show a much closer similarity to those found in prisons.

As Jason so eloquently described in his interview, when he was put in a cell with nothing to do for 23 hours a day and nothing but walls to look at, he was reminded of the same experience in school – being put outside of a classroom for the entire school day with nothing to do and nothing but walls to look at:

J (…) If you're someone who's not headstrong then (prison) is difficult.

KG What do you mean by that?

J Well, the way I see it, I can adapt to anything in a couple of days; I just put it to the back of my head. Whereas some people can't do that; they just dwell on it. (…)

KG So where do you think you got that kind of head strength from then?

J Well, being sat outside the classrooms every day, or outside the Headmasters just being stuck on my own all the time. So you know... your mind brings yourself back to that you know what I mean? They've pushed me from pillar to post anyway; the schools have, 'cos they don't want to give a shit about us, we're shit to them. And all they used to do is sit me outside on my Jack Jones; so sitting in a cell on my own didn't bother me either.

(Jason)

Through the school stories we see the lack of meaningful educational activity in the spaces of isolation they frequently found themselves, some of which were actually inside the classrooms. There are references to a similar lack of meaningful activity whilst serving time in prison. There were even some brief references from two of the interviewees on the unequal access they had to food in school *and* prison because of their low status within the student hierarchy and the prisoner hierarchy. When I asked Brady if there were any similarities between school and Young Offenders Institution he gave an interesting metaphor, one that only a child who felt neglected in educational terms could give:

B The similarities are with say, things like you still have to be educated…

KG But you said you weren't being educated in school though right?

B Alright… well you're still *supposed* to be! You're still supposed to be educated. As for structure wise - there wasn't because the screws [*Prison Officers*] were nothing like

teachers. The screws were like screws; the screws would swear at you and you know, if you were caught being disrespectful, they would ill-treat ya. (…) they would starve ya; they will make it as uncomfortable for you as possible.

KG So in comparison to screws, teachers aren't that bad then – is that what you're saying?

B Mm… They can both cause as much damage as each other. It's just with two different weapons (…) if they're not *encouraging* you to learn then they're starving your brain ennit? And they're not feeding you what you are supposed to be fed.

(Brady)

The parallels between the isolation of the various exclusions in schooling faced by the men interviewed and the isolation of the various exclusions found within a prison sentence are undeniable. There were also those two incredible comparisons to one particular aspect of the prison experience that was uniquely mirrored in their schooling. Jason described a teacher drawing a square in chalk on the playground floor and allowing him to skip in that square "for good behaviour". The imagery of that square marked out on the floor outside, into which Jason was allowed to briefly escape his hours of 'imprisonment' sat staring at a wall inside the school, resonates with the square yard enclosed by high wired fences that inmates in UK prisons go out to walk around when briefly released from their cells for exercise. Benji inadvertently drew a similar parallel when he was describing the 'time out room' used as punishment in the school he attended for children with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. While recalling that children would typically have to stay locked in that room alone for the entire day, he accidently begins to refer to the brief time they would be let out for "your little playtime" as "getting your exercise".

Building upon the ways in which the data addressed the first research question around a typical school experience for the men interviewed, I would argue that this unique experience mirrors the similarly unusual experience of being in prison. In line with Bowles and Gintis' theory (1976, 1988, 2002) that schools prepare children for future roles in the unequal social hierarchy, I suggest that each of these unusual school experiences on the margins directly correspond with the experience of being a prison inmate – rights of freedom are removed, they are segregated from the law-abiding society, they have to cope with the boredom of incarceration, and they are separated from their families.

6.7 IS THERE A SHARED *IDENTITY* OF MALE PRISONERS, AND (IF SO) HAS IT BEEN INFLUENCED SIGNIFICANTLY BY SCHOOLING?

The eleven men interviewed were different from each other in many ways. There was an age range of over thirty years, so they had been to school and prison in different eras. Though each of the men had lived, gone to school and served time in prison in Birmingham, England, they had been raised in different areas of the city with different family backgrounds. As human beings and social agents they were obviously individuals with unique personalities and their own choices to make. However, there was evidence in their accounts of a shared common identity. When I worked in prisons I observed that there were different social groups based usually on race, ethnicity, age, home city and (less frequently) religion. But I also observed that these were not strictly bounded social groups who did not interact with each other, but that there was a good amount of camaraderie generally amongst all of the prisoners. This subtle solidarity was always even more evident when the inmates in the main

population made direct or indirect references to the VPs. But there was also an implicit sense of *belonging*; that they recognised their shared positions and took some pride and comfort from that tacit knowledge.

Two of the interviewees further illustrate this when they describe the subtle ways in which they did not fit the model prisoner identity. Bob talks about the problems he encountered when some of the inmates became aware that he was a teacher before coming into prison. As this did not fit with what was expected from the average inmate in the main population, he perceived that some inmates made assumptions that he would not be able to display prison masculinities. He soon put them straight: "I'd done martial arts for fifteen years so I wasn't by any means a soft touch" (Bob).

And Shortie describes how he was never destined to go to prison, that his brief criminal activity and prison sentence was a blip and not consistent with his social identity, a fact both he and acquaintances that he knew from around his local area recognised:

S Basically, I shouldn't have went to prison. Everyone said it's not in your character, even when I got there, lots of people were saying 'What you doing here? How come you're here?'

KG People that knew you?

S Yeah, people that knew me 'What you doing here? You're not meant to be in here'. So obviously it was out of my character to be in prison.

(Shortie)

What is particularly interesting about Shortie's comments is that he was the only interviewee to categorically state that his schooling bore no relevance to his time in prison. Whilst his school career was not illustrious, (he acknowledges he could have tried harder and achieved more,) his story is not filled with exclusions and segregations and negative relationships with staff as all of the others are. As he was "strong headed", he was able to cope with prison perhaps as well as anyone else, but he was clear that he did not have the identity of someone who goes to prison. If Shortie's narrative is juxtaposed with the others, it makes a strong argument that there is some form of prisoner identity that is recognisable to those in that field, an identity that Shortie did not have. It is interesting that Shortie's school narrative was completely different to everyone else's and that his prison narrative also reflected some differences.

In the other accounts there were a number of references to being in prison with people who were "just like me". References that were made when responding to the question of what it was like the first time they went to prison. These comments could certainly be attributed to a shared identity, and there is also a good deal of other evidence that these social identities may have existed within the context of a possible *community of practice*.

As detailed in **Chapter Two**, the factors that define a community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) are that the members have a shared domain of interest; a community that shares ideas, knowledge and supports other members; and a shared practice.
The domain of interest for a group of boys on the margins of school, fully aware of their low status within the school hierarchy and severely reduced chances of achieving educational

successes, could initially be survival. Their first concern would be to not succumb to the negative attention from staff and possibly pupils, and to use strategies to enable them to navigate the very difficult spaces they inhabit. Andy gives examples of the coping strategies used by the members of the Special Unit he was part of in primary school – they would share tips on how to respond to bullies and provide each other with the support and understanding that was not available from teachers or other children. Their next level interest may be to obtain a sense of worth and/or self-esteem outside of the traditional routes offered in school as positive rewards such as praise from teachers or good grades were unlikely to be forthcoming. The narratives suggest this was often pursued through overt masculinities – Brady spoke of the respect he gained by the threat of violence and Anthony mentioned that his group's toughness meant that the 'clever' kids could not belittle them due to their lack of educational capital.

Similarly, the involvement in offending behaviours that brought monetary rewards either as they finished school or later in their adult life would not merely have been a survival tactic used due to traditional routes to earning money being less accessible, but also as a way to achieve success. Brady argues that a lot of young men who commit crimes for profit do so because they are not happy to be poor, and as they believe they cannot earn decent money by legitimate means, they are very prepared to risk a prison term while trying to make large sums of money. Part of his argument reiterates the research contention that life in prison is not difficult for those in this *community* of men who go to prison:

> …the motto of inner city youts [*youths*] is… I'd rather be in jail than a bum on the roads. So a lot of the youts that are frequently in jail are youts that are out here, that are in their own mind trying to make something of themselves. (…) So they think if I go and rob this place and get 140 grand then that'll solve my problems, but boot on the other foot, if I get caught jail's not that bad anyway, so I can ride it.
>
> (Brady)

The ideas, knowledge and support that also define a community of practice are evident in the interviews. Jason describes his first time in a Young Offenders Institution and how his first cell mate gave him the benefit of his experience by advising him on the do's and don'ts as a newcomer. He also enjoyed receiving the benefit of his mentor's experience of stealing cars: "he learned me how to nick any car I wanted in seconds." There are a number of examples given of the men either giving or receiving support whilst in prison. Brady argues that this support can often be much stronger than anything experienced outside of prison:

> (…) you make proper relationships. There's friends that I've met in jail that are, you know... I probably would never make friends like that on road! People are a lot… yeah, are loyal… because we're all in the same boat ennit? So we all have a better understanding and we all open up that bit more, and we're all that bit more caring about each other.
>
> (Brady)

The shared practice of Lave and Wenger's communities could be defined as the practice of earning a living by illegal means, or the seemingly associated practice of displaying appropriate masculinities; one of the legitimate cultural capitals among this community. This

is something David unconsciously referred to when he told his story of one of his first experiences on the prison wing when he was newly arrived at a Young Offenders Institution:

> (…) we've gone on association [*free time on the wing*], and everyone is playing pool. So obviously I wanna play but I'm just standing around. So then I said to this kid, who seemed to be one of the boys, I says 'can I have a game like?' he says 'yeah'… *in fact* did I even ask? I'm not sure if I even asked, but I'm standing around – I think somebody else asked, and this kid said 'well *he's first*' pointing at me, 'he's next, he's next and then you can play'. And was like, **surprised** 'OK sound, not gonna argue'. Maybe if you look a certain way – well you do don't you? You can spot people that are weak and I guess that people who look weak… maybe it's your aura? It must be something mustn't it?
>
> (David)

David cannot quite define what it is that enables him to recognise which of the other lads on the wing is "one of the boys", (that is, high up the inmate hierarchy), but his knowledge gained through his membership in the community of practice allows him to both recognise who is in charge and to also display the appropriate cultural capitals to be immediately recognised and accepted by those in charge.

In addition to the shared practice and support identified, the interviews revealed something of a "professional network" (Foucault 1991, p300). John described a network of boys to young men to men that he had come into contact with at various points in his trajectory from school to prison. He met boys in taxis transporting children with behaviour difficulties to Special Schools, who he later met in Boarding School and later still in prison. This network operates as any other, providing opportunities to meet others, gain experience and reinforce the community's expertise and legitimacy.

Lave and Wenger's concept (1991), whilst most often used in formal learning contexts or working environments can give an insight into how these young 'disruptive' pupils can learn through participation in this community of practice how to become prison inmates. There is a type of informal apprenticeship of which they are their own masters that runs alongside their marginal positions at the absolute bottom of the unequal hierarchy in schools. The sense of power and self-esteem achieved through the almost hyper-masculinities associated with delinquent or offending networks is similar to the deference to masculinities of Willis' (1977) lads.

Willis' ethnography demonstrated the cultural benefits to the group of emphasising masculinities. This process clearly set them aside from the students attempting to do well in school, whilst at the same time rejecting the legitimacy of academic work. As presented in both **Chapters Four** and **Five** there are a great number of references to the superiority achieved by emphasising the most masculine of traits and qualities, not least because it enabled the problem pupils and prison inmates to compare themselves favourably to those who were evidently *weak*. They were able to gain respect in their school years by acting as a protector of the weak by defending other children from bullies. In prison a number of the men displayed a similar concern for those that were outwardly showing weakness, something considered dangerous as it invited intimidation:

> If I went to play pool and that I used to say you know 'just keep your heads up; you know – don't let 'em get to ya. Just try and be strong'. But then they used to go back to the cell and cry all night. Once you hear 'em crying at night all the other lags, all the inmates will take the piss out of 'em; the ones who were stronger than them.
>
> (Jason)

Even so, the majority of references to the *inappropriate* weakness of a minority of inmates were through a process of *othering* that highlighted their own masculine qualities as both superior and absolutely necessary. There was also a consistent othering of the VPs as the epitome of inappropriateness and illegitimacy:

B (…) if someone was finding it difficult, they are either *suicidal* or they're gonna be put on the 'numbers' where they won't associate with us public, the normal population.
KG The numbers? Is that the VPs; the vulnerable prisoners?
B They get put with them people or they'd be put on (suicide) watch and that.
KG So what's the difference between a suicide watch and the numbers or the VPs? (…)
B A suicide watch *is* just a person who will take his life; that will harm himself ennit, 'cos they can't cope with being in their position. But someone on the numbers they could be like paedophiles and all them people that normal population would wanna tear them apart if they get to them, so they have to keep them separate from them ennit?

(Benji)

This particular use of esteem through archetypal masculinities is important when the men's narratives are examined for reasons that they may continue to behave in ways at school that consistently placed them in marginal spaces that none of them (excepting perhaps Buster) appeared to enjoy. They were positioned as an underclass that the teachers and school had written off, so to imagine that they would still aspire to academic success as a route to work when they could perhaps only envision a route to unemployment or a life of hustling through illegal means, would be to discount their accurate perceptions of what were their objective realities. Of course, Bob was an exceptional example of a student that bucked this trend. After leaving school he became determined to not consent to the low status position

his schooling had afforded him and worked towards academic success and access to professional employment. Nonetheless he maintained his skills and knowledge gained through his marginal school experiences which included confidence in his masculinities: he was not a “soft touch”.

The predictions of children’s future outcomes by either typing of pupils by teaching staff or actual educational achievements do not have to seal a child’s fate. Bob shows how the experiences and outcomes of schooling can be mitigated by a determination to not be strictly bound by them. He did not accept the schools version of him as legitimate, and chose to start again in education to create a different outcome. However, what his story tells us is that he strove to gain legitimacy through the same system that had initially rejected him. Rather than completely discounting the educational experience as irrelevant and seeking to achieve success via another field, he returned to education to be remade as legitimate. He was so influenced by this form of legitimacy that he went on to become a qualified teacher.

This was one of a number of fascinating connections theorised from the interview group’s individual life stories. Two more such interesting connections will be discussed in the next section.

6.4 INTERESTING CONNECTIONS

In **Chapter Four** and **Five**, interesting aspects of some of the individual stories were flagged. Given the theoretical frameworks and responses to the research questions discussed above,

these possible connections between the very specific school histories and number of sentences served by a small number of the men is worthy of discussion. Three of the men spent by far the most amount of time in prison. John served 15 – 20 sentences; Benji over 17 sentences; and Buster between 12 and 14 sentences. Buster's family's criminal influence has already been discussed in the previous chapters, but his school history was still littered with exclusions and punishments like most of the others – he just appeared to have been unconcerned about this aspect of his school experience. He also stated, almost in passing, that he had been sent away to a children's home for "naughty lads", a place where at least one of his older brothers had also been sent to previously. Both John and Benji experienced substantial exclusions that involved Special Schools for children with behavioural problems and boarding schools for delinquent children.

Given the extensive and intensive exclusions they faced as children it is perhaps not surprising that their experiences of prison were equally extensive.

Buster's casual attitude to his schooling and upbringing are also worthy of note. For him getting caned all of the time and shoplifting and getting drunk on school trips was "just part of growing up". During his interview he may have been displaying a bravado that positioned being awoken by police raiding the house as a young boy or hanging another inmate in a Young Offenders Institution as nothing out of the ordinary, but he may also have been recalling what was in reality the "normal" he knew. As such, his lack of concern over the constant punishments he received through school may reveal a difference in his response and corresponding behaviour in adult life that set his prison stories aside from the majority.

For the others, the punishments and segregations faced in school *were* a problem – they did not enjoy being the naughty kid or the negative attention that came with it. But they appeared to both resist their position by engaging in a counter community of practice, whilst at the same time internalising the school's view of themselves. By doing this they accepted the legitimacy of the school and the knowledge that was produced about them. Buster perhaps did not. His narrative is very convincing in the contention that 'school is just something that you have to do – it does not really mean anything'. If this is the case, this might account for the high level of violence and non-conformity he displayed in prison. Had the school's versions of the other men worked so well on them to produce model, compliant prison inmates, but this had not been effective in Buster's case? Perhaps this is why he spent so much time in solitary confinement in prison and why he ultimately had to be threatened with the liquid cosh?

With only eleven men providing their life histories and questions such as those posed above not raised when I worked in prisons, they cannot be reliably used as comparative data. However they do continue to resonate with the rest of the data and the theoretical interpretations discussed. In the conclusions drawn from this thesis, which are presented in the next chapter, the potential for these interesting possible connections to be followed up in further research will be stated.

6.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the research questions have been addressed using the interview data and discussed using the key theoretical frameworks.

The data confirms that there was a typical and unique experience of schooling for the men interviewed. This experience directly corresponded with the prison experience and partly as a result of that; serving time in prison was not difficult. There is some evidence from the interviews of a shared identity of prisoners that may contribute to the relative ease experienced in prison for boys and men who share this identity. There is stronger evidence of a community of practice.

In the next and concluding chapter I will discuss the implications of the research findings within the current socio-political context: what are the implications for social and educational research and policy? I argue that the problems of 'challenging' pupil behaviour in schools and the criminal behaviour that can lead to prison need to be reframed from a theoretical perspective that revisits the inequality and legitimacy producing functions of schooling.

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHERE TO NOW? THESIS SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This research project was born out of my personal and social position, my academic affinity with critical Sociology and my professional teaching practice in adult male prisons. Information gathered during hundreds of prison induction interviews signalled the possible significance of school *experience* over educational outcomes. I also observed an apparent ease with which men lived in prison. This led to the question: do inmates experience a preparation for prison that begins in school? I conducted in-depth life history style interviews with eleven former inmates to investigate this principal question.

This concluding chapter begins with a summary of the key findings of the research. I will then assert the uniqueness and relevance of the thesis with reference to existing research in the field. This includes a critical discussion of the current discursive and policy approaches to school pupils' so-called challenging behaviour. I also reflect on the shortcomings and limitations of this Doctoral thesis. Finally I take a long term view and discuss possible future applications or extensions of the research.

7.2 KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

Negative educational outcomes in the form of poor or no qualifications and/or official exclusion from school are shown to be associated with the probability of young and adult offending (Farrington et al, 1978, 2006; Graham and Bowling, 1995). Punitive interventions by schools, social services and/or the criminal justice system are also known to significantly increase the likelihood of young people becoming long term offenders (Case, 2006, Goldson, 2001). This has led to campaigns to reduce the level of official school exclusions and custodial sentencing for convicted offenders. My research adds to this debate by analysing the effects of unofficial and internal school exclusions and emphasising the significance of the *experience* of the hidden curriculum of schooling on a group of former prison inmates. Rather than discussing how pupils labelled problematic or challenging can be 'included' in schools, I reposition the issue to consider how the education system produces and legitimises inequalities and often uses 'naughty kids' as boundary markers in this process. The significance of the hidden curriculum of education that is argued to prepare students for their expected future work roles is also extended to include the role of prisoner.

The school experiences of men who go to prison

It has been well established that imprisoned offenders typically have low levels of education. There are also high levels of official school exclusion among prisoners (Murray, 2012). The former prisoners interviewed for this research described a unique experience of schooling where they were relegated to or positioned on the margins. This experience was

characterised by negative relationships with teaching staff, segregation from the mainstream school population and exclusion from quality educational activity.

Ten of the eleven men interviewed in depth were identified as apparently challenging or disruptive early in their primary schooling. The types of behaviours that were punished when they were so young included what might be viewed as relatively low level acts such as not remaining silent in an outdoor P.E. class at aged 5 years old. They were also sanctioned for talking too much, talking in any way deemed inappropriate by a teacher, or not following instructions to the teacher's satisfaction. The sanctions applied in response to these or other incidences of low level disruption (DfE, 2012b) invariably involved segregation or exclusion at some level. At primary school this involved being sent to sit in other areas of the classroom, or outside the classroom, or outside a head teacher's office. During these internal exclusions they were provided with very little (if any) activity to occupy them – typically required to write 'lines', copy text from books or sit silently. As these occurrences of segregation increased, their learning suffered and they began to fall behind educationally. These types of exclusions, and the developing label of disruptive or remedial child that accompanied them, influenced the nature of relationships with other pupils. They were sometimes mocked for their slow educational progress or teased because of their obvious *otherness*. They found themselves aligning with similarly segregated pupils and becoming more likely to get into physical fights. If and when fights did occur, harsher sanctions would be employed by the school. The majority of the men interviewed reported being expelled or officially excluded from primary school. Some were sent to alternative settings for children with behavioural problems, including residential boarding schools.

Many described a desire to make a fresh start and leave their negative experiences of primary school behind when they moved on to the secondary schooling. They were thwarted in this effort by the extra surveillance they encountered due to reports from their former school or the reputation they had acquired among peers. Other children with the same 'challenging' behaviour label tended to seek them out as allies, and those considered legitimate learners (Rollock, 2007) made sure to avoid them. Teachers anticipated trouble and so heavily monitored their conduct. This heavy surveillance has been shown to lead to unequal and disproportionate use of negative sanctions against particular pupils (Youdell, 2003). The overemphasis on their behaviour also led to a further withdrawal of quality educational activity as they were again routinely segregated from their mainstream peers. This could be through relegation to lower ability sets (irrespective of their academic capabilities) or via the more structured forms of internal exclusion such as 'time-out', 'the sin bin' or 'isolation'. Fighting and overt masculinities were consistent features of their secondary schooling; aspects that invariably led to more official school exclusions. Some of the men exited school early. All achieved substandard educational outcomes.

The correspondence between inmates' school and prison experiences

As outlined in **Chapter Two** Bowles and Gintis (1976, 1988, 2002) argue that schooling prepares children for their anticipated adult work through the hidden curriculum of school social relationships and hierarchies. Through what they term the *correspondence principle* the schooling of middle class children, which uses loose supervision and encourages independent thinking, mirrors their expected professional or managerial work roles. By contrast, they argue the schooling of lower class students focusses more on restricting the

children's behaviour and continually reinforcing the authority of the teacher. This readies children for their anticipated role of low skilled worker. Further, children come to recognise the positions they hold within the unequal social hierarchies of education, which prepares them to occupy a similar position within the unequal hierarchy of work without complaint.

My research found evidence of this type of correspondence between the former inmates' schooling and their experience of prison. During their school years they were routinely segregated from the mainstream school population. They were removed to spaces of physical isolation and provided with nothing or very little to do whilst there. They were often ostracised by 'well-behaved' pupils. They were subject to heavy surveillance and supervision; frequently denied the same level of movement permitted to other children. Within classrooms they might be restricted to only one area and they were often individually escorted by staff when moving around the school. Often, their frequent punishments meant they were denied time outdoors for either physical education classes or break times. Instead they would remain inside the school building, confined to a small area such as a table and chair outside of the head teacher's office.

These conditions are also found within the prison environment. Inmates are segregated from the mainstream population. They are restricted to the isolation of small prison cells, with little or nothing to occupy them, sometimes for 23 hours a day. They are ostracised by politicians, the media and the wider law abiding society. Their movement around the prison is severely restricted by the presence of locked gates and doors between every landing, wing and building. Group movement of inmates around the prison only happens with prison

officer supervision and individual inmates are only permitted to move around with a prison officer escort. The majority of inmates' days in prison are spent inside the building. Even if they are out of their prison cells and engaged in some activity within the wider prison regime, it is still *inside*. Prisoners are permitted only a small amount of time each day to go outside into the fresh air to 'exercise'. I therefore argue that the former inmates' unique schooling experience on the periphery of the mainstream school population provided a preparation for the parallel experience of being a prisoner. Further, through their schooling they appeared to develop the capitals and habitus (Bourdieu, 1986) that were useful to their later time in prison.

Communities of Practice

Alongside the structural nature of their restricted schooling, the men were also building networks and developing coping strategies that served to help them to better cope with later prison life. They met and formed alliances with other children who were being similarly excluded, a network that continued building as they were removed from mainstream school and sent to alternative settings. By the time they began their first custodial sentence they saw familiar faces, boys they had met at schools for children with behaviour difficulties, boarding schools and Key Centres. If they did not personally recognise any friends or allies, they were reassured that most of the other inmates were 'just like them'. They had a recognisable set of dispositions, skills and attitudes that had been developed through learning how to navigate the structural experiences of their schooling. I argue they constitute a *community of practice* (Lave and Wenger, 1991) which began as children in schools and continued on the streets, through their offending and into prison. This

community of practice combined with the structural realities of their schooling to provide a well-rounded preparation for their future prisoner role.

7.3 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

The ways in which schools are directly contributing to the criminalisation of children in the United States has been heavily researched (Brown, 2006; Casella, 2003, Hirschfield, 2008; Meiners and Winn, 2010). Known as the school-to-prison pipeline, the scale and nature of this US phenomenon is unprecedented and unparalleled (in line with their incredibly high incarceration rates). However the UK Government has recently begun to amplify the punitive responses schools can mete out, and extended some of those authorities to reach outside the school. Teachers now have increased powers to use force and to search pupils for either illegal items or items banned by school rules, such as mobile phones. Schools have been given powers to punish behaviour that has occurred off school premises or out of school hours. Certain rights at school exclusion appeals have also been rescinded (Gove, 2011). Research into the effect of these zero tolerance social policies in UK and US schools focusses on the increased likelihood of being excluded from school or even receiving a criminal record for breaking school rules. Other research examines the effect of this increase in punitive schooling on pupil aspirations, educational outcomes and ultimate social inclusion/exclusion as adults.

My research adds to this discussion of the school-to-prison pipeline, a discussion that could be tailored to examine the possibility of similar phenomena in the UK. It does not examine

the route from school to prison, through theorising the connection between poor educational outcomes; exclusion from school and offending behaviour. Instead it explores the *direct correspondence* between a punitive school and a prison. This correspondence is relevant and significant because it may explain why prison is ineffective as a deterrent. The findings show that by the time the men were sentenced to their first custodial sentence, the austere, unforgiving environment of a prison was not a shock or particularly difficult for them to deal with. They had been experiencing the same physical conditions and social relations for many years, and from a young age. This new experience of prison was not new at all – it was normal and familiar.

Implications for Social Policy

The negative school experiences and outcomes described by the men in this research are presented in social and school policy discourse as a within-child or within-family problem. This discourse rests on a deficit model which labels the children as problems and ignores or discounts the structural factors affecting non-middle class families and their relationships with schools. By focussing on the apparent inadequacies of working class families, this discourse also hides the blatant deference to middle class values and social capitals in UK schools that inevitably privilege middle class families and their children (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). This deficit model usually results in a perceived need to intervene in attempts to fix what are seen as working class or underclass inadequacies. Again this process masks the promotion of middle class values as the neutral and natural norm, but is also largely ineffective as it is more likely to reinforce and amplify the so-called problem behaviour than change it.

These interventions can take many forms that appear to be benevolent and charitable, but these are acts of *symbolic violence* (Bourdieu, 1991). They can serve to denigrate working class values and skills and reinforce acceptance of the unequal hierarchy in which they are unfairly positioned at the bottom. Alongside these apparently benevolent interventions are the punitive measures employed in attempts to force children of working class families to conform to the expectations of schools. These range from fining parents for their children's lateness or absence from school, to the removal of children to boarding schools as described by three of the men in this study. These type of punishments are justified as being in the interest of the 'greater good' – disruptive pupils cannot be allowed to hamper the education of hardworking, diligent children (Gillies, 2005). Through these discursive definitions the excluded children unavoidably become labelled as lazy or bad and undeserving of education. As their behaviour is seen to be problematic, this is where the interventions are focussed and educational activity slows down or stops altogether.

Given the breadth of evidence that low educational achievement and official school exclusion increases the chance of various forms of social marginalisation (including the onset of offending), these social policies are clearly flawed and are frequently challenged.

Building on critical theories of social reproduction through education, my research suggests that these policies that appear to be failing may actually be successful in other ways. By identifying and punishing pupils with 'problem' behaviour, schools are marking the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for the rest of the school population - a perhaps essential ingredient to ensure conformity from the majority. It can be argued the parallel

social policies that rely on prisons in response to offending serve the same ideological function. This may explain why prison sentences that do little to reduce offending rates, at great expense to the public purse are favoured over alternatives to custodial sentences advocated by prison reformers and abolitionists.

By critically theorising the ideologically useful function of isolation rooms in schools and prison in society, I argue that no significant improvement will be made to the school experiences of marginalised students without looking at the ***entire*** system of schooling and how it is reproduces and legitimates the unequal social order.

7.4 THE LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

While the number of prison induction interviews was substantial, the information gathered was during professional practice and not under research conditions. As such, accurate records of the induction accounts were not available to me once I had stopped working at the prison. I therefore refer to these accounts with approximations and generalisations. The induction interviews in prison were the catalyst for the Doctoral research, and served as background, but I ceased to have access to the induction interview data in ways that enabled me to report it fully.

As discussed in **Chapter Three**, I used a loosely structured conversational interview technique. This resulted in no two interviews being the same. While the quality of the data was excellent, and provided similar themes across the interviews, when I came to code the

transcripts I considered whether a more consistent structure might have produced accounts that could also have been compared. If I were to repeat this study I would certainly pilot a more structured interview schedule (though still aimed at eliciting life history narratives) to see if the same quality of data could be obtained

7.5 POSSIBILITIES FOR THE FUTURE

This EdD project was conducted without the support of financial resources or the benefit of a research team. There were false starts and changes of plans that extended the data collection and overall research process considerably. Nonetheless, the data collected via the eleven in-depth interviews was so extensive that all of it could not be included in this thesis. Themes relating to the men's resistance to the authority of teachers and schools emerged that could be included in an extended exploration of the data.

Gender and race were also talked about in more detail than I have given space to here, but as these themes emerged from only two or three of the interviews they were not included as standalone themes. This being said, Bob's interview revealed the significance of race in every part of his life story. He described how racism from children and teachers impacted on his education, how he had to avoid Black males from other areas of Birmingham when he was travelling to college, how he believed his race had significantly influenced the judge and jury's decision to convict him of his first offence and send him to prison, and how race and racism again impacted on his relationships with staff and inmates in prison. Bob's life story narrative was incredibly powerful – the data could arguably be the sole focus of a Doctoral

thesis. I have already presented a paper focussing only on Bob's story at a conference exploring Blackness in Britain and intend to follow up this aspect of the research.

The interesting connections between the very high levels of school exclusion and their equally high number of prison sentences for three of the men could be expanded with a larger sample. As could further examination of the identities and experiences of prisoners who, like Shortie, did not experience a schooling defined by exclusions.

As identified in **Chapter Three**, I aimed to include men of Asian ethnicities in the study, but was unable to facilitate this. If I could take this particular project further I would ensure that men from other ethnic backgrounds than White British and Black Caribbean were also included. Due to similar issues of access, this research is clearly focussed on boys and men. The project could certainly be advanced to explore whether the experiences of school and prison correspond for female prisoners in the same ways.

Alternative methods and different settings

I have presented my research findings to teaching professionals in conferences and seminars and have also spent considerable time visiting schools recently as a parent looking for school places for my two children. This inspired a motivation to include observations of the use of isolation and other internal and external exclusions in schools now. These observations would be aimed at theorising the discourses employed by policy makers, teachers, parents and pupils to justify the use of these punitive sanctions. It would also provide an up-to-date

picture of students' experiences on the margins – is it more pronounced in the era of Ofsted reports and the marketisation of education?

On reflection, it could also be useful to observe or interview first timers in Young Offenders Institutions. If I were able to obtain funding and recruit a team of researchers I could perhaps return to the original prison proposal, but seek to interview a large representative sample of prisoners in order that the qualitative findings could also be quantified. The prison induction interviews that inspired the research suggested the possibility of a shared school experience among the majority of inmates - evidence from a large scale qualitative survey would be compelling.

7.6 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Teaching in prison was incredibly rewarding. The prisoners were eager to learn and very appreciative of quality teaching and educational resources. Good humour and camaraderie were ever present among the inmates. As a civilian member of staff with a working class background I found this solidarity was often extended to me. On the (very rare) occasion that a prisoner behaved in any way that could be construed as disrespectful towards me, other inmates would intervene to interrupt the behaviour and ensure an apology was issued. I had some of the most meaningful conversations of my lifetime with inmates in prison. Maybe it is all the time the inmates have to think that creates an environment conducive to deep exchanges about the nature of life and its problems. I learned so much about the possibilities of life through their continued resilience and kindness. They could still laugh and

joke and console each and hope for the future when they were imprisoned for sometimes very lengthy sentences. For me, being in prison was a wholly positive experience.

This research was born out of that professional experience and has been equally rewarding. I am incredibly grateful to each of the eleven men who took their time to share parts of their life histories with me. I found the experience of interviewing was simultaneously heart-breaking and inspirational. As I had hoped, a number of the men found the process to be cathartic. My further hope is that in the writing of this thesis I have done justice to their life stories. Their early lives that were at times labelled ‘a waste’ or ‘a failure’ can now be seen as the culmination of a number of social injustices delivered via the education system.

APPENDICES

Appendix I Interview Schedule

Appendix II Research Information Sheet and Consent Form

Appendix III Completed Ethics EC2 for PGR Students

Appendix IV Prison Research Application

APPENDIX I

Interview Schedule

Outline of the research project including some information about myself.

- Former prison teacher with family members who have been to prison.
- EdD research – what it is, who will read it, possibility of other publication.

Description of the interview/research process including all possible uses of the data and rights to withdraw.

- Conversation focussing on school experiences from interviewees viewpoint.
- Digitally recorded for ease of transcription, only people who are able to listen to the recordings are myself and research supervisors (though in reality supervisors are unlikely to listen to too much of the interview(s).)
- Recording will be put into written form, and all names and other identifiers will be changed to ensure anonymity. In a mutually convenient second meeting, interviewees will then be able to review the content of the interview and request removal of any sections they are not happy to remain, or indeed, can withdraw altogether. If there are any further reflections since the initial interview or since reading the transcript, these can also be noted and/or recorded.

Any Questions?
OK let's turn on the recorder and start the interview.

Some general background to begin with.

- How old are you now?
- How old where you when you left school/education? What qualifications did you gain?
- How many times have you been in prison and/or other secure institutions?
- What age were you when you first went? When you were last there?
- Where would you say you 'are now' in your life? (*Prompts: Working? Family? Coping? Thriving? Struggling? Etc.*)

Let's talk about your schooling.

- How many different schools did you go to? (*Prompts: Primary; Secondary; Secure Schools)*
- If you could sum up your feelings about your schooling in a sentence, what would you say?
- From the beginning then, what was school like for you when you first started? (*Prompts: the physical building(s); teachers (how did you see teachers generally? any particular teachers stand out for any reason?); peers (who were the peers you were attracted to/sought out, why these and not others?); family members (siblings in and out of your school, parents, other extended family of significance); what was learned (subjects, curriculum)*). How did you get on generally in your early schooling? Are there any incidents/things/events that stick out from those times? If so, why do you think

that was so significant? What did you think/feel at the time about it? How do you think others (teachers; peers; family) felt about it? What where the 'values' in this school? (What impression did you get that school was 'all about'?) Where did you fit in with the scheme of things? Were you comfortable/happy with this position? Would you say that you had a role/identity as a particular 'type' of kid in school at that time? How, if at all, did this vary between relationships? (Say between friends and teachers, for example). If there was such a recognised school identity, did this have any impact on the way your day to day school life was experienced?

- So moving on through your schools… How, if at all, did things change as you moved to a new school? Did you have any choice in which school you went to? Did former peers move with you to the school? What was school like now? (*Similar questions as above, and continue on to cover all schools*). Were there streams or sets in school? And where were you?
- Did you get into any serious trouble at school? If so, describe this (*at what age; what were the contributors to this; was there an isolated incident or was there a pattern of 'trouble'?*) Was there a point at which you began to be 'seen as trouble'?
- How did schooling end? What experiences of education have you had since then? How, if at all, have they differed from your school experiences?

If we reflect on your experiences of school then…

- What did you learn in school in terms of skills/academic knowledge; about yourself; about the world? Did you see a value to education – could it do anything for you? Or was it not for you. Has you view on this changed with time?
- Did you at any stage in your schooling think or feel 'I'm going in this direction now'? What plans or expectations did you have for after you had finished school? What did you base these on do you think? Did these pan out?

Let's talk about prison.

- Do you think it is very difficult for men to adjust to being inside – when they first come in? Or even when they've been in lots of time? How do you learn to become part of prison life? How do you learn the ways to behave?
- Is there a difference in the way different men deal with being inside? Why do you think this is? How did you manage?
- Why do you think men who have been to prison often come back again?

Closing question – **what effect (if any) do you think your school experiences had on you going to prison?**

Thanks and what will happen next.

- I'll make a written transcript of the interview.
- We'll meet again so you can read it and let me know if there's anything else you want to add, or if there's any part you want taken out.

APPENDIX II

"Reflections on what school prepared us for": An exploration and interpretation of imprisoned offenders' perceptions of their own schooling.

The project focuses on prison inmates' own views of their individual experiences of school. Around 12 men will be involved in the project. Each will be interviewed one-to-one, by the same researcher, who will ask them to describe and discuss their prior educational experiences.

Why is the research being done?

I am a postgraduate university student and former Prison teacher who is interested in finding out about the school experiences of men who are in prison. The project will give you the opportunity to tell your own stories of what school was like for you. These stories will be central to my Doctoral thesis.

How will it be done?

Each interview will last about 2 hours and each interview will be recorded. You will be asked a few questions to help you think and talk about your school days and any effects they may have had on you. From the recording, I will make a written copy of the interview, which I will show to you a few days later. You can then make any further comments on the issues discussed, and tell me if there are any parts of the interview you do not wish to be included in the research.

What if you change your mind?

There may be things said during the interview that you later realise you do not wish to be included in the written copy. You will be able to tell me which specific areas you wish to be removed. It may even be the case that you decide that you don't want any of what you've said to be included in the project. It is your right to say this and to withdraw from the project at any time (without giving a reason).

Who will see/hear the information given?

Only my supervisors at university and I will be able to listen to the recordings. When I am making the written copy of each interview, I will change all names, events and places that could identify you. I will be using information contained in these written copies as part of my Doctoral degree, and sections of the interviews will appear in my final thesis. It is also possible that I will publish academic articles or even a book based on the interview material, but, again, all names will be changed.

Please Be Aware: Although the recordings will be confidential, and your identities disguised for the purposes of the research, I must inform you that should you discuss any previously undisclosed illegal behaviour or breaches of prison rules, I am ***obliged by law*** to pass this on to relevant prison staff. However, this is not the focus of this research, and I would advise you not to reveal any such information to me. Similarly, if I should be concerned about your welfare or the welfare of another inmate (for whatever reason), it may be necessary to pass on my concerns to prison staff.

APPENDIX II

Consent Form for participation in the "Reflections on what school prepared us for" Project.

Please fill in the following details and tick the boxes below if you agree with the statements and wish to take part in the research.

Please feel free to discuss this further with the researcher or a member of Prison staff.

NAME:

NUMBER:

LOCATION:

I have read the attached information sheet and understand that:

I can withdraw from the project at any point without giving a reason ☐

The interview recordings will be confidential to the researcher and her university supervisors ☐

My identity will be disguised in any written material ☐

If I discuss previously undisclosed illegal acts or acts concerning the security of the Prison or wellbeing of an inmate (including myself), the researcher will be obligated to pass this information on to Prison staff. ☐

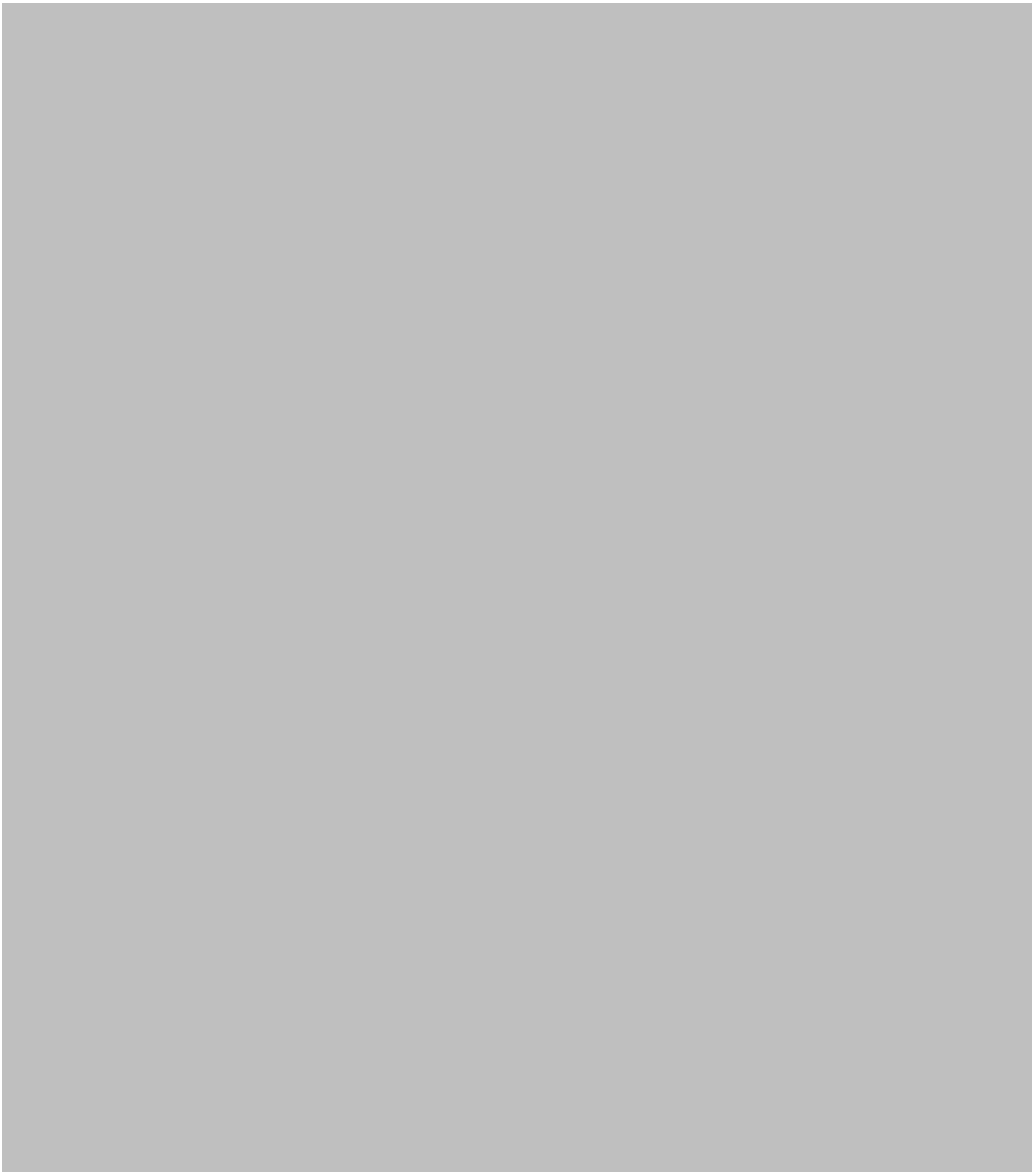
By signing the form below, I agree to take part in the research project.

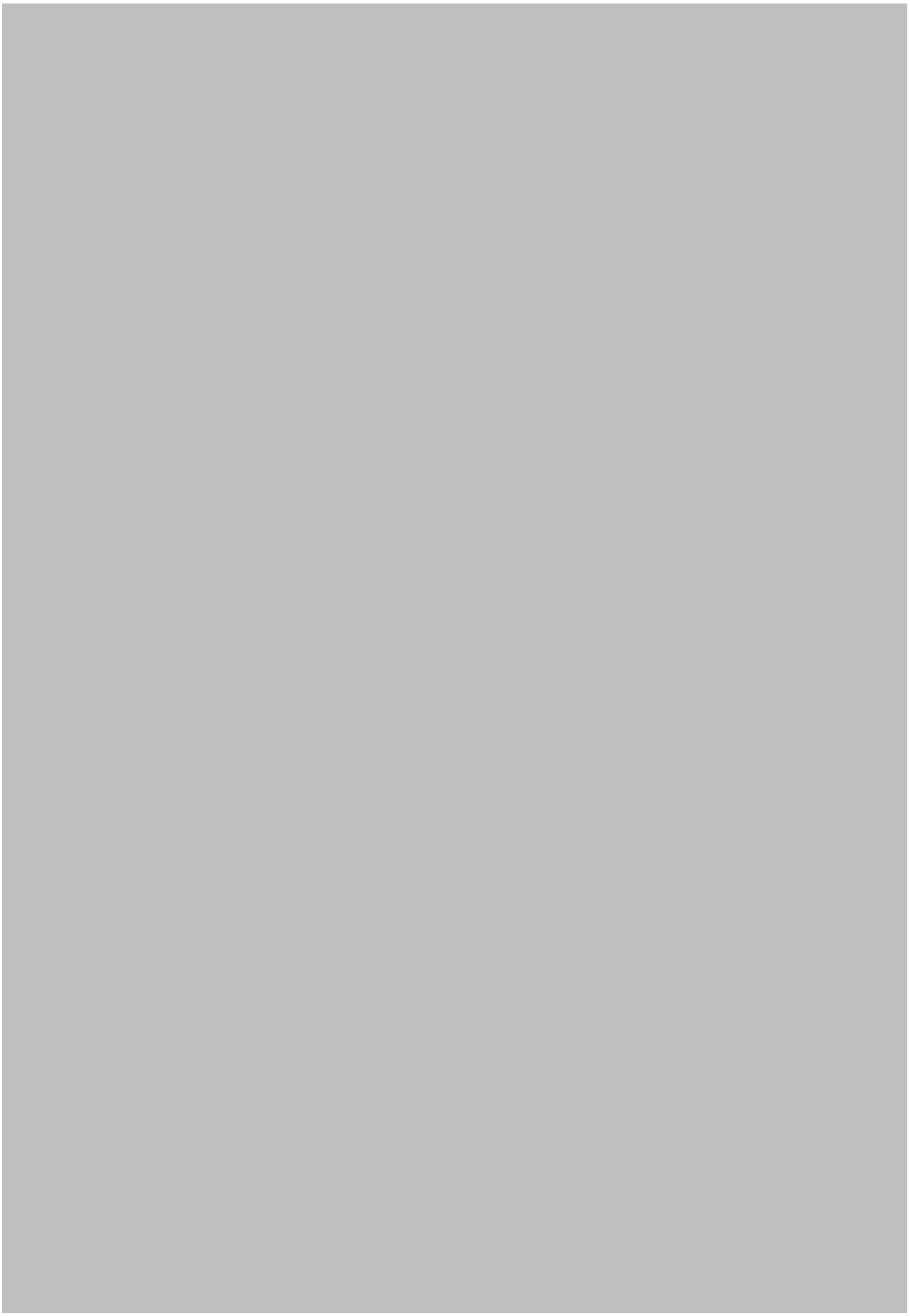
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Date:

APPENDIX III

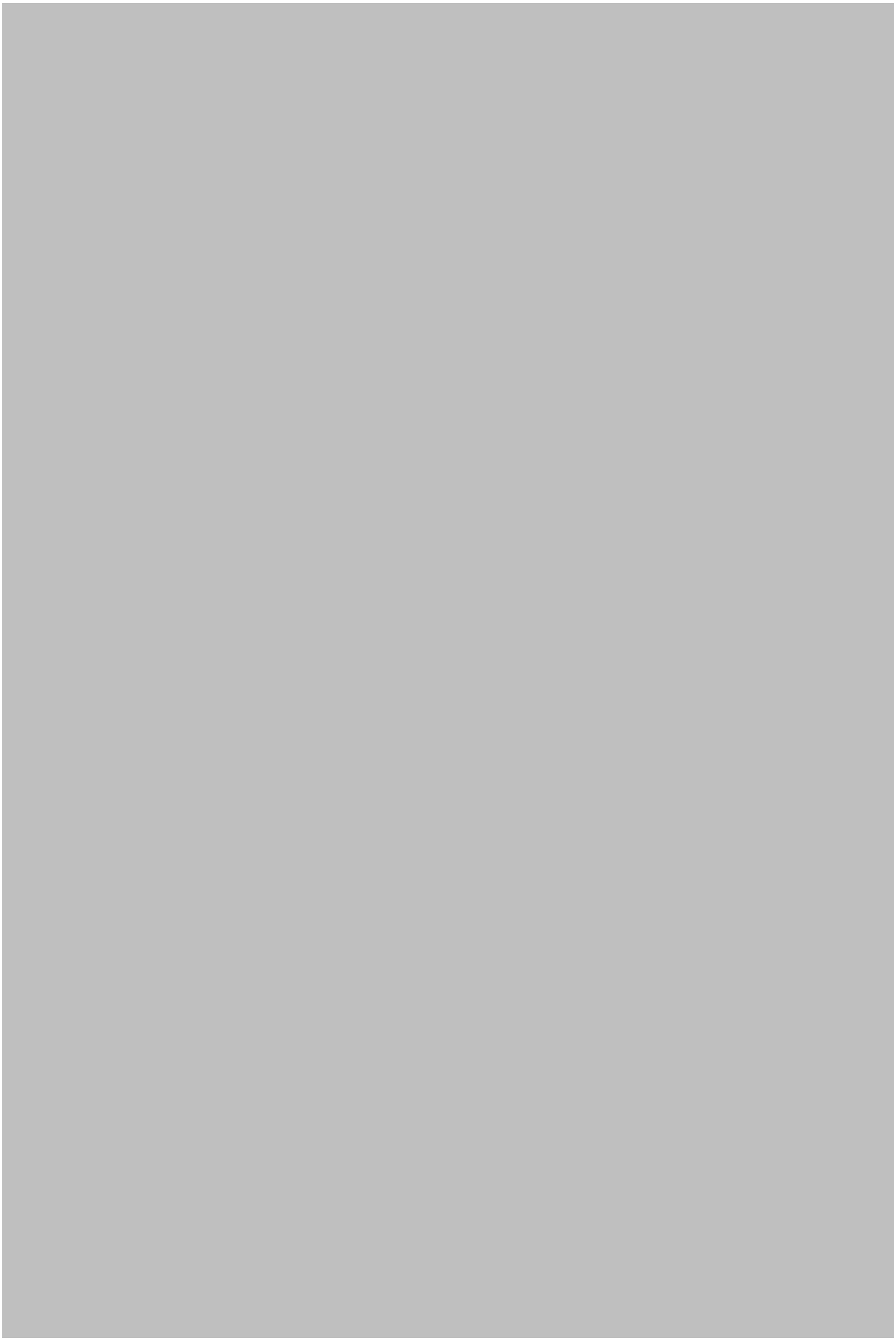
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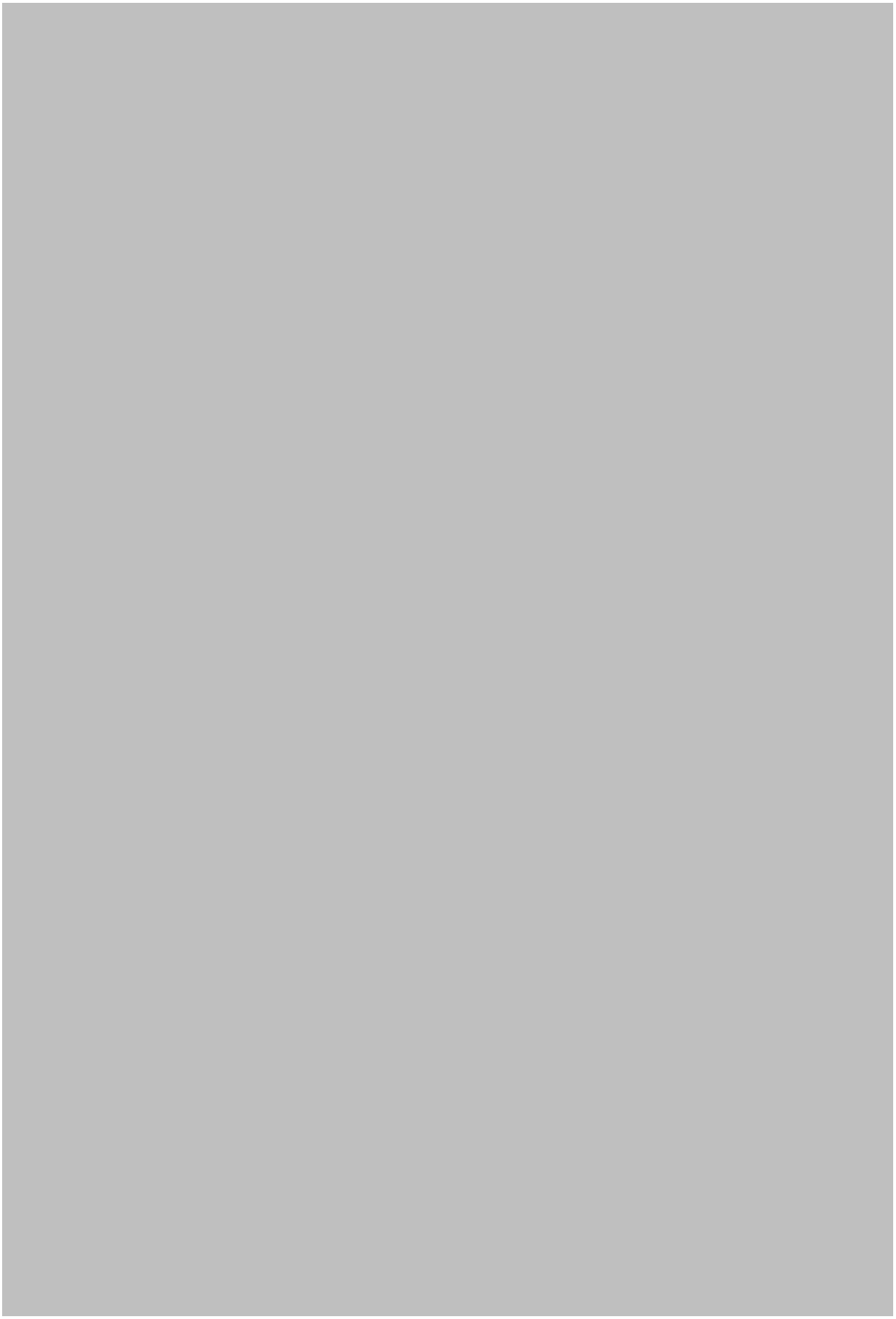




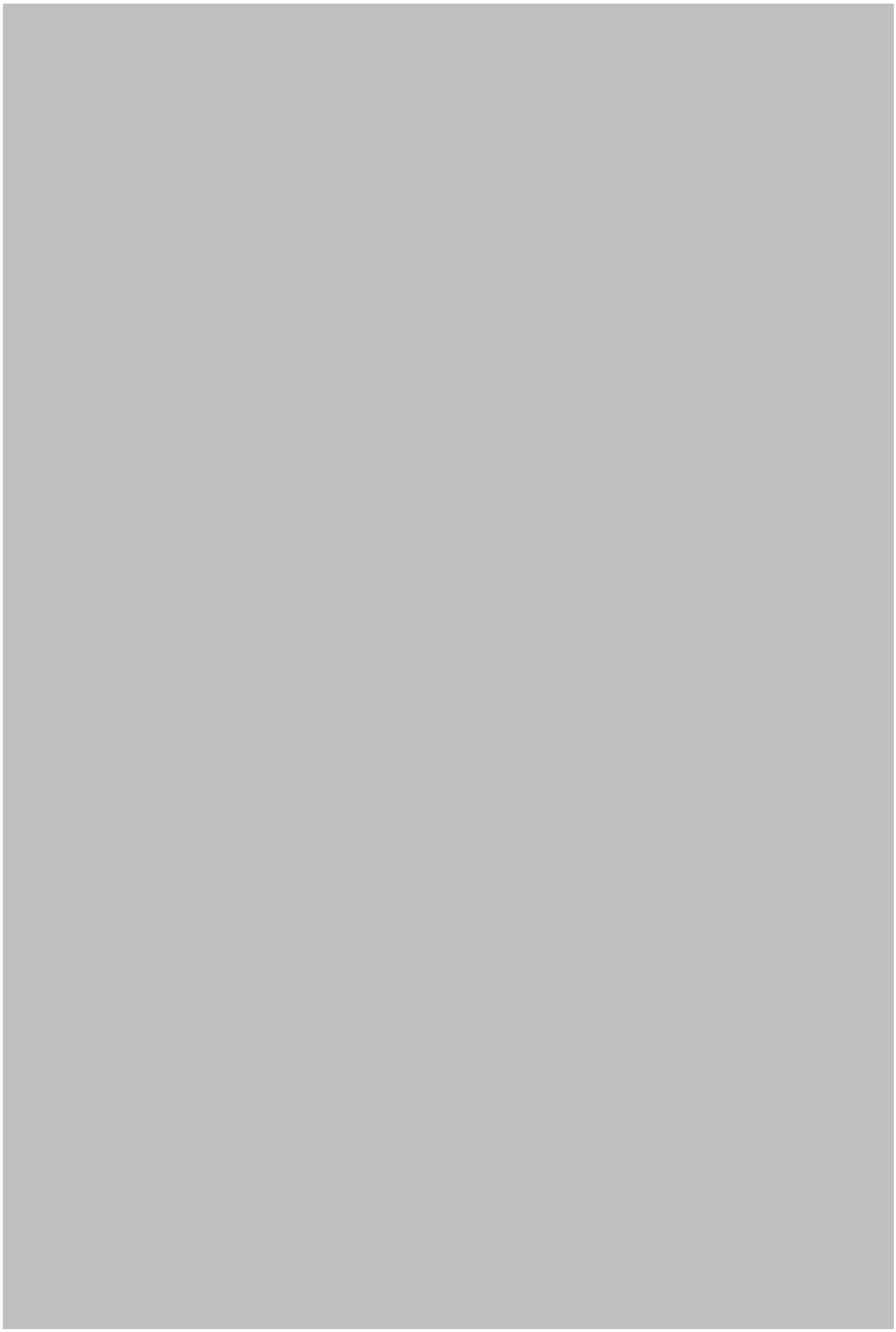
Appendix III





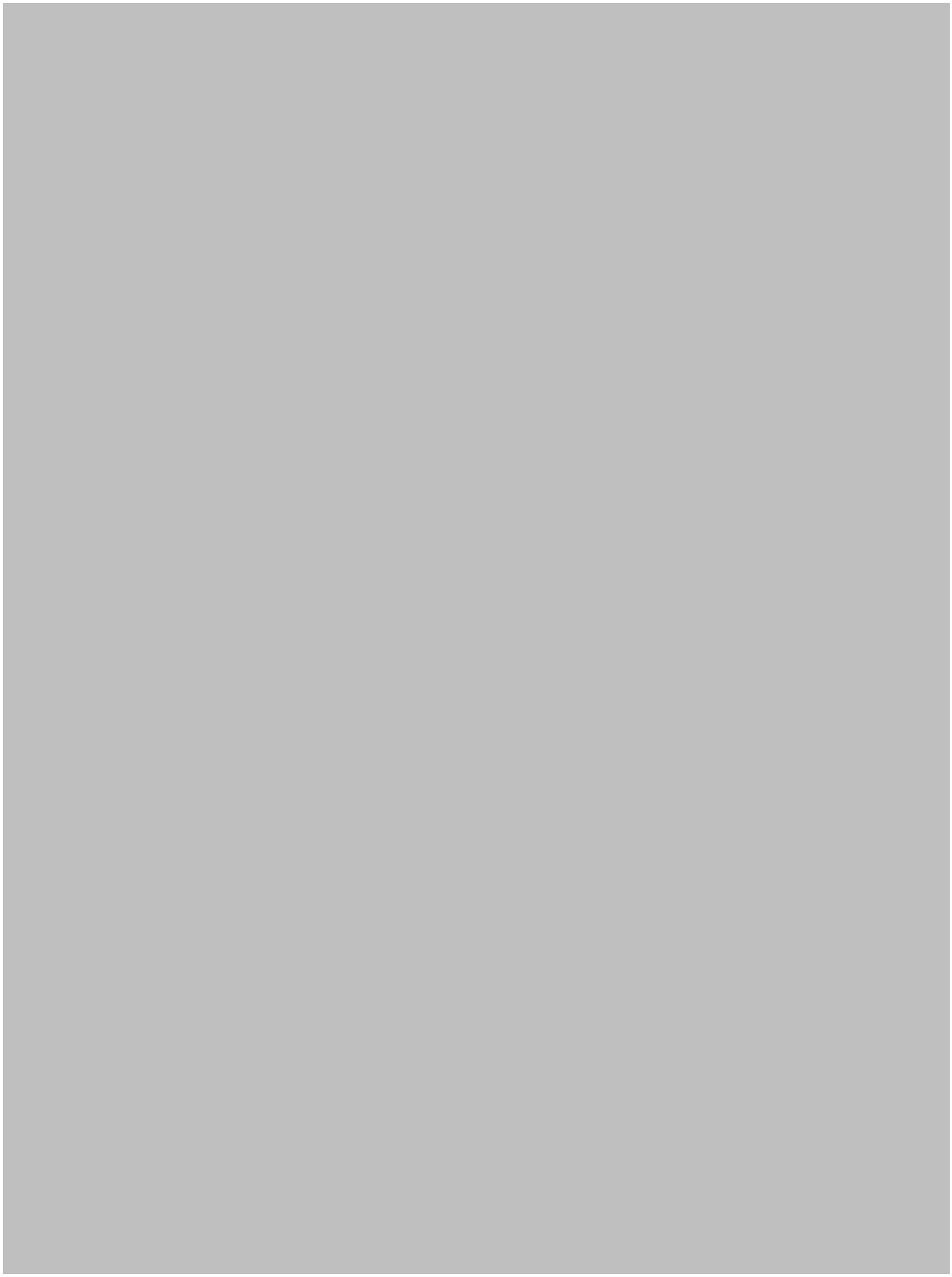


Appendix III

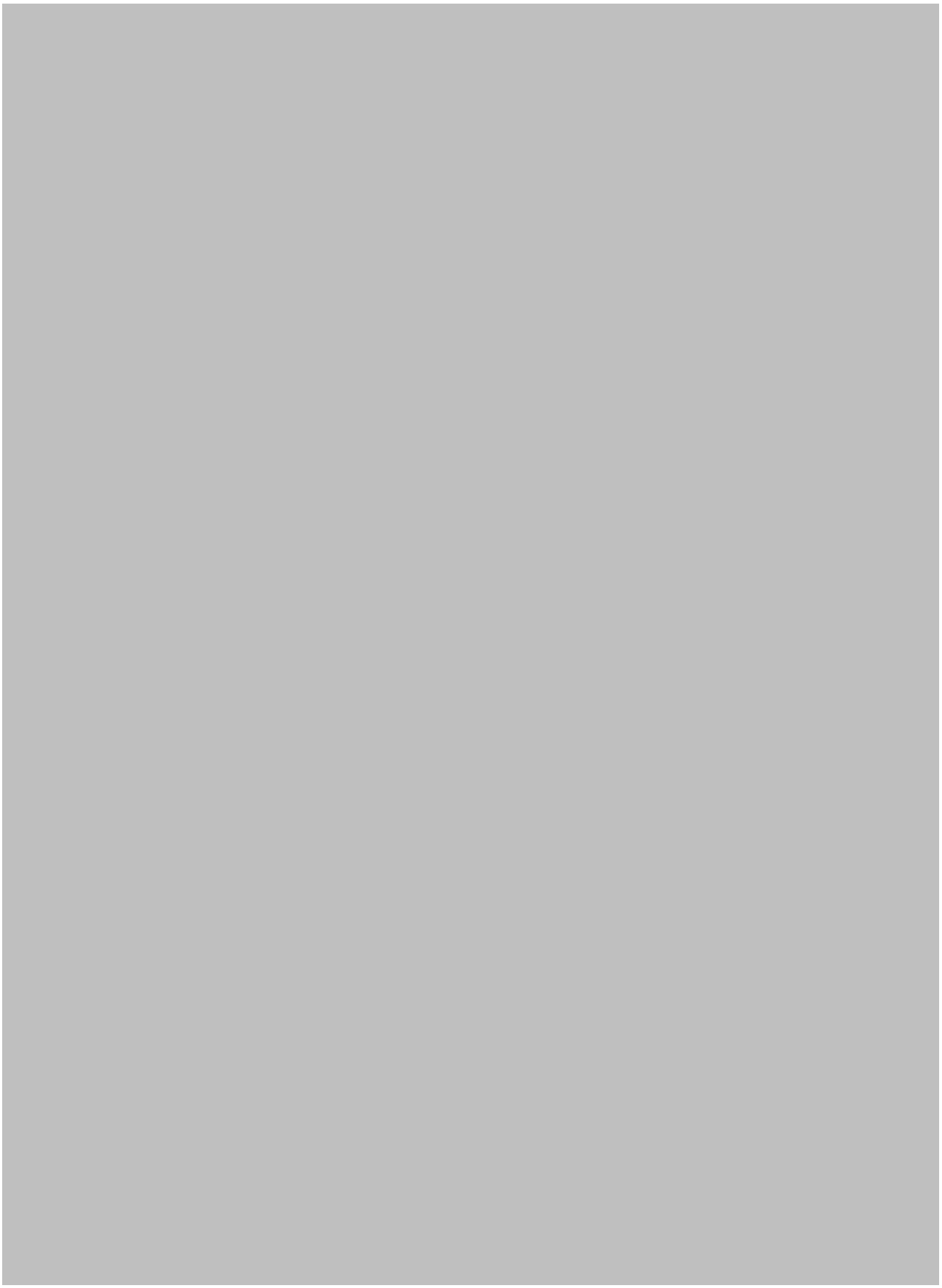




Part B: to be completed by the SUPERVISOR



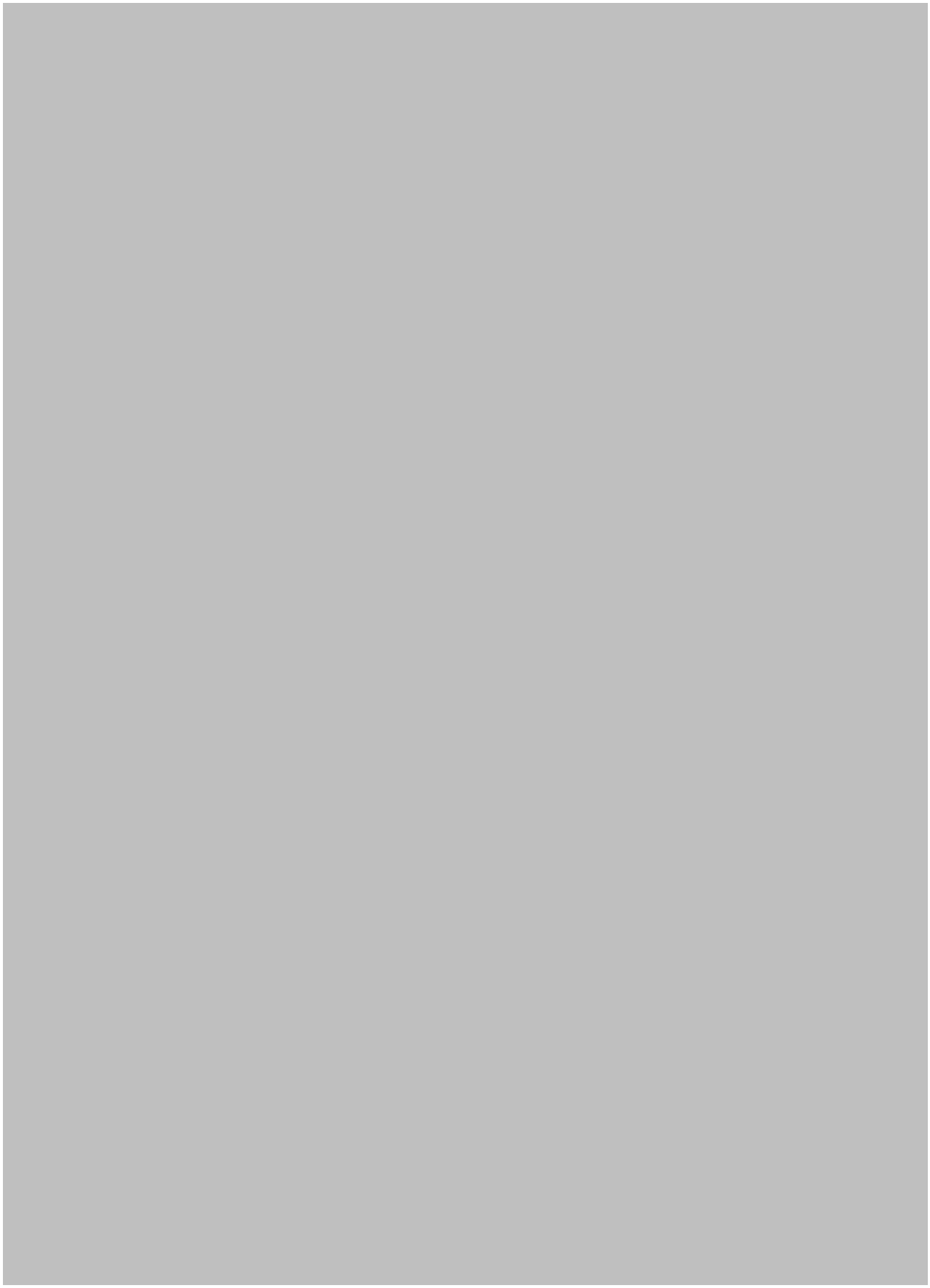
Appendix III



Appendix III

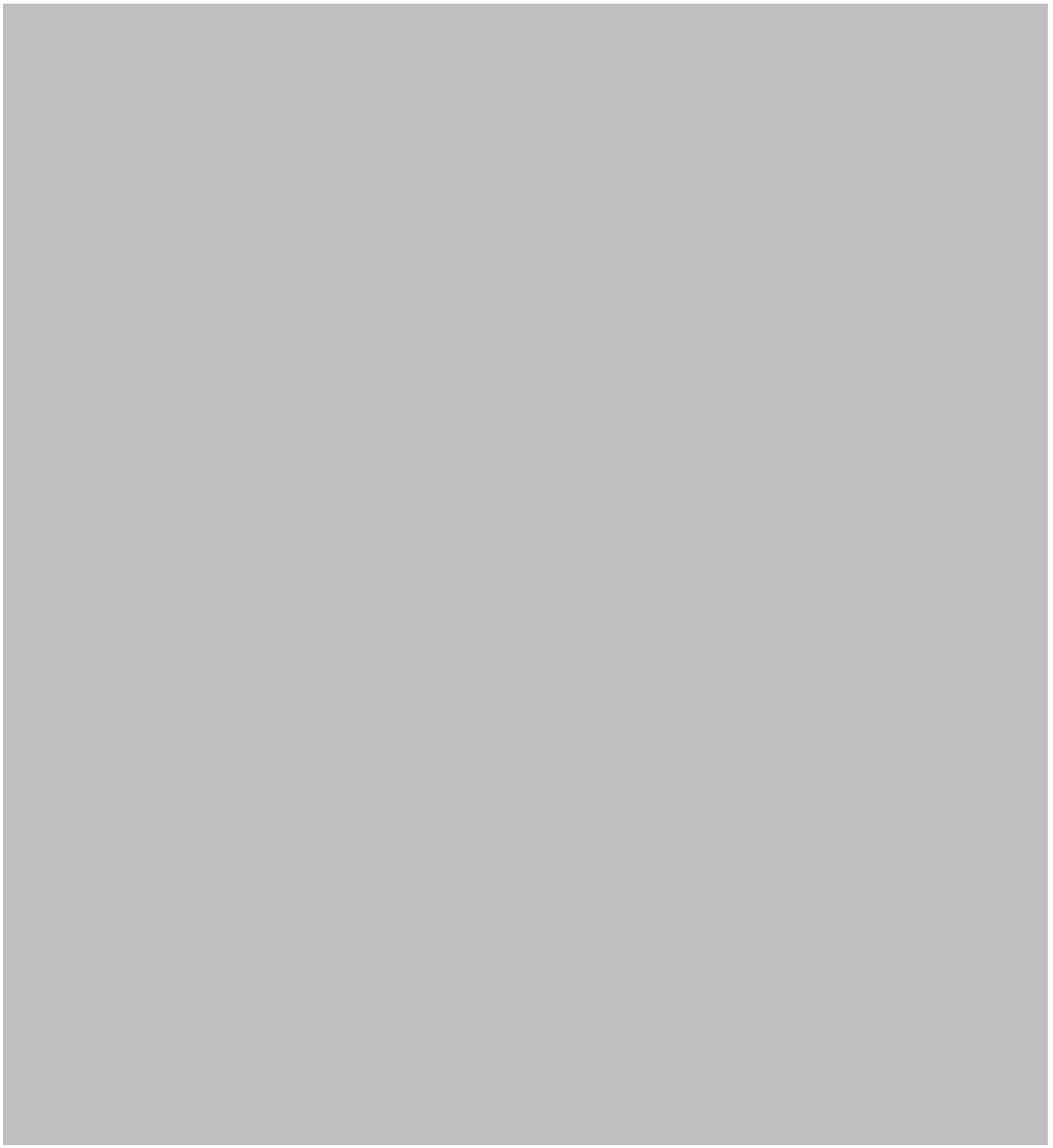


Notes for completion of forms EC1, EC2 and EC3



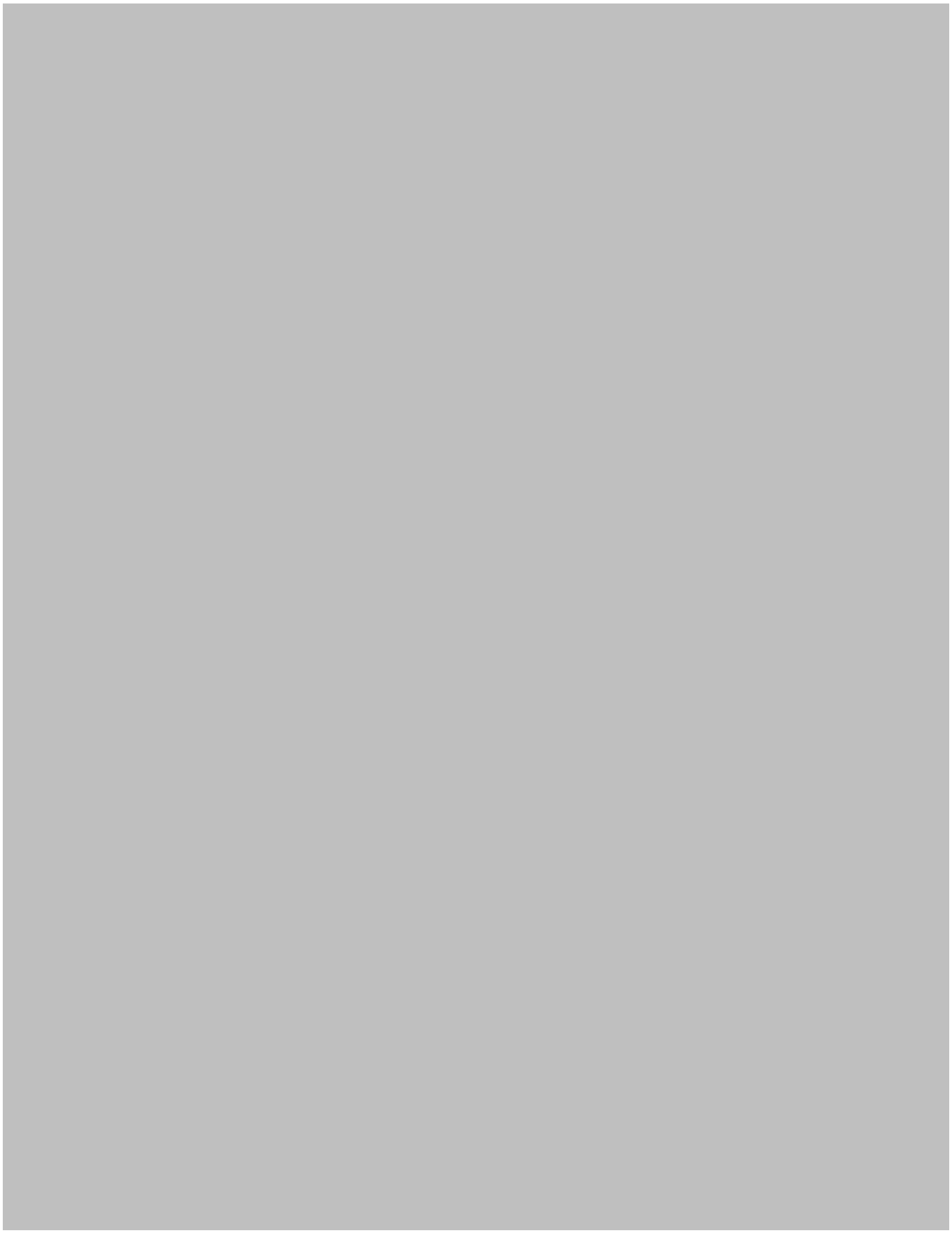
APPENDIX IV

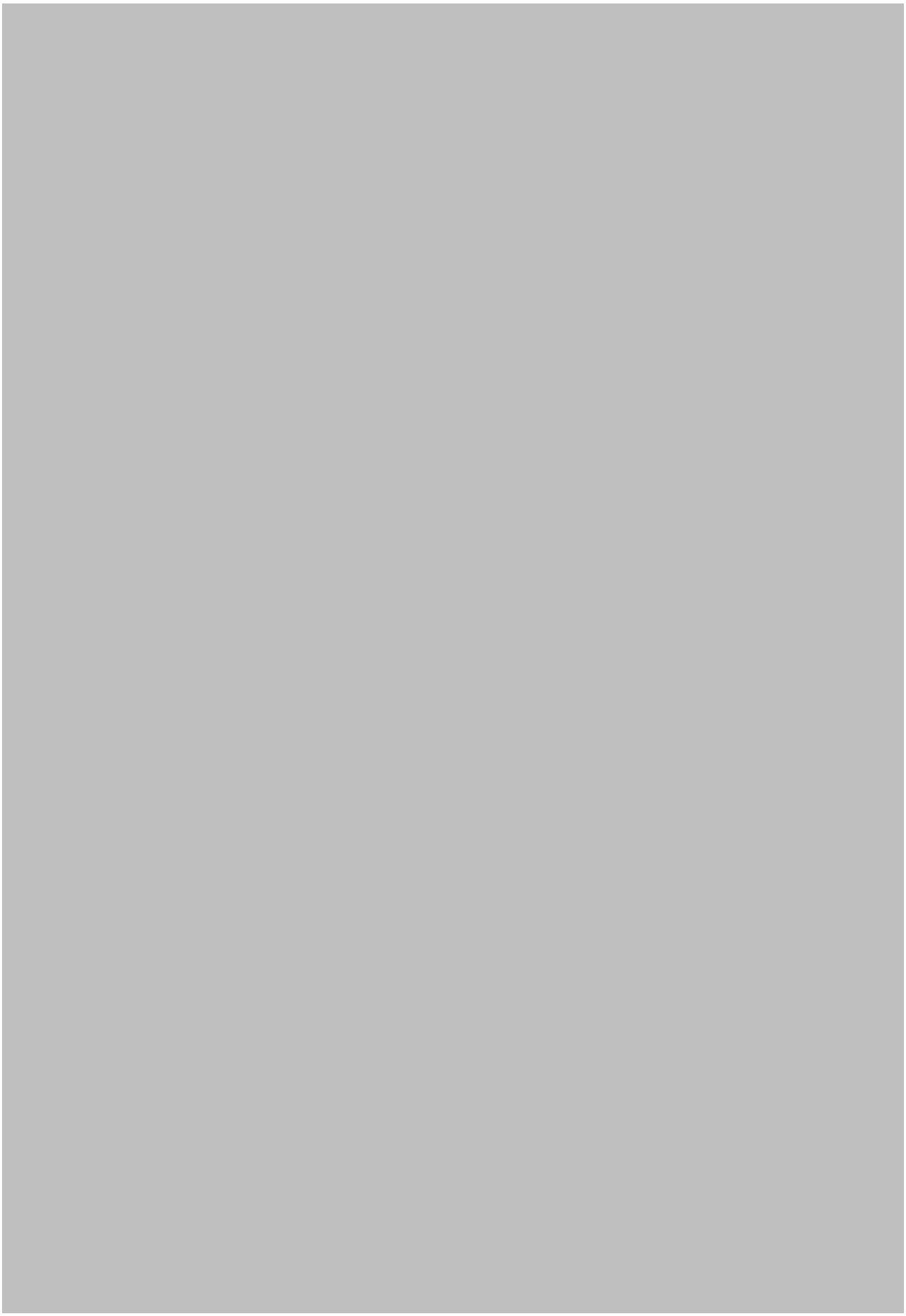
APPLICATION TO UNDERTAKE RESEARCH IN HER MAJESTY'S PRISON SERVICE

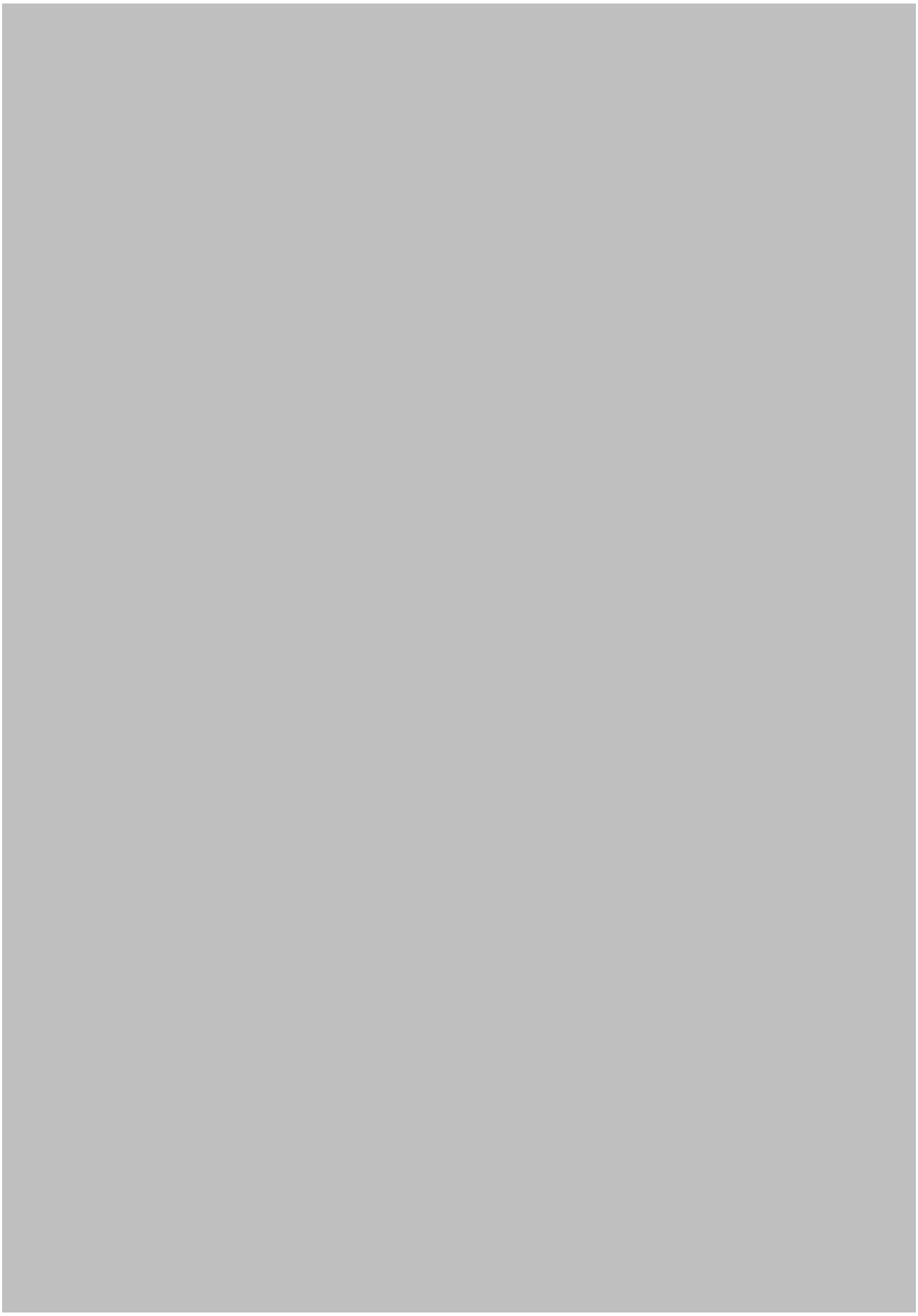


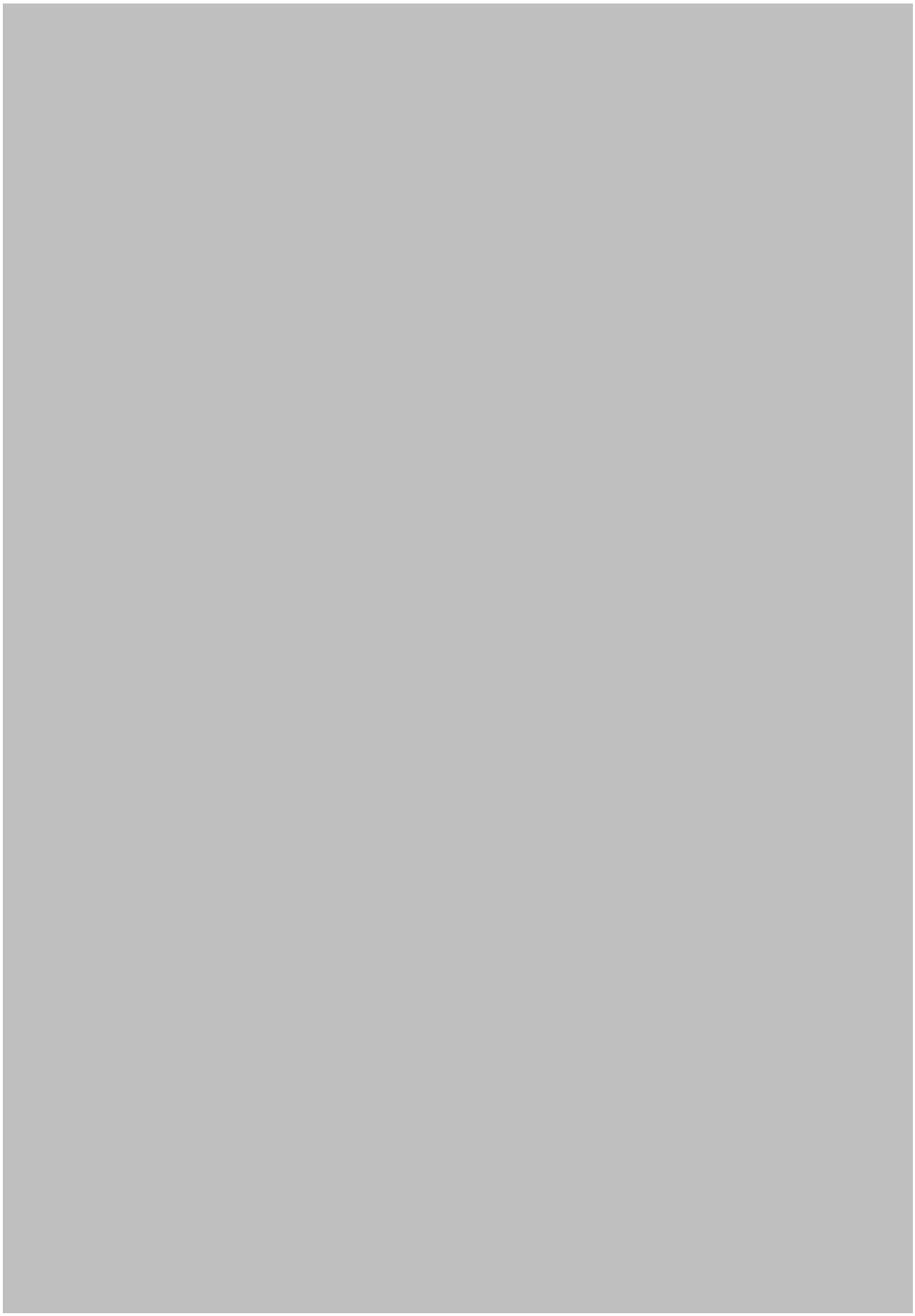
Please attach a CV for all researchers

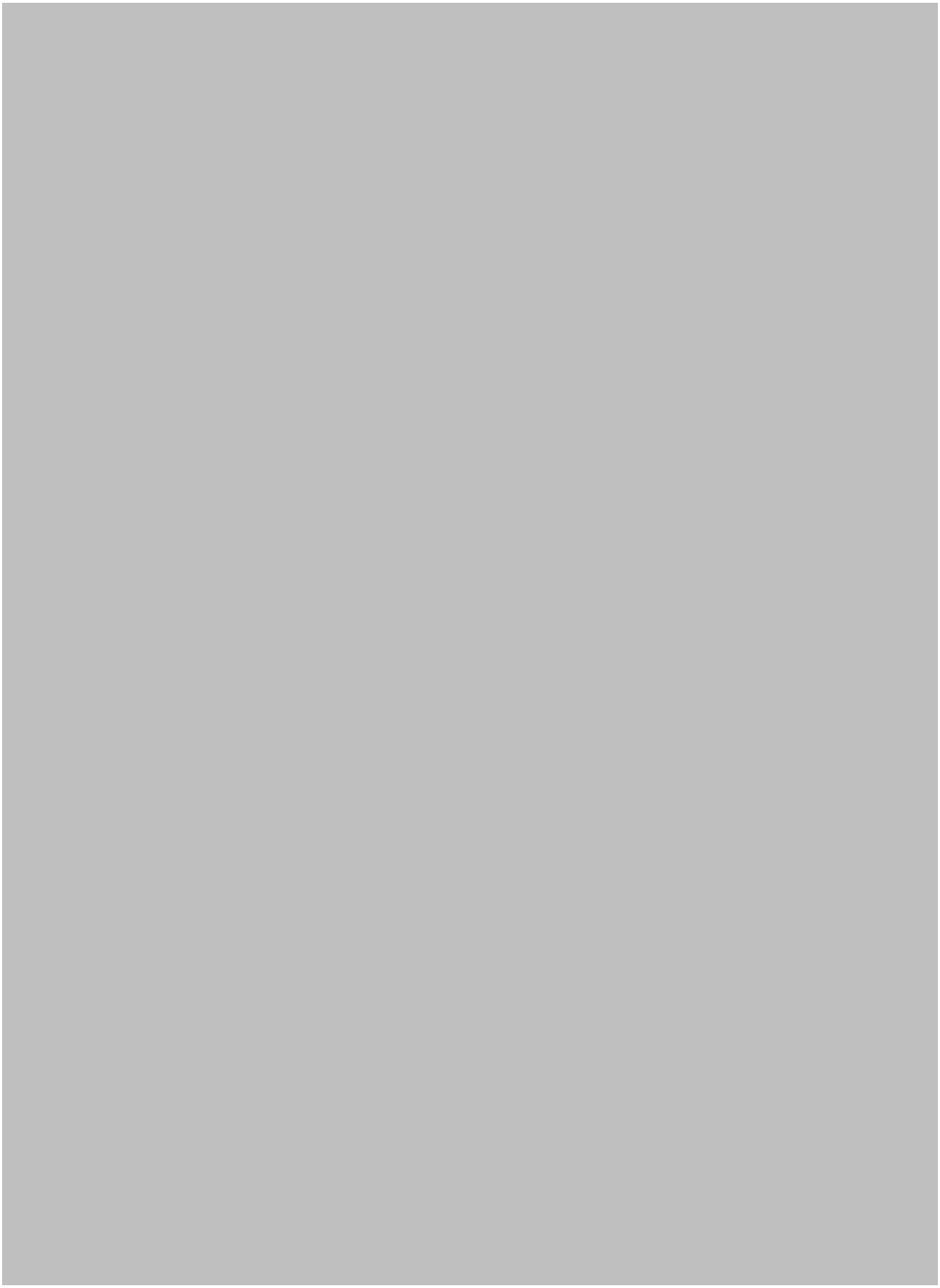
Proposed Research – Aims and Objectives

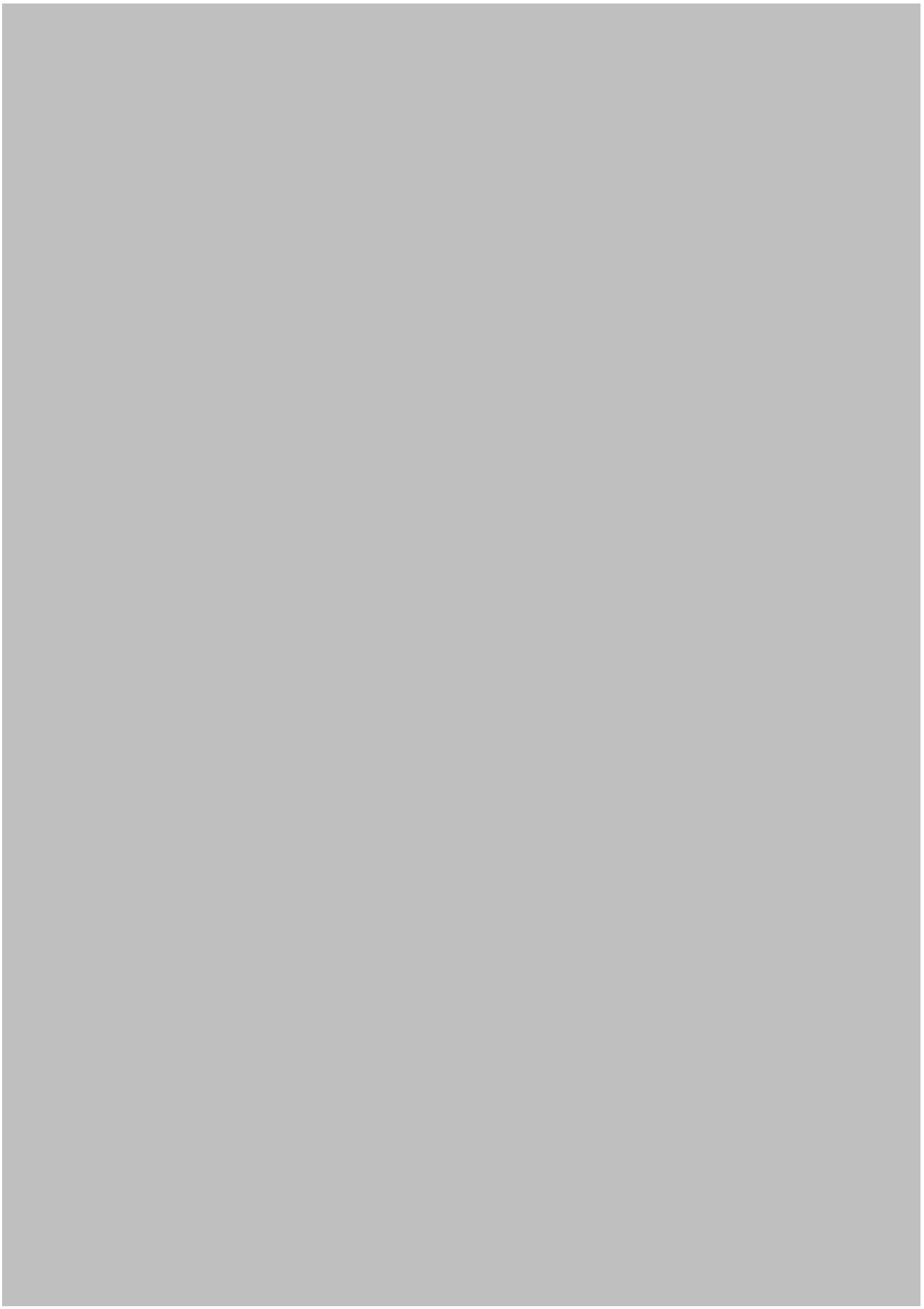






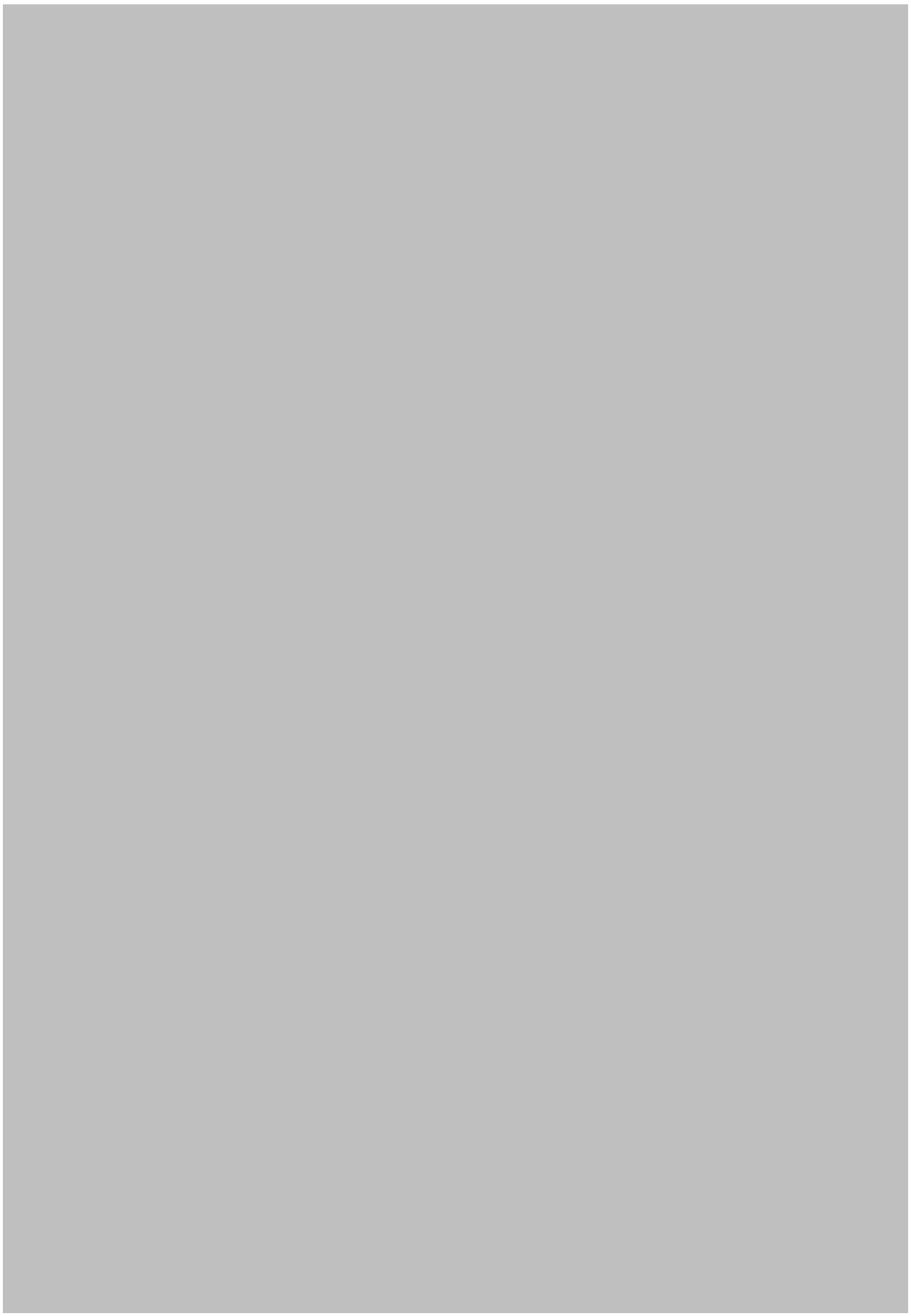






Appendix IV





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