

Surviving


Zambian Prisons

– Inmate experiences,
coping strategies and
sex in prison

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PhD dissertation

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Sciences and Business

 Roskilde Universitet

Roskilde University
December 2016
ISSN no. 0909-9174

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Abstract

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Prisons in Africa are understudied and poorly understood. Perhaps surprisingly, amongst the research produced, there has been very little focus on prisoner perspectives. Rather, most studies focus on prison staff and other more institutional perspectives. This PhD makes an important contribution to the field of prisons research in Africa, where the dissertation explores how male inmates experience imprisonment, and how they struggle for physical, social and psychological survival.

The thesis is built on a data collection in Zambian male prisons, where 72 inmates, 15 former prisoners and 10 staff members were interviewed in the period from 2011-2013. The interviewing methodology rested in the life story/narrative tradition. Some ethnographic observations were also part of the data.

Every prisoner’s experience is unique and his own, yet common themes also occur. The well-known ‘pains of imprisonment’ from international prisons research, such as the loss of liberty, stigma, isolation from family and loved ones are in the Zambian context exacerbated by the poor conditions of imprisonment, where overcrowding, ill-health, injustice, and social abandonment pose specific challenges and affect inmates’ identities as men. The author characterises imprisonment in Zambia as chronic crisis, where enormous demands are made on prisoners for them to survive.

The experience of imprisonment may fundamentally affect the individual prisoner’s sense of identity to the point of injury or breakdown. Even if inmates do have some capacity to act to improve their situation, they have limited options to do so. The PhD draws on Honneth’s theory of recognition and on empirically grounded studies to identify five main categories in relation to how inmates respond to imprisonment. The categories are: not coping at all; morally grounded struggles for rights in groups; individual struggles for maintaining or constructing a pro-social identity; and compensatory struggles for recognition, where the struggle for recognition can be viewed as negative in the sense that these behaviours will further alienate them from conventional society, and because the struggle entails negative behaviour that nevertheless allows them some form of recognition. Finally, the fifth category concerns those who struggle for survival with no direct association with recognition. Here, inmates will simply aim to get by on a day-to-day basis, drawing on instrumentalism and emotional withdrawal to survive.

Some prisoners enter into relationships as a way to survive. Sexual activities in the closed prison environment are influenced by the prison context and conditions, and will play into power structures, hierarchies and social relationships, not to mention to individual’s coping strategies. Sexual relationships between men in Zambian prisons can generally be characterized as transactional. A reformulation and interpretation of gendered roles take place, where some so-called ‘weak’ inmates are constructed as ‘women’ to be available to dominant inmates, so-called ‘men’. The ‘men’ gain a sense of masculinity through the sexual relationship, whereas the constructed ‘women’ experience severe threats to masculine identity. The thesis proposes that the social construction of gender and sexuality is a translation or reinterpretation of general society’s gender roles in an environment without biological women.

In this way, the thesis makes a rare but important contribution to understanding prisoner perspectives in an African prison.

To the prisoners of Zambia

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Acknowledgements

I have many to thank.

Jakob Trane Ibsen – my childhood friend – who pushed me to consider writing a PhD, and who made sure I got the proposals done, and who towards the end stepped in to push me to finish. Tak, Jakob!

I wish to thank FFU for generously funding everything relating to this study.

Lisa Richey and Christian Lund for encouraging me to apply for a PhD scholarship. I want to thank Lisa, Andrew Jefferson, Signe Arnfred, Jakob Ibsen and Steffen Jensen for giving me constructive feedback on amateur first proposal drafts.

I wish to sincerely thank my supervisors Lisa and Andrew for guiding me into the world of academia.

I wish to thank my wonderful PhD colleagues and other researchers at RUC and DIGNITY for being well, great colleagues!

I wish to thank the RUC administration for their continued support, when I needed project extensions based on long-term illness. I would not have finished, had I not received your support. I am very grateful. The same goes for DANIDA Fellowship Centre.

Zambia Correctional Service. I wish to thank Commissioner Mr. Nawa (RIP) and Commissioner General Mr. Chato for their support. I wish to thank Deputy Commissioner Fredrick Chilukutu for his unrelenting support throughout the project. I could not have done this without you. I also wish to thank Dr Chileshe, who at the time was Deputy Commissioner for his support to this project by reading the PhD through and providing last minute considerations.

Thank you to individual staff members for your honesty and support. You know who you are.

Godfrey Malembeka from PRISCCA: Thank you for taking me to Mwembeshi Open Air Prisons and Lusaka Central Prison ten years ago. Thank you for your support over many years.

Carol Chomba, who is always there. Thanks for everything you have done and continue to do for me, the research and for Ubumi.

Namasiku Wakunuma, the most amazing research assistant one could ask for. Siku, I will NEVER forget the key incident... You make me laugh! We were a good team. Thanks for your dedication to the research and to Ubumi, for long talks and lots of laughs.

Mutale Wakunuma, Rodgers Siyingwa and Andrew Millambo. Thanks for your hard work!

Ubumi's project for the seriously ill was started based on my findings during the fieldwork (www.ubumi.dk). One cannot mention Ubumi without mentioning Lena Kresojevic. Lena, initially a MA student I supervised (on a voluntary basis), turned into a friend and project manager for Ubumi. Thank you for everything!

I wish to thank all the prisoners, who let me learn about their personal story. Each and every story was important.

Kilimanjaro Lodge – for providing a very nice place to stay, with an always welcoming and helpful staff. There were so many instances of much appreciated kindness shown by members of staff. Thanks especially to Stan, but also to Health.

Jørgen. Thank you. Words are not enough.

My parents: Thank you for being there for me, and for believing in me. Thank you for taking care of Christoffer, when I was away. Thanks for reading various drafts, and to both of you for proof reading the monster in the end. Thanks to my mom for her hard work for Ubumi.

My sons: Christoffer - for being patient and supportive, and letting me leave for field trips and writing retreats. Nicholas – for being the crazy, wonderful kid that you are.

My 'bonus' kids: Thore, Liva and Sebastian - You make me smile! All of five kids: You're the best kids ever.

Jess for loving me whether I finished the thing or not, and for believing that I would (or being smart enough not to tell me when he had doubts). I love you.

Anne

Setting the stage – the author’s first visit to a Zambian prison

My first visit to a prison took place in 2005. When I walked through the blue-green gates of one of the biggest prisons in Zambia, it was with somewhat trembling anticipation. What would I find? How would I be approached? How would I approach people? What would they think of me?

I entered the prison through the main gate, and walked into a dark reception area. A blackboard on the left kept count of the different categories of prisoners. In white chalk, it says: Total 1827. Next to the blackboard was the office of the Officer in Charge (director of the prison) and other offices. I pass through two more barred and locked gates, before I am finally allowed to go through the last gate and into the large prison yard. The yard is surrounded by the prison cells, where the inmates are locked up from late afternoon to morning. A feeling of being trapped grips me, as the gate is shut behind me and the keys rattle. I remind myself that I asked to be here.

The yard is without bricks or concrete; one simply walks on the hard, red dirt. The yard is filled with hundreds of prisoners. Some are shaving, standing in line to wash, or doing some other activity, but most just sit or walk around, killing time in the burning sun. A few hundred prisoners can attend the prisoner-run school, or attend courses at the workshops. Both lack materials and equipment to function adequately.

The prison guards escort me around. If prisoners do not move out of the way quickly enough, orders are issued, and they jump at the slightest signal. At this first visit, prisoners are not allowed to speak to me, or I to them. Later, I learn to ignore instructions of that sort. But, on this day, I follow orders. The whole place smells – of stale air breathed by too many people, of people who do not have access to soap, and of ‘kapenta’, a dried fish used for meals. In the kitchen area, the smell is almost unbearable. The prison wall rises perhaps 6-8 metres up in the air and hinders fresh air flowing in.

The wardens usher me past the water pump. Later, I find out that a big pump was donated by an international organisation – and then stolen by someone high ranking in Prisons Service. They all know, and they do not want me to know. Instead, they take me into the tiny prison library. It is filled with prisoners sitting shoulder to shoulder on benches taking turns to read worn books. They smile kindly, some shyly to me, when I enter. They ask me to donate more books. I understand that sitting here, shoulder to shoulder in this tiny space on hard benches and reading, is a privilege and a pleasure. On the dirty prison wall there are the odd posters produced by NGOs containing health messages: ‘Tattooing is a risk for HIV’, one poster says.

I leave the stuffy room and am escorted to the dormitory cells. Bunk beds and mattresses are placed against the walls and plastics bags hang on the walls or the side of the beds. These contain the few private belongings of the prisoners. The cells are tidy, but the smell reveals that the cells, designed for 35 individuals, contain up to 145 prisoners at night. The majority of prisoners must sleep sitting, only a few privileged inmates get to lie down and share mattresses. I am told there is only one toilet for each cell.

As I leave the prisons on that day, I find myself worn out. The sadness, shame and depression of the place has crawled under my skin. I find myself ashamed of the fear I had felt prior to entering. I felt ridiculous for having imagined they would be screaming obscenities at me. I still remember the look of quiet shame on one prisoner’s face. I remember the shy smile of another. I remember the silent rage of another glaring at me. I remember how inmates jumped at the slightest signal from the guards. I remember how disciplined and quiet the prison was, considering the almost 2000 inmates. Above all, I remember the pain and desperation – evident everywhere, on every person’s face, in the cells, in the overcrowded yard. Everywhere.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Prisons are places of punishment – and they are associated with extreme deprivation, stigma, isolation and lack of social recognition from the surrounding society. In this sense, prisons are places of social abandonment. Prisoners will experience and struggle to cope differently in this challenging environment.

Despite the characterization of these places as abject and stigmatized, incarcerated men continue to seek social recognition, as they struggle to survive physically, socially and psychologically. This study aims to break new ground, as it will explore the complex interplay between social constructions of recognition, prisoner experiences, coping strategies for survival, and sexual risk behaviour.

The purpose of the study is to strengthen the knowledge base of imprisonment in a Sub-Saharan African prison, specifically in relation to prisoner experiences and coping strategies. Further, the aim is to provide research-based knowledge to aid the facilitation of increased political and public awareness and knowledge based interventions to address prison pain and for prevention of HIV/AIDS in prisons.

1.2 MY MOTIVATION

All over the world, prisons are on the increase. Never have more people been incarcerated. Prisons draw upon a powerful imagery of violence, deviance and delinquent behaviour. Prisoners in general society are often perceived as a largely homogenous group sharing the same criminal propensities, and particularly those incarcerated for the long term are often perceived to be dangerous and a threat to society. Media representations go a long way towards reinforcing this image. Even if prisons hold a variety of people incarcerated for anything from petty theft, and illegal immigration, to economic crimes and violent crimes, the imagery of violence, danger and deviancy remains powerful (Jewkes and Johnston 2006, Cohen and Taylor 1972).

It seems that much debate on prisons is far removed from the reality of prisoners' experiences and effects of imprisonment. Prisons are closed to the public and, largely, to in depth scrutiny, but crime and prisons are on our minds – and are in this sense both absent and distant. Davis argues:

The prison is present in our lives and, at the same time, it is absent from our lives (...) We take prisons for granted but are often afraid to face the realities they produce. (Davis 2003, p 15)

One may argue that this distance and the negative imagery produces an indifference to prisons and their populations. Scraton argues that this indifference and negation of prisoners' basic humanity is grounded in a paradoxical moral justification of protecting society from violence, protecting values of liberty, freedom of speech, and respect for humanity. The institutional violence of incarceration is in opposition to those values. Yet, apart from perhaps criticism of Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, and more rarely other conditions of imprisonment, prisons are more or less uncritically seen as a necessity. The detrimental effects of imprisonment, along this line of thinking, are understood to be necessary and excusable (McCulloch and Scraton 2009). Even if prisons as we know them have in reality existed only for the past two centuries, imprisonment is generally perceived as the only solution for a wide range of offences (Dikötter et al 2007).

This PhD is not concerned with this (more political) discussion, but positions itself in relation to this discussion in terms of drawing attention to the harmfulness of imprisonment. The study positions itself against the

indifference and neglect of prisoners' rights, and wishes to draw attention to the pains of imprisonment – in the hope of raising some awareness of the harmfulness of imprisonment. As Cohen and Taylor propose:

This type of consideration of long-termers' situation may seem like 'bending over backwards' to do justice to this predicament, but it's only an attempt to apply the same type of sensitivity to his situation as would be brought to bear by any social scientist who was investigating the plight of the old, the infirm, the poor. Even if these prisoners are unlike such groups in that they may be thought to have 'deserved all they got', this should not influence our readiness to be sensitive about the social-psychological problems they face. Without a full consciousness of the way in which the everyday world has been broken for the long term prisoner, we can assume that his apparent ease represents a natural adaption to prison conditions and not one which has been personally constructed as a solution to intolerable problems. (Cohen and Taylor 1972, p 44)

Adding to the plea of exploring the pains of imprisonment and effects of the same, Liebling states:

Fear, anxiety, loneliness, trauma, depression, injustice, powerlessness, violence and uncertainty are all part of the experience of prison life. These 'hidden' but everywhere apparent features of prison life have not been measured or taken seriously enough by those interested in the question of prison effects. Sociologists of prison life knew these things were significant, but have largely failed to convince others in a methodologically convincing way that such 'pain' constitutes significant measurable 'harm'. Yet, 'pains' have consequences, however indirect. The petty humiliations and daily injustices experienced in prison (as in our communities) may be suffered in silence but as they accumulate and fester these hurts can return as hatred and 'inexplicable' violence. After all, if the consequence of injustice and rejection is hatred or resentment and the product of pain is violence, we are surely obliged to avoid these unwanted and unintended effects. (Liebling 2005, p 3)

With this PhD I wish to contribute to a much more nuanced understanding of what the experiences of imprisonment are, and how individuals must employ - sometimes radical - survival strategies. Ben Crewe argues that even if social scientists often analyse prisons and prisoners, rarely are the voices of prisoners heard (Crewe 2012). In agreement with his call for prisoners' voices, I as much as possible attempt to allow space for prisoners' narrations in the following chapters.

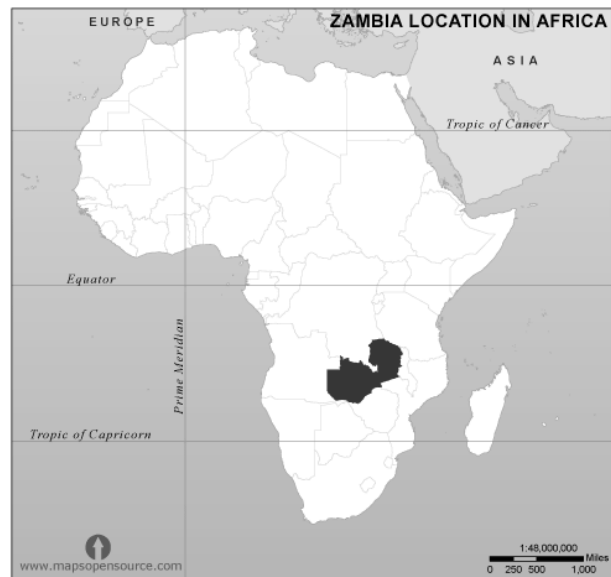
A cross-cutting theme for this PhD is *what matters* to Zambian prisoners. The question will not be asked outright throughout the dissertation, but it remains and underlying and always-relevant question that I asked myself when I collected and analysed my material. My motivation for this study has always been as much practical as intellectual. I was curious to learn about the inner workings of the prison, and I was curious to understand what individuals went through. I was also curious to find out if I could suggest ways to make tangible improvements in everyday prison life. I am a prison activist (being the managing director of a small prisons NGO providing humanitarian and development aid to prison with a focus on health¹) as well as a researcher. For me this meant a strong focus on what I would consider to be relevant knowledge for empirically grounded researchers, professionals and activists on the ground. The purpose of this PhD is therefore to communicate prisoner perspectives to the research community, and to inform Zambian policy makers and prison practitioners, including the Correctional Services, international partners and NGO's of how prison is experienced and lived by the people placed in them.

¹ www.ubumi.dk

1.3 ZAMBIA

I have chosen to write a PhD about prisons in Zambia. This choice is based on my personal and professional history in Zambia, more than Zambia being a particularly unique case compared to other African countries. As it happens, Zambia was an appropriate country to choose because of the relative openness of its Correctional Service and its position as lead country in Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As my choice fell on Zambia, an introduction is in order.

Zambia is situated in the central part of Southern Africa, and under British rule went under the name of Northern Rhodesia from 1923 until the country achieved independence. On 24 October 1964 Zambia was born. Zambia's hero from the independence struggle, Kenneth Kaunda, became president after independence was gained in 1964. He was the president of a single-party state, but after international and internal pressure, he was forced to change the rules. In 1991 he lost the election to Frederick Chiluba. Zambia is now a multiparty democracy and has had different parties and presidents rule the country (Sardanis 2014). The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) works with four categories of governance: full democracy, flawed democracy, hybrid democracy and authoritarian regimes. The EIU places Zambia at no. 67 out of 165 countries and in the category of flawed democracy. On the African continent Zambia is surpassed only by Lesotho and South Africa (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2014). A study commissioned by Zambian civil society organisations elaborates:



Zambia, in comparative terms to other countries, is seen to be progressing well in its democratic and political governance practice, over the years. The country is seen to have passed what would be considered as the breakthrough stage with the transition it made in 1991 from a one party state to multi-party, while a number of characteristics that would assist in defining the country as a practicing democracy, can be seen in the consolidation stage. The country's ability to consistently hold periodic elections and peaceful transition of power in a continent that is dogged by various electoral contestations is seen as a milestone and best practice. In addition, there is still a high endorsement of democracy as a good system of governance though there is need for improvement especially to get it more institutional-based.

However, the major complaint is that most citizens do not see democracy as delivering development, and have strong views on how subsequent governments have not fulfilled promises arising from electoral campaigns, which has meant that the anticipated benefits from their participation in elections, including enjoyment of freedom of expression have not necessarily changed the economic status and way of life for the majority of the people. (YEZI Consulting & Associates March 2013, p 19)

Poverty is not the only problem faced by the Zambian people. Even if the democratic institutions do perform their fundamental functions, there are few checks and balances, and the president has far reaching powers which are sometimes administered arbitrarily. Also, even if policies are developed and adopted, and

comprehensive strategies developed, implementation of the same are often insufficient.² Access to justice is a major problem in the country, and according to civil society organisations it is often a challenge for government agencies to welcome input from civil society (YEZI Consulting & Associates March 2013, The Economist Intelligence Unit 2014).

The main source of income in Zambia has always been the copper mines, which leaves the country vulnerable to world market prices. The economy has also fluctuated due to this weakness, but also because of government mismanagement and corruption. For many years, Zambia was one of the absolute poorest countries in the world, but in the past 10 years it has been one of the fastest growing economies of the world, with growth in GDP averaging 6.7% a year. Population growth is quite rapid, and today there are more than 15 million Zambians. Zambia is heavily urbanised in comparison to many other African countries and the majority of Zambians live in the cities.³ Zambia's economy grew at an average annual rate of 7% between 2010 and 2014. But the benefits of this GDP growth have accrued mainly to the richer segments of the population in urban areas, leaving widening income inequality in the process. Since 2014, however, the economy has taken a down-turn with growth rates reducing and inflation increasing by 20% and the Zambian currency, the kwacha, depreciating significantly (Forum of International NGO's and Cooperating Partners: IMF common paper draft 5, September 2016).⁴

Zambia is comprised of several different ethnic groups, of which the largest is bemba and the second largest tonga. Other ethnic groups are chewa, lozi, nsenga and several more. Equally, there are many languages, most of which belong to the bantu language family. Zambia may be the result of colonial rulers drawing up artificial borders on a map, but:

Over the years they bonded: they lived together, they worked together, they socialised, they intermarried, they struggled against exploitation of the settlers and they created a common conscience. They fought for their independence and they emerged as Zambians. (Sardanis 2014, p 13)

This sounds almost too poetic, but Zambia is a remarkably peaceful country compared to many of its neighbours. There have been no civil wars nor major ethnic conflicts, and Zambians take immense pride in their peaceful country. That said, ethnic discrimination is common, also in work places, where employees may be hired or fired based on their ethnic affiliation. However, this discrimination rarely translates into violence (Sardanis 2014).

1.4 IMPRISONMENT IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Except for Europe (and this mainly because rates of incarceration have decreased in Russia and Eastern Europe) and Africa, incarceration rates around the world are increasing but more in some areas than in others. The Oceania and the Americas take the lead with increases of 59% and 40% since 2000. In the Americas, it is particularly the USA that leads in terms of numbers incarcerated. Africa's incarceration rates are also increasing but less so than the general population increase. Nevertheless, there has been an increase in prison population totals of 15%⁵ since 2000, which puts pressure on the prison systems (Walmsley 2016).

² UNAIDS: Zambia Report NCPI/GARPR, downloaded December 2015:

<http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/Zambia%20NCPI%202013.pdf>

³ <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/za.html>, accessed December 2016

⁴ <http://www.zambian-economist.com/2016/03/imf-and-zambia.html#more>

⁵ It is 25% if Rwanda is included in the numbers, but I have excluded them here because they skew the general picture due to the genocide of 1994 and the mass incarcerations that followed.

World prison population levels – continental totals and rates		
Continent (country)	Prison population totals	Prison population rate (per 100,000 of national populations)
AFRICA	1,038,735	94
AMERICAS	3,780,528	387
ASIA	3,897,797	92
EUROPE	1,585,348	192
OCEANIA	54,726	140
WORLD	10,357,134	144
Zambia	19,000+ (2016)	125

(Walmsley 2016)

Prisons were imposed by the colonial powers and were solely a place of punishment. Although there were some movements towards a reformist model inspired by developments in the West, racial stereotypes prevailed. Poor sanitation, nutrition, clothing combined with overcrowding and corporal punishment was the rule. Doing time in prison was experienced as degrading, and those who entered prison expected to be stripped of their social and physical integrity as well as of spiritual protection. Whipping sentences generally endured until the 1930s, only to be replaced by cane beating. Physical punishment was imposed as hybrid sentences borrowing from African and Western punitive regimes. Whipping for instance was justified as a modern standardised form of punishment, deemed to replace traditions of bodily mutilation, stoning or death (Bernault in Dikötter and Brown 2007). Today, we see practices of caning being reduced or even disappearing in some countries (Martin 2013, chapter 4, this PhD).

Dikötter argues that prisons like all institutions were not simply imposed by colonial powers, but were reinvented/transformed locally (Dikötter et al. 2007). Bernault argues, however, that although prisons were certainly adapted and reinvented locally, this was mainly done so by colonisers, making prisons less reformist in nature compared to the European system, and making the prison experience extremely harsh (Bernault in Dikötter and Brown 2007). Certainly, we see strong remnants of the colonial legacy in the prisons of Southern Africa today. In many countries, most prisons were built in colonial times, and today they are dilapidated and worn down buildings, yet hold thousands of prisoners. Creation of adequate infrastructure has not followed the significant increase in people incarcerated, which has led to less than optimal conditions of imprisonment. Historically, it has also taken longer to move from the more punitive to the correctional approach in which reform of the prisoner receives a stronger focus (Bernault in Dikötter and Brown 2007).

According to the United Nations Special rapporteur on Torture and Other Forms of Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, there is a global crisis of conditions in detention. With only few exceptions, torture is practised globally in detention facilities, and the conditions under which inmates serve their sentences are grotesque. The UN Special Rapporteur writes:

In many countries of the world, places of detention are constantly overcrowded, and filthy locations, where tuberculosis and other highly contagious diseases are rife (...) (They) lack the

minimum facilities necessary to allow for a dignified existence (UN Special Rapporteur, 3 Aug 2009, para. 39)

1.5 ZAMBIAN PRISONS

Zambia has 87 prisons, of which 33 are ‘open air’ or farm prisons and 54 are ‘standard’ prisons. There are two reformatory institutions for juveniles. Female sections are placed in physical connection with some male prisons, but males and females are separated. The official capacity of the prisons was 5,500 in 2011. An extra prison has been constructed since then, and plans for more constructions are underway. Below is an overview of the categories of prisoners in the Zambian prisons.

Prison Statistics Zambia May 2013	
Category – males	Number
Convicted	11961
Un-convicted (remands)	3989
Prohibited Immigrants	228
Condemned	393
Juveniles	232
Juvenile Remand	229
His Excellency’s Pleasure (HEP) Mentally ill patients	61
Lifers	123
Total	17216

Category – females	Number
Female convicts	284
Female remands	208
Prohibited Immigrants	16
Condemned	4
Female Juvenile Remand	13
Lifers	2
Total	527

In 2016, the prison population reached an all-time high of more than 19,000 inmates. In Zambia, the overcrowding is more than 400% of capacity in some prisons. Hygiene is poor, with soap and detergents

rarely distributed by the authorities. The diet is poor; breakfast consists of rice, and lunch/dinner is combined in one meal consisting of beans or dried fish with nshima (a kind of thick maize porridge). The food is of poor quality, the amount of food is insufficient, and many go hungry. Malnutrition and general poor health is common. Prisoners cannot survive in the longer term on the diet provided by Correctional Service alone, and relies on family or others to support them. However, many are abandoned by their families and have very few or no social networks, which leaves them vulnerable in the prison system (Human Rights Watch 2010, CARITAS 2007, Todrys 2011, Zambia Prisons Service 2015).

There is evidence of verbal and physical abuse, including beatings by staff and between inmates. As a disciplinary measure, prisoners who have committed an offence inside prison may be locked up in so-called penal blocks, where they are denied food, forced to be naked for hours or days, denied baths, and have no access to toilets. Levels of abuse vary between prisons, often depending on the attitude of those in command. Importantly, many prisoners have suffered torture and inhumane treatment before they reach the prisons, namely in the detention facilities at the police stations (Zambia Human Rights Commission 2013). In the 2010's Zambia Correctional Service claimed to have abandoned the practice of penal blocks entirely, yet the practise persisted in one of the prisons in this study up to 2016, where it was finally abandoned with the change in leadership in that prison. According to the Zambia Human Rights Commission:

Respondents, however, revealed that torture in Zambia is rife and takes many forms such as beatings using slaps, caning, hitting using a gun butt, whipping etc. Sometimes, the torture takes the form of detention in inhumane conditions, threat of death and harm to relatives. Some extreme forms of torture have been described as hanging someone upside down by the legs, tying people to trees while threatening to shoot them, verbal attacks, starvation and physical isolation. (Zambia Human Rights Commission 2013, p 32)

Lengthy periods of incarceration, including long remand times, are the rule in Sub-Saharan prisons. I have spoken to several remand prisoners in Zambia who had waited up to seven years for a trial⁶, and long remand times have been documented (Paralegal Alliance Network February 2008, Human Rights Watch 2010). As seen in the above chart, remand prisoners and pre-trials detainees constitute more than 25% of the prison population. It has not been possible to access recent figures on detainees in police cells. These groups contribute significantly to overcrowding in prisons. Very few organisations provide legal aid or paralegal aid⁷ and they are able to take on only few individual cases (Paralegal Alliance Network, February 2008). Prisoners (and prison staff) consider the long remand times and lack of legal support as extremely unjust. This situation contributes immensely to a chronic feeling of uncertainty and causes extreme tension in individuals and between prisoners (Jefferson 2009).

Overcrowding contributes to poor health. The sleeping conditions, where 120-180 inmates share a space of approximately 40 square metres, provide optimal breeding grounds for opportunistic infections. Fungal infections, scabies and lice are common and contribute to the stress of incarceration. Depending on the space available and the individual prison, prisoners may sit either squatted or lie head to toe. When squatted, one prisoner leans up against another prisoner in the same position, and with a third person between his legs, and so forth, resting against his chest from early evening to the next morning. The poor conditions contribute to severe physical ailments of stiff joints, muscular pain, oedemas and problems with blood circulation. Access to quality health care remains low and arbitrary. Unnecessary suffering due to ill-health is common, as are deaths which could have been avoided. AIDS related disease and tuberculosis is common, as are

⁶ Focus group Lusaka

⁷ Legal Resources Foundation (LRF) and The Zambia Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) provide legal/para-legal aid.

various forms of diarrhoea which also regularly cause otherwise avoidable deaths (Ubumi Prisons Initiative June 2015).

Boredom and idleness is another factor contributing to the stressful environment. Even if Zambia Correctional Service attempts to provide schooling (with inmates teaching other inmates) and vocational training, only a minority of prisoners can access these services at any given time.⁸ This means that many prisoners go idle, and this together with the conditions of imprisonment and personal circumstances provide a fertile ground for stress, anxiety and depression (Sarkin 2008, Liebling and Maruna 2005).

Mental health is a major issue in prisons globally (Simenda 2013, Mayeya et al 2004, Mwape et al 2010, CARITAS 2007, Sarkin 2008, Liebling and Maruna 2005, Birmingham 2003). Zambia Human Rights Commission noted psychological trauma in almost every case encountered (Zambia Human Rights Commission 2013). A study conducted in Lusaka Central Prison and published in 2011 documented a prevalence of mental health issues in that 63% of prisoners had at least one mental disorder (Nseluke and Siziya 2011). Another study on the same issue conducted in Mukobeko Maximum Prison showed a prevalence of 29% (Nseluke and Siziya 2016). This finding is consistent with other studies from the West that show a lower prevalence in higher security institutions. Nseluke and Siziya suggest that the pre-trial status of many prisoners in medium institutions adds on to the stress of incarceration and has an impact on mental health (Nseluke and Siziya 2016).

In May 2014, the overcrowding in Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison hit an all-time high (even if the all-time high was even higher a year later), and here prisoners described to me how some inmates *just died like that for no reason. He just took a deep breath and was dead.*

There is little doubt that Zambia Correctional Service struggles live up to its mission statement:

To effectively and efficiently provide and maintain humane custodial and correctional services to inmates and to increase industrial and agricultural production in order to contribute to the well-being and reform of inmates and maintenance of internal security
(Ministry of Home Affairs and Zambia Prisons Service 2008, p 5)

Even if human rights reports of various kinds document very real problems found in the prisons and places of detention, it is important not to understand the information they provide as unbiased facts, or as completely representative of what happens in all prisons or to all prisoners. The aim and mandate of human rights reports are to bring wrongs out into the open, which is certainly justified. However, some reports such as the 2015 Human Rights Report by the US government paints with very broad brush strokes, and arguably overlooks the important progress made in the prisons in recent years in terms of a stronger awareness and adherence to human rights amongst staff, and the increase in health staff in prisons (see an example of this: United States Department of State 2015). For example, in 2011, there was only one clinical officer in Mukobeko Maximum Prison. Today, there are two, plus a nurse, a pharma-technician and a physiotherapist. In the bigger prisons, at least, progress has been made, but these are rarely reflected in human rights reports.

1.6 PRISONS, HEALTH AND HIV/AIDS

Prisoners are one of the most vulnerable yet overlooked risk groups in terms of HIV infection (UNAIDS, UNODC and World Bank UNAIDS 2008). HIV surveillance has been the most common form of HIV research in

⁸ Own observations

prisons, but most HIV prevalence studies have been conducted in high-income countries. Globally, however, prisoners constitute individuals with greater risk factors for contracting HIV compared with the general population (Jürgens et al 2011).

HIV prevalence in Southern African prisons has been estimated to be from 2 to 50 times that of the general population. The highest prevalence of HIV is found in South Africa where estimates have placed the national prison population HIV prevalence rate at 41.4% (UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment 2009). Evidence, however, is often fragmented and generally not for national prisons rates but instead rates for selected prisons within a country. Yet there is little doubt the infection rates are high. AIDS related disease and HIV infection behind prison walls constitute a significant health problem in Africa and elsewhere (Singh 2007, Jolofani and deGabriele 1999, UNODC, UNAIDS and World Bank 2008, Onyemocho 2014, Jürgens et al 2011).⁹ There are several sources of HIV transmission in prisons, such as tattooing, shaving and drug injection with non-sterile equipment, violence (with exchange of blood). However, at least in most Southern African countries, the main source of infection is through sexual intercourse (Jürgens et al 2011, Simooya 2010).

Most inmates return to their communities after release. Therefore, not only is it highly desirable to prevent HIV in the prison setting, but HIV in prison populations pose a challenge for general public health, as the disease will spread at even higher rates. Often, the people who are in prison have not had access to sufficient information on HIV prior to incarceration, and they constitute a group that is termed hard-to-reach. Preventive programmes in prisons have shown significant effect, even if they could have been even more effective if it had been possible to promote condom use (UNODC, UNAIDS and World Bank 2008, Onyemocho 2014, Jürgens et al 2011). Condoms are mostly forbidden in African prisons for a complexity of cultural, historical, political, religious and legal reasons – apart from in South Africa (and a few other countries) (Epprecht 2004, Epprecht 2008).

The conditions under which human beings are incarcerated play a vital role if one is to understand how incarceration affects people psychologically, socially and physically. The same conditions play a major role if one is to understand the psychological, social and physical dynamics contributing to how and why HIV is spread in prisons.

1.7 NARROWING IN ON THIS STUDY

Prisons in Africa are understudied and poorly understood. Perhaps surprisingly, amongst the research produced, there has been very little focus on prisoner perspectives. Rather, most studies focus on prison staff and other more institutional perspectives. This PhD aims to make an important contribution to the field of prisons research in Africa by exploring how inmates experience imprisonment, and how they – within the limited options available – struggle for physical, social and psychological survival. Prisoner perspectives are essential if we are to understand how imprisonment affects human lives during incarceration. If we understand prisoner perspectives, we will be closer to making meaningful change.

Inmates in the Zambian prisons live under circumstances that place them under severe stress. Prison conditions such as overcrowding, lack of food, ill health, as well as loss of liberty, stigma and isolation from family and loved ones all contribute to placing inmates in a situation where they must struggle hard to survive in both psychological, social and physical terms. This research aims to explore how inmates experience this

⁹Read more on <http://www.avert.org/prisoners-hiv-aids.htm>

adversity and how they struggle to survive, including how sexual relations for some may be part of this struggle.

As seen in the above, HIV and AIDS remain a significant problem in the Zambian prisons, and calls for urgent attention to understand the process leading to new infections. An in-depth understanding as to why some prisoners may contract HIV inside prison is an important step towards addressing the problem and protecting inmates from infection. Contracting HIV can be said to be more of a process than an event, and therefore it is important to look at HIV transmission in terms that look beyond the sexual act (Krebs 2002).

Interestingly, sex between men occurs despite the considerable stigma against the practise (Epprecht 2004) and even though inmates in the Zambian prisons are more knowledgeable about HIV than the general population outside of prison (Simooya 2010). Certain factors and practices place certain individuals at risk of contracting HIV, and psychological and socio-economic vulnerability are some of them.¹⁰ In agreement with Krebs, I believe that:

Contracting HIV is more of a process than an event, and understanding this process both substantively and theoretically will assist in the effort to make risky events less common and/or less dangerous. Reducing the risk, and ultimately the incidence of infection, will improve not only inmate health but also public health (...) (Krebs 2002, p 22).

To grasp how inmates experience imprisonment, and how they struggle to survive and to hold on to a sense of self, this dissertation will draw upon two concepts, identity and recognition, in combination with a number of more empirically grounded studies. This study is inspired by Honneth's concept of recognition and identity in the way that it has helped me think about how to analyse prisoner experiences, and how inmates struggle for a sense of recognition in a place where recognition of even fundamental humanity is hard to come by. I use his concepts intuitively, situating them with other more grounded theories based on empirical studies and adapting them to my case.

1.8 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study posed the following research question:

How do incarcerated men survive imprisonment psychologically and socially, and how do sexual relations play into this struggle for survival?

The analysis will shed light on the research question, through an analysis of these working questions:

1. What characterises the experience of imprisonment in a Zambian prison?
2. How do inmates survive incarceration, particularly socially and psychologically?
3. How do sexual relations play into the struggle for psychological, social and physical survival?

In Section 1.10 we shall see specifically how the thesis is structured around these questions, and I will explain how each chapter relates to the working questions.

The aim of the study is:

¹⁰ <https://www.aids.gov/hiv-aids-basics/prevention/reduce-your-risk/who-is-at-risk-for-hiv/> and <http://www.apa.org/pi/aids/resources/exchange/2013/01/comorbidities.aspx>

- To strengthen the knowledge base of imprisonment in a Sub-Saharan African prison, in particular in relation to prisoner experiences and coping strategies. This area is remarkably understudied, and provides the opportunity to shed light on very fundamental features of how individuals are affected by extreme situations, specifically incarceration.
- To provide research based knowledge to aid the facilitation of increased political and public awareness and knowledge based interventions for improved conditions and health, in particular prevention of HIV/AIDS.

1.9 ANALYTICAL INSPIRATION: IDENTITY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR RECOGNITION

1.9.1 A normative point of departure – for Honneth and for this dissertation

Honneth's theory of recognition offers one of the most coherent and convincing theories of the link between recognition and identity today (Willig 2007, Zurn 2015). Honneth takes a point of departure in critical theory and social philosophy, and builds his normative theory on many influences ranging from psychology, sociology, history and political theory. He is a third-generation scholar of the influential Frankfurt School, where the second-generation Jürgen Habermas has been his mentor and has played an important role for Honneth's theoretical development. The single most influential scholar in Honneth's work is Georg W. F. Hegel with whom Honneth shares the focus on social character of human personality and intersubjectivity (Zurn 2015), a concept which will be explored further on the following pages. However, his influences are broad and include George Herbert Mead, and Honneth's theory is fundamentally interdisciplinary (Honneth 1995, Zurn 2015).

Honneth's overall aim is *to produce a critical social theory: an interdisciplinary social theory aiming to diagnose perils and potentials of the present* (Zurn 2015, p 15). Honneth is concerned with social change, and that through social analysis we can identify exclusion mechanisms and pathologies and thus have the potential to change them for the better. He is deeply committed to presenting a social critique of the present based on normative standards and a moral standpoint (Honneth 1995).

To Honneth, the normative ideals should be understood and identified through an analysis of existing social structures and not independently from them. In this sense, the theory is normative, but the normative ideals are to be identified through social analysis of existing institutions. In this way, Honneth encourages empirical analysis that identifies social values and where these values are not adhered to. Honneth's approach also entails a deep interdependence between empirical social analysis and normative analysis. His intent is fundamentally emancipatory. Honneth proposes two central points for identifying progress – inclusion and individualization. Basically, societies are better off when they acknowledge individuals and their distinctiveness and work towards as little discrimination and exclusion as possible (Honneth 1995, Zurn 2015).

My approach for this dissertation, which is grounded in a fundamental sense of empathy for the plight of prisoners, is normative. I too wish to identify pathologies or 'wrongs' – specifically in terms of the Zambian prisons - and through this analysis provide the opportunity to look critically at the prison social environment and its effects as a foundation for a potential for change. In this way, I follow Honneth's lead.

1.9.2 Identity and recognition

Honneth creates a strong link between recognition and identity, as recognition is seen as fundamental for identity formation, and the lack of it will affect identity and consequently behaviour and the possibility of self-realization. The development of identity is not an individual project independent from the social world

in which the individual navigates. Rather, recognition is an inter-subjective and mutual process between individuals and within a community (Honneth 1995). Zurn sums it up:

Individuals only become who they are in and through relations of mutual recognition with others. In short, persons gain subjectivity only inter-subjectively. Only, when individuals receive positive acknowledgement from others of their own personal traits, standings and abilities can individuals begin to see themselves as others do and thereby gain an efficacious sense-of-self. Mutual recognition, according to Honneth, characterizes a whole range of intersubjective relations: between parents and children, between lovers and friends, between legal subjects, between participants in labor markets, between commodity consumers and producers between fellow citizens, between men and women, between members of different ethnicities and races, between members of various civil society organizations, between democratic actors and so on. (Zurn 2015, p 6)

To develop a 'good' and full identity, according to Honneth, the individual needs recognition in three spheres: 1) Love (initially parental love, later understood as loved ones) 2) Legally institutionalized relations of universal respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons, and 3) 'Ethical life' (*Sittlichkeit*), which entails networks of solidarity and shared values within a community. Love lays the foundation for self-confidence. Rights provide the foundation for self-respect, and self-esteem can be ensured in the third sphere through mutual solidarity. Each sphere corresponds to the risk of a certain kind of disrespect which will affect self-confidence, self-respect and/or self-esteem. Honneth formulated how disrespect in any or all of the spheres can injure or even destroy to a person's identity (Honneth 1995).

Because the normative self-image of each and every individual human being – his or her 'me' as Mead put it – is dependent on the possibility of being continually backed up by others, the experience of being disrespected carries with it the danger of an injury that can bring the identity of the person as a whole to the point of collapse. (Honneth 1995, p 131-2)

In this way, individuals are fundamentally dependent on others' recognition for both construction and maintenance of their identity and sense of self as a person of value.

The most fundamental sphere is love – in the family and close relations. This sphere relates mainly to the parent-child relationship and other close relationships, such as partners and close friends. In particular, in relation the first sphere, Honneth draws on psychoanalytic research. Honneth is inspired by the psychologist Donald Winnicott who developed the term 'good enough mothering' (Honneth 1995). Winnicott argues that the child will develop and mature in the relationship with its caregiver, and that the extent to which the child's needs are met plays a vital role in terms of the child's capacity to express needs without fear of being abandoned. If the fundamental need for love and care is met, the child will develop self-confidence, which is a condition for self-realization. However, this self-confidence does not constitute an impregnable shell; and throughout an adult's life, there will still be threats to its integrity in the shape of disrespect (Winnicott 1960, Honneth 1995).

According to Honneth, disrespect relating to this sphere can take on many forms. Some are more serious than others, but the most serious are threats to physical integrity, such as deprivation of the opportunity to freely dispose over his/her own body. Honneth exemplifies this with torture and rape to show which kind of injuries severely affect self-confidence (Honneth 1995).

The second sphere of Honneth's theory is concerned with rights and respect in society. Respect of the individual's basic rights protects his/her autonomy. Rights are connected to identity in the way that rights in

society ensure a sense of self-respect for the individual. Rights and respect is concerned with being equal under the law, and all enjoying the same rights. Inclusion in society is central to this sphere of recognition, as well as freedom from discrimination of any kind (Ibid).

According to Honneth, the state should be impartial when delivering these fundamental rights to its citizens. The idea is that self-respect as well as self-realization can be achieved if one learns to recognize others as humans with rights just as oneself. This, however, does not mean that law-breakers shall not be held accountable for their actions, as he argues that most individuals are able and obliged to act morally and rationally. Therefore, they will also have to face justice if they break the law. They should not be stripped of fundamental rights, but law breakers should face the consequences of their actions through for instance having their liberty limited (Ibid).

Being awarded fundamental rights is therefore a prerequisite for achieving a 'full identity', and subsequently for successful self-realization. It does not mean that a person without rights cannot have self-respect, but Honneth argues that the fullest form of self-respect cannot be realized, if one is not recognized in this sphere. In this sense, respect and rights cannot be separated: rights are a prerequisite for respect, and respect cannot exist without rights. Rights are fundamental, but they vary over time and place, although they are not completely relative. In short, social, civil and political rights are 'rights' in Honneth's terms, and the denial of such rights can result in the injury or collapse of the individual's identity. Disrespect in this sphere is that of being structurally denied certain rights within a society. This leads to a loss of self-respect, because the ability to relate to oneself as an equal partner in society is not possible, and this causes injuries to identity (Ibid).

Honneth's third sphere of recognition is concerned with recognition as esteem. Esteem is different from respect in the way that esteem should be awarded individuals on the basis of their unique characteristics. It is about finding your own place and making your own contributions, whatever they may be. Every society and community has its own value system in which individuals are awarded esteem based on their contributions to the common good. This form of recognition manifests in self-esteem. Solidarity between individuals and shared values are at the core of this sphere. The third sphere is then, as are the other spheres, a prerequisite for developing a full identity, and for self-realization (Ibid).

If one is robbed of group solidarity through not being able to fill one's mode of life with positive significance, this will deny the person the ability to attribute social value to his or her own abilities, and consequently the individual's self-esteem will suffer. Honneth describes how studies have shown that the after-effects of such violations are often described as psychological or social death or as 'scars' or 'injuries'. These violations endanger, damage or destroy the identity of the individuals (Honneth 1995). Trauma psychology similarly claim that trauma affects identity. Often, individuals will tell a negative story about themselves upon experiencing trauma, such as 'I was not strong enough, I am helpless to protect myself' etc., which has severe implications for self-perception and identity (Ibid).

1.9.3 Critiques of Honneth

Honneth theory of recognition is considered as one of the most coherent and systematic theories of contemporary philosophy and sociology (Willig 2007, Zurn 2015, Thompson 2006). There are of course also critiques of his theory, one of the most prominent being that of philosopher Nancy Frasier. Her critique centres on a political-philosophical discussion on the relationship between redistribution and recognition in a context of global capitalism and justice. However much this could be relevant at an abstract theoretical level, my focus is more empirical and specific, and my aim is to use Honneth's theory to aim to make sense of the empirical data. Therefore, in this section, I will focus on the critique that centres on the more psychological and social elements of his theory.

Of relevance to this PhD would be the critique put forward by some psychologists who argue that Honneth's approach is somewhat naïve in that it downplays the negative and aggressive sides of human nature. Freudians for instance argue that aggression is indeed an innate quality of the human self, particularly in the form of primary narcissism and anti-social forms of inter-subjectivity. Honneth's response to this would be that he does acknowledge both negative and aggressive forms of expression. But he essentially denies the Freudian claim of intrapsychic unfolding of drives based on the numerous studies which have shown that it is the interaction between child and parent that matters in emotional development and for moral identity. Relating that point to my case, the aggression shown by prisoners may be understood as an emotional reaction, but not something innate to prisoners or human beings in general (Zurn 2015).

Another interesting point is the fact that Honneth's theory does not rest on empirical evidence, even if he encourages such analyses based on his theory:

As we can see, Honneth does not have any empirical evidence for his critical diagnoses of contemporary pathological development tendencies. He has never himself made empirical investigations and mostly refers to the type of empirical studies which are either sufficiently abstract to fit his own level of analysis, or examples which are easily recognised as experiences of everyday consciousness of contemporary condition. This means more specifically that it is not yet – on a sociological empirical level – possible to speak of actual, documented emancipatory experiences of successful struggles for recognition, just like it is not possible to speak of any real evidence of social pathologies. The categories only appeal to our intuitive understanding of the state of affairs. (Willig 2007, p 111) (author's translation)

For me this has meant that I have not been able to identify in-depth empirical analyses by Honneth himself, which I could use as a kind of backdrop to my work or as inspiration. There are of course several in-depth critiques of Honneth's theory. But my aim is not to develop a new theoretical framework, but to try to contribute to a deeper understanding of prisoners in African, specifically of course Zambian, prisons.

Honneth claims universality, but in his work, he concentrates his analysis mainly on Western societies, and arguably on Western values of democracy. He does, however, emphasize that values are historical, and that values and ideals of societies and cultures vary over time, and he shows sensitivity to difference between cultures. However, one could certainly criticise me for choosing a theory which is rarely used outside of Western societies. Even so, I did choose to work with Honneth, and this is because I see the concept of recognition and the link to identity useful. This dissertation does not set out to make sense of the totality of Honneth's theory in connection with Zambian prisons, but aims to draw on his three spheres and on the link to identity formation, maintenance and threats to these.

1.9.4 Experience, identity and recognition

Much in line with Honneth's thinking, narrative psychologists Crossley (Crossly 2000) and Jarvis argue that identity and self is not a static thing but will develop and change over a lifetime. It is a process which is not only an internal psychological development, but rather something which happens as a process of interaction between the individual, other individuals, the community and society as a whole (Jarvis 2006).

Identity is a product of meaning in this way because it is produced by meanings and interpretations. One's 'identity' is heavily influenced by how other people view you, and these views will be reflected internally in some way. The self is seen as an interactional process of dialogue between different images of self, taken from the past, the future, and affected by responses from significant and generalized others. Jarvis argues:

We are what we think and do, but we are also what we have learned and remember. But what we do affects the way others identify us, and it is this that allows them to identify us which, in its turn affects our self-identity. Our minds are the storehouse of our memories of the complexities of the lives we have led and are leading, so that our identities are a complex interplay of self and social – what I see myself to be, what I do and the person others see me to be. As this process continues, we learn a sense of self identity. However, our identity is not just our store of memories, it is also about the way that people treat us as persons and what we learn about ourselves from this (...). Finally, our identities are affected by the spaces that we occupy (...). Significantly, ourselves and our identities are learned phenomena (Jarvis 2006, p 48).

So, identities are learned and not given, and culture and identity will form a more or less conscious filter of how to understand the world and one's own position in it – which again shapes the perceived options for agency (Jarvis 2006). According to Illeris, human beings are to a large extent a product of their earlier experiences. Their past will be brought into every new experience and will be used to process new experiences (Illeris 2000).

Lack of recognition can be understood as repressive. If a group is presented with a negative image of themselves, this image can be assimilated or cause a negative self-identity. Alternatively, this group will have to engage in a process of fighting this negative identity. Honneth gives examples of various groups having fought negative stereotypes and achieved significantly more recognition. Examples would be the colonies fighting for independence, the former slaves fighting for freedom, or groups fighting for LGBTI¹¹ rights (Honneth 1995).

The risk of downplaying the individual's role follows with Honneth's focus on society and its exclusion mechanisms. With many of the great thinkers – Foucault, Honneth and Goffman, to name a few – there is an important focus on society or social context, and on how the social context shapes the individual's identity. Yet Honneth with his strong focus on identity formation offers a lens through which we can aim to understand more about both the destructiveness of imprisonment as a social structure, but also about how the individual responds. Even if Honneth himself does not focus much on the individual, his concepts of recognition and identity may offer important lessons on how individuals respond to imprisonment more specifically in terms of how they experience imprisonment, and how they are affected, and ultimately cope. His theory offers a comprehensive approach to how recognition and identity are linked, and in this way, contributes to an analysis of what prisoners face when they struggle to cope with the destructive prison environment.

To me it has been helpful to understand what prisoners experience through Honneth's lens. In my view, his focus on recognition and identity speak strongly to my material, as we shall see in the following chapters. This PhD aims to use Honneth's theory to cast light on the social processes taking place in prison under circumstances that are not only destructive for the individual's identity but certainly also place stress on even the most basic feature of human life – survival. In this way, we are not only looking for a snapshot of prison life but attempt also to look at experiences and social processes. The fundamental basis for the study is that incarcerated men act within and navigate through the social system of the prison in ways that are meaningful to them in their struggles.

Honneth speaks of injuries to identity and even destruction of identity. These are powerful words, but perhaps they fall short of explaining what this structural damage to identity actually entails for the individual

¹¹ LGBTI: Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgender/sexual and Intersex

both in the short and long term. What is an injury to identity exactly, and how are these injuries experienced? Can injuries be conquered? Can one or does one learn to live with injuries? How do individuals deal with these injuries and how do they cope, if they cope at all? In the coming chapters, we shall explore some of these questions.

1.10 DESIGN

The dissertation is structured around the three working questions (see Section 1.8) to answer the overarching research question. The dissertation is divided into chapters, where each chapter informs the next, even if they can be read almost independently. Here, I take the reader through each chapter to show how the chosen order of chapters forms a coherent framework for the analysis.

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter that presents the research questions and the most important background information needed to understand the research questions. The main themes are: my personal motivation for writing on this particular topic, an introduction to Zambia, HIV/AIDS and prisons, and Zambian prisons. The chapter outlines the theoretical inspiration and frames the research questions.

Chapter 2 is the methodology chapter which describes the main methodological considerations.

Chapter 3 contains a literature review of ethnographic and sociological scholarship on 'prisoners'. It forms the background for Chapters 4 and 5. The chapter is structured so that findings from the West form the first part of the chapter, simply because the Western prison is far more researched. The second part of the chapter sheds light on Sub-Saharan African prisons.

Chapter 4 answers the first working question, and sheds light on how inmates in the Zambian prisons experience their imprisonment under the extreme circumstances of incarceration in an African prison. Aided by theory of recognition and psychological theory on crisis, the chapter explores the trauma and the pain of imprisonment.

Chapter 5 sheds light on the second working question, and explores how inmates respond to the experience of imprisonment. Here we explore how prisoners aim to survive imprisonment. The different coping strategies that emerged from the data analysis are explored with the help of concepts of recognition and identity combined with theory of crisis and coping.

Chapter 6 contains a literature review on the topic of sex in prisons. The chapter starts with reflections on studying sexuality and defining sex in prisons. Then, like in Chapter 3, we start by reviewing literature from the West where causes and dynamics of sex and sexuality in prisons are explored. Again, we start here because of the scarcity of literature on sex in African prisons. We focus on Sub-Saharan African prisons later in the chapter, which prepares us for Chapter 7 where we explore sex in Zambian prisons in detail.

Chapter 7 answers the third working question, and explores sex as a coping strategy to survive imprisonment. It explores how masculine identity comes under threat, and how prisoners cope with sexuality in a highly stressful environment where there are no (biologically defined) women. The chapter explores the reasons why some inmates enter into sexual relationships. Finally, the gendered dimension of the sexual relationship is explored and how this is linked to a struggle for survival as well as recognition.

Chapter 8 sums up the main conclusions of the PhD with the main emphasis on the empirical findings and makes suggestions for future research and action on the ground.

1.11 CONCLUSION

Imprisonment is known for its damaging effect on health and well-being. Prisons in Africa are poorly understood and understudied. Even if Zambian prisons are no worse than other Sub-Saharan African prisons, they have massive problems in the form of severe overcrowding, many deaths due to infectious diseases, insufficient health services, and lack of (healthy) food.

For many prisoners, incarceration means a struggle for basic survival – physically but also psychologically and socially. Very little is known about how prisoners experience imprisonment in Africa and how they struggle to survive. There are vast differences between prisons in Africa, but this study will provide one piece of the puzzle. We shall now turn to the methodological considerations and challenges of researching prisons.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A solid methodological foundation is necessary when conducting fieldwork and interviewing vulnerable groups, such as people in prison, about their lives and sensitive subjects such as sexuality. Serious and systematic considerations concerning ethics and interviewing methodology are fundamental to collecting data in a responsible way. This chapter explores and examines the process of and challenges associated with data collection, the principles and practices of interviewing methods, reflections on emotions in field work, and finally the limitations of the study.

2.2 DATA COLLECTION

The study was from the outset grounded in a wish to understand – people’s stories, their past and present, and their coping strategies in terms of how to survive imprisonment physically, psychologically and socially. This study is based on a combination of interviewing data and ethnographic observations, but with the main emphasis on life story interviews.

The nature of the crime committed was not in focus, unless it carried a particular significance in terms of the informant’s life story. Rather, attention was on understanding values, patterns, ruptures, changes in their lives – and the significance of those in relation to coping strategies and sexual risk behaviour.

To begin this work, I had to gain access to a closed institution. Since the field of research is sensitive and controversial, I will explain how I approached the authorities and how I finally gained access.

2.2.1 Gaining access

Gaining access to prisons is difficult all over the world. Yet I had an advantage in Zambia because before I commenced on the PhD research, I had already worked with Zambia Correctional Service in a different capacity. I had worked as a UN programme officer for UNAIDS, the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, where I was responsible for providing technical support to HIV/AIDS policy and strategy development. I had also started a private initiative, which later developed into the NGO ‘Ubumi Prisons Initiative’, where I and Zambian partners worked to secure improved nutrition and health for circumstantial children in prison (children aged 0-4 born or brought in prison with their mothers). When I started my work for UNAIDS in 2005, I was received with deep suspicion, but with time a relationship of trust developed. During a recent visit, the Deputy Commissioner with whom I worked closely as a UN Programme Officer said that I now had a free rein to enter prison. A kind exaggeration, yet nevertheless an indication of how the working relationship has developed over the years.

Yet entering prisons to do academic research proved to be a challenge because of the closed nature of prisons, and the sensitivity of the issue of sex in prison.

Ethical Clearance

The first step in terms of official permission to conduct an academic study is gaining clearance from the Bio-Medical Ethics Committee at the University of Zambia. A proposal was submitted stating what the research was about, including interviewing men about sexuality and sexual risk behaviour. They approved the project after several months of processing the request, contingent on a letter of approval by Ministry of Home Affairs.

Only a few months prior to my proposal, Human Rights Watch had done research in Zambian prisons which was widely publicized. The study was of high quality but was also very direct and pointed to a number of human rights violations, including the use of penal blocks: this is a common form of torture in African prisons, where an inmate is placed in isolation in a small cell, receives only very little food, and perhaps water is poured on the floor up to the ankle or knee, the inmate has to sit naked for days in the cell without access to a toilet. The Zambian government was embarrassed at the public revelations. At the launch of the report, the government quickly announced the abolition of penal blocks and a will to make changes to conditions in general. Behind the scenes, the system was shocked that a study such as this had ever received approval in the first place. The government and particularly the Ministry of Home Affairs was deeply embarrassed.

So, when the application for this study was submitted to the ministry, the decision was – even if it was an academic study – to refuse access. The process was stalled for months, and finally a letter by the Permanent Secretary in Ministry of Home Affairs arrived, referring to the impossibility of conducting the study ‘due to prison being a security institution’. The expression ‘security’ is one often used and misused in the prisons to assert dominance over outsiders as well as prisoners.

After having mobilized contacts in international organisations to no avail, it turned out to be Zambia Correctional Service itself that opened doors. I had previously worked closely with a prisons HQ officer who had since risen in the ranks. After he became involved, the formal permission went through in a matter of days. He expressed that he had enjoyed working with me, and that they trusted me. I am aware that I have to keep earning and honouring that trust – also in terms of disseminating results carefully.

2.2.2 Site, sample and the research team

Site and sample

The fieldwork took place in January/February 2011, December 2011, January/February 2013, May 2013 and finally in November/December 2013, a total of four months. Over the three years, 15 ex-prisoners, 72 prisoners and 10 staff members in Lusaka Central Prison in Lusaka and Mukobeko Maximum and Medium prisons in Kabwe were interviewed by a research team consisting of myself and four research assistants. After 2013, I have frequently visited the prisons, and I have regularly followed up on issues pertaining to the PhD.



The episodic nature of the fieldwork of coming and going proved an advantage in terms of building relationships with staff and prisoners. Like Tomas Martin (Martin 2013) experienced in his studies of the Ugandan Prisons Service, ‘coming back’ shows commitment and fosters relationships in the longer term. Every time I returned, staff and inmates’ confidence in me increased. I am convinced that the fact that I kept coming back over a couple of years to the same prison and the same people (thankfully, the current command in both HQ and in Mukobeko Maximum Prison stayed the same) showed not only

commitment, but also served to prove that I was not 'telling on them' to the media or anyone else and revealing anything that would create problems for them.

The research team

Due to the fact that the individuals interviewed in this research are potentially highly vulnerable, because of the nature of their life situation, a lot of care has to be put into how to approach the topic and deal with issues that arise, not to mention how to train research assistant to do the same.

In January 2011 I recruited a team of four Zambian research assistants. They came from very different professional backgrounds, and had varying experience with research and qualitative studies. I hired for instance a former diplomat, a finance student with research assistance experience, and a clinical officer/counsellor. I trained them all thoroughly over three days in social science methodology, narrative and life story interviewing and interviewing trauma victims. Importantly, we spent significant time on the ethics of interviewing, in particular on the importance of approaching all informants from the perspective of fundamental human rights, i.e. human dignity. It was very important to convey to them how judgment of any kind was not allowed. On the first trip, three men and one woman were selected as assistants, all from different ethnic groups speaking common Zambian languages. One of the men was an ex-prisoner, and performed the role of ice-breaker, but did not conduct interviews, but he still received the training.

'The ice breaker' is a former prisoner himself who runs a successful NGO working for human rights of prisoners. He facilitated a lot of the work, and in the beginning when the 'do's and the don'ts' were not yet as clear to me, he was very useful in providing advice and general assistance. He would introduce the informants (the prisoners) to us, the interviewers, and encourage them to open up and feel confident that everything they revealed would stay confidential. This approach worked well. Later, he became too busy to participate, but by then we were known faces in prison so it was no longer necessary to have an icebreaker.

Unfortunately, one assistant turned out to be a poor interviewer. He could not follow the guidelines provided, particularly in terms of ethics, for instance by making judgments and in terms of promising things he did not deliver. I spent significant time trying to correct his technique, but he was unfortunately unable to develop his skills further. I have discarded all his interviews (15) in terms of data analysis. I did not get the impression that informants were traumatized by his behaviour, but his questions were much too leading to be used in a project strict on methodology.

On the last two trips, I used only female assistants simply because they happened to be the best interviewers. Williams and Heikes challenge assumptions of the non-applicability of cross-gender research and instead propose an awareness of how gender may affect the stories told (Williams and Heikes 1993). My initial concern about whether men would open up to women turned out not to be relevant. We discovered that inmates were likely to open up with any (sensitive and empathetic) interviewer, eager to be able to share their stories.

Selection and interviewing

On the first trip, I was unsure of whether I could make demands on the categories of prisoners I wanted to interview and I was concerned that if I made too strong demands, I would be sanctioned in some way by staff. Additionally, I was not sure if the prisoners actually wanted to speak to me at all. I therefore started carefully by simply asking officers to identify prisoners who were willing to be interviewed, and who were serving varying lengths of time in prison. During the first visit, I had the sense that they largely picked 'nice' guys out with some rank (i.e. prisoners with a level of trust and responsibility). Yet the informants were very

different, and they provided me with useful information and, in a sense, the experience served as a gentle introduction to research in prisons.

With time my focus turned increasingly to Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison. Even if it is the most guarded prison in terms of security and cautiousness, with time it became possible to identify informants quite freely. After the first visit, we moved on to what could be described as almost-random selection, where we selected informants reflecting prisoner demographics. Informants were identified from different categories: condemned, lifers, long, medium, and short term convicts, and finally remandees and juveniles. We made sure to speak to members of all age groups, with the exception of inmates over the age of 56 of which there are very few. According to oral information from an officer in HQ, the average age of inmates is 32. The average age of informants for this study was almost 34 years old.

We did not actively seek out foreign nationals such as prohibited immigrants, other than once when we interviewed five. They were not a specific focus of the research, but nor were they excluded. Interviewing them posed some language barriers because their English and/or Zambian language skills were often poor. We did not make a selection based on ethnic group, but the affiliation of each informant was recorded, and there are no indications of ethnic misrepresentation in the data material, probably also because the Maximum Security Prison facility has inmates from all over the country.

There are no demographic data on education amongst prisoners in Zambian prisons, but attention was given to selecting persons with different levels of education. The average level of education of the informants was schooling up to grade 9, but we interviewed everybody from people with no education to people with academic degrees. A general impression is that education levels are low amongst prisoners, and that inmates generally come from poor backgrounds (a worldwide trend) (Moore et al 2008, Jefferson 2014).¹² The fact that a large number of the informants were from Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison (which contains inmates serving long sentences) means that many informants had been incarcerated for years. This meant that many inmates had advanced *inside* prison in terms of education up to and including secondary school, and this probably contributes to the relatively high education average amongst our informants. At the time of the interviews, 25 informants had less than seven years of schooling, and three had no schooling at all. 33 inmates had between eight and 12 years of schooling, and 12 informants had education above secondary school, though only one by more than three years.

At times, we would pick out one or two informants in a less random fashion, if this person for one reason or another would be able to provide us with useful information. At other times, we decided to interview inmates who were particularly eager to be interviewed. Prisoners who actively sought us out were often inmates in acute crisis in need of help, but a few times a prisoner came forward with a wish to tell us something specific that he felt we might not know. Over time, we relied more on snowballing than random selection, as we wanted to speak to prisoners who would be able to provide knowledge of specific elements of prison life.

Many Zambians know some English, and it was often possible to interview people with next to no formal education in English without much difficulty. Those who were not able to speak English were interviewed in local languages (Bemba or Nyanja) by the research assistants. There are about 73 languages spoken in Zambia, but Bemba and Nyanja are the major languages, and most Zambians will know one of those languages. Only once or twice did we give up on interviewing a person, and they were immigrants or refugees.

¹² See also <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2014/10/incarceration.aspx>, accessed 26th November 2016,

Upon being selected, prisoners were informed of the purpose of the study and were given the opportunity to opt out. No one opted out, and most were disappointed if they were not selected. The informants signed an informed consent form after it had been read out aloud to them and questions clarified. At this point they were once more given the opportunity of opting out. Again, no one opted out.

We followed four informants closely over the three years to go deeper into their life stories and understand more about their development and coping strategies. These inmates were selected based on their availability, personal and social development, and ability to reflect and express themselves.

Interviews would last between 45 and 180 minutes, the average being 90 minutes. Giving the informants plenty of time meant that we had the opportunity of spending much time on each topic. Narrative interviewing also means asking for 'stories' (examples etc.), and here it was useful to have sufficient time. There were times when it became physically uncomfortable for the interviewers because we could not always eat (we did not eat in front of the prisoners, but outside prison, which brought logistical challenges) or drink or just rest as much as we needed.

Prior to each visit, I developed a set of themes to be explored in the interviews. I would hand out a page of key words for the interviewers who, based on prior instructions, would be able to delve more deeply into for instance: 1) Everyday practices and routines, 2) Life trajectories, 3) Accounts of major opportunities and challenges of prison life, 4) Coping strategies and accounts of resilience, 5) Social relationships – for instance to staff, inmates and outside prison, 6) Accounts of masculinity ('definitions' about male identity and roles, and how these were affected by imprisonment) and 7) accounts of sexuality. It was not mandatory to get through the list, because that would depend of the willingness of the informant. The themes were deliberately not formulated as questions, because the main idea was that we ask the informant to tell us about his life, and the questions we asked would be using his words to explore further. An example of this:

Informant: There are so many cruelties in prison

Interviewer: Can you tell me about these cruelties?

Informant: Yes, there is the sleeping conditions, lack of food, people sick and dying, sodomy...

Interviewer: Can you tell me more about the sleeping conditions... (and so the interview would continue, asking for more and more details and experiences about the cruelties)

I did not have much opportunity of 'hanging around informally' with prisoners without supervision, except on weekends when there were less staff and fewer activities. Then I would sit and chat with prisoners. A guard would linger in the background, but too far away to engage in conversation (because I asked them to stay away, but at other times, I would pay some attention to the staff and chat informally to build trust). During the last two visits in particular, was I able to sit, chat and relax with prisoners outside the chapel. Otherwise the observations took place as part of the daily routines. We took notes and recorded our impressions to the extent possible.

2.3 ETHICS AND INTEGRITY

I ascribe to the ethical principles and code of conduct provided by the American Psychological Association.¹³ But even if they are very useful and necessary guidelines, they are of course not designed specifically for researching prisons. As Meskell and Pels argue, ethical guidelines are useful but there is a need to engage

¹³ APA <http://www.apa.org/ethics/code/index.aspx>

practically with ethics. Ethics must be built into the research design and must guide the process throughout, but ethics are also situational in the sense that research design cannot stand alone, and the researcher will come across unforeseen challenges (Meskell and Pels, Ed. 2005). Murphy and Dingwall write:

The ethics and the politics of ethnography are not clearly separable. Questions about the right way to treat each other as human beings within a research relationship are not wholly distinct from questions about the values, which should prevail in a society and the responsibility of social scientists to make, or refrain from making judgments about these. (Murphy and Dingwall 2001, p 347)

They continue:

These (ethical) obligations are complex and will not be fulfilled through simple adherence to a prescriptive list of requirements. Indeed, given the diversity and flexibility of ethnography, and the indeterminacy of potential harm, a prescriptive approach may be positively harmful. (Murphy and Dingwall 2001, p 347)

Several times I found myself in situations where I had to make choices: of interfering, not interfering, acting or not acting, speaking out or keeping quiet, of addressing the inherent suspicion of outsiders, and of addressing the pressing needs of prisoners. An example would be when staff members would be rude to inmates while I was there. I felt I had to avoid taking sides, especially if the staff member was high-ranking, and therefore could have authority over me. Only a few times did I challenge them openly.

An example of this would be when I was visiting the health clinic inside prison in my capacity as head of Ubumi Prisons Initiative. I had received permission from Zambia Correctional Service to take pictures, but I also wanted to obtain permission from the inmates so as to respect their right to privacy. As I was explaining what I wanted to do to the group of prisoners, a staff member interrupted me, challenging my attempt to ask for their permission: *Why do you even ask them? You have permission from the highest place and you ask these people? They are prisoners, you don't need their permission!* I already felt that asking to take pictures of seriously ill people was a major invasion that was only justifiable by the fact that I was trying to raise money for them, and responded irritably. I sharply remarked something along the lines of: *These people are human beings like you and me, and they have the same rights. They have human rights, and they certainly have the right to refuse having their picture taken. No one should have to have a picture published against his will, especially in a delicate situation such as this!* I am pretty sure I went on for a bit longer than that, but to his credit the staff member went quiet, and my assistants said afterwards that he looked like he was considering what I said. I do not know, because I was busy convincing the prisoners that I my request was sincerely meant, and that they were free to opt out. It had the effect that some of the prisoners in fact did opt out of having their photo taken.

At other times, I did not challenge prison staff. Junior staff would sometimes bark aggressively at the prisoners if they dared speak to me at 'inconvenient' times. Once a large group of inmates was waiting by the gate to be let back into the prison from the court. Some of them knew me and started chatting to me (but also asking me for money). The officer shouted at them and me for talking, and called them 'criminals and liars'. This particular officer was always rude and unfriendly to me (and prisoners), and I knew it was to no avail to start arguing with him. I said goodbye to the prisoners and turned away after a short time.

Arguments made by Piacentini in her recent publication 'Integrity, always integrity' resonate well with the considerations I had before entering the prisons. She speaks of integrity as being honouring her word and showing integrity in her actions in her prison ethnography. She speaks of integrity being particularly

important in prisons because of the very nature of prisons, and because the prison site cannot be anything but *destabilising for the researcher*. The researcher has to be able find ways to cope with the field, according to Piacentini. (Piacentini 2013, p 21)

Further, Piacentini argues for the researcher to be aware of what he or she stands for – in the sense of awareness as being fundamental to who the researcher is and why he or she chooses the particular field of prisons. So then, who am I? What do I stand for? Those are important yet quite challenging questions. In relationship to my research, in the following sections I try to shed some light on my key values in this particular study.

Professional

In this study, professionalism was about being clear about our capabilities and limitations in terms of interviewing, in terms of dealing with authorities and in terms of our emotional reactions. Being professional does not entail being detached, but rather offers a range of possibilities to deal with the ethical, practical and interviewing methodology issues that will invariably arise during field work.

Staff did on a rare occasion provoke me to the point of anger. It becomes tiresome to deal with their suspicious nature as well as their attempts to spy on me and control my movements. *The security nature of the institution* is a statement that is much (ab)used to create restrictions on outsiders and prisoners. I do not mean to suggest that there are not legitimate security concerns and precautions to be taken in a prison. Yet this specific statement seems to be a standard response made by staff when they do not need – or wish – to justify their decisions. I used a professional mask to control the anger. Being professional is also about being able to deal with the sometimes major psychological problems (or other kinds of problems) that would be revealed in interviews. Read more on this in Section 2.4.

An important limitation is also to be clear on what informants can expect from the interviewer. Many had hopes of some kind of assistance, or had expectations of us having certain powers that we simply did not have, such as for instance access to the president or access to enormous amounts of money.

Empathy and non-judgement

Drake and Harvey describe how *the identities we performed with our informants was to be consistently open, positive, accommodating, empathetic and non-judgemental* (Drake and Harvey 2013, p 7). Showing empathy and recognition of each person is important in order for informants to open up and share their stories. It meant that both prisoners and staff were consciously met with an open attitude.

Judgments of any kind – be they positive or negative – entail an evaluation of the informant, and this was consciously avoided as much as possible. A positive judgment (direct or indirect) may on the surface feel positive, but it also entails emotions on behalf of the informant. One will consciously or subconsciously look for recognition, and if for instance someone been told that he was ‘brave’ or ‘good’, then he will perhaps feel more reluctant to share information of when he had been less ‘good’ or ‘brave’, and thereby compromise results (Thorsen 2008).

Further, I stressed the necessity for myself and my assistants to separate our own emotional reactions from that of the informant. It can be painful to witness the pain of imprisonment, and as an interviewer, it is important to create a safe space where the informant can share his story. It is not the role of the researcher to be reduced to tears during an interview or by seeing dying inmates. It is not the responsibility of the prisoner (in this case) to worry about the emotional reactions of the researchers. Instead, the job for the researcher is to be able to accommodate emotional reactions of the informant. Emotions are not bad or

unwanted. If one becomes too detached from the reality of pain, then that in itself carries a great risk of harming informants. Emotions, however, have to be contained in a meaningful way during the interview, so that informants are not harmed or traumatized further by the researcher becoming too engrossed in the pain of their story.

Crewe and levins consider how researchers deal with interviewing criminals who may have done 'monstrous' things (Crewe and levins in Drake et al 2015). As I worked in a maximum security setting, I did of course encounter those who had killed or sexually abused children and so forth. It becomes a moral question of how to deal with emotions such as like or dislike, or morally grounded condemnation of the prisoner. Crewe and levins write:

'Ambivalence' captures the cognitive dissonance of liking and not liking someone simultaneously, for example, when enjoying the company of someone who admits to having committed a grotesquely violent act, and who may describe it with little remorse. It suggests a suspension of judgment that is necessary to distinguish between the person and the offence, or an attitude that is genuinely conflicted. (...) People are certainly more than their crimes, but so too are they more than the person we meet when we interview them. (Crewe and levins in Drake et al (Ed) 2015, p. 134-135)

Even if I knew full well that encountering persons who had committed terrible crimes would be part of the job description, it was still a process for me to come to terms with actually meeting the so-called criminals. During my first stint of fieldwork, I did struggle on a few occasions with keeping the professional and empathetic front towards prisoners who had been convicted for serious crimes. I remember one of the first inmates I interviewed had sexually abused several young girls. He was very preoccupied with telling me all his academic achievements, and most of the interview was about how he had lost his social status, and how unfair it was that he was incarcerated. I am quite certain that my 'dislike' or emotional distance did not manifest directly, especially since he proposed to me after the interview, because he wanted 'a good white woman'.

I spent much time processing this experience. I found it hard to accept my own gut reaction of dislike. This was not the kind of person or researcher I wanted to be. I had a clear goal of wanting to empathise with prisoners regardless of their crime and other personal attributes. In the end, I came to terms with these conflicting emotions by using Nils Thorsen's technique of 'trying to see the world through the eyes' of the informant, and by not letting the criminal offence define the informant (Thorsen 2008). I also feel that empathy and sincerely trying to understand a person's life does not necessarily entail 'liking' the person. Finally, I also felt that my personal judgment was somewhat irrelevant to the purpose of the work, which was to understand the person and his experiences. This served as a way to distance myself from concerns of likes and dislikes.

Having contemplated the conflict of like/dislike in the above, it was actually rare that I or my research assistants felt conflicted in this way. We did not ask specifically about the crime in the interviews, or only in a superficial way, unless it felt important to the informant's life story (which it often did). It is not rare that inmates were in fact innocent of their crimes, or their sentences were grossly unfair, and this would naturally be a big part of their story of incarceration (I am aware that not all those claiming innocence are not always innocent). Further, I quickly learned that the victim/perpetrator discourse is a simplistic and harmful one. In practice, it is far more muddled than that, and when one learns the individual stories of a given crime, the question of guilt of a given crime is often far more complicated than a simple guilty/not guilty. An example would be refugees who pass through the country on the way to South Africa. They may get 20-25 years in a

Zambian prison. The question becomes far more muddled when a young man in desperation kills a family member after years of neglect, abandonment and abuse, or when the mentally impaired perform crimes for which they can hardly be held responsible.

Activist – Ubumi Prisons Initiative¹⁴

Jefferson describes ‘bystander guilt and inaction’ in connection with his fieldwork in Sierra Leonean prisons:

In the prisons, I felt not fear, but guilt. I felt inconsequential and brutalised, not by the harshness of the atmosphere but by my choice of accepting a bystander/witness stance in the seemingly endless and tragic stories of judicial limbo. I could not help. I chose not to help (mostly). (Jefferson in Drake et al (Ed) 2015, p 176)

My privileged Europeaness was a source of guilt. I could leave anytime. They could not. Having worked and/or lived in Africa for many years, this was however not a new dilemma to me. I cannot tell the extent to which Jefferson did help in practice, but I also experienced a feeling of guilt. We tried our best with the means we had. From the outset, the research team did smaller things for the informants (prisoners), such as making phone calls for them, and if they had legal aid needs, we would put them in contact with an organization able to provide such aid. If we spoke to suicidal prisoners, we put them in touch with counsellors of the same organization.

Knowing well that I could not help everyone, I decided to act on the guilt and feelings of compassion by making my small contribution to making some things just a little more bearable through the NGO I founded. In 2006, I started doing volunteer work benefitting the circumstantial children in the Zambian prisons. In my capacity of programme officer in UNAIDS, I had been visiting the prisons, and I had witnessed how children aged 0-4 lived with their incarcerated mothers in prison. During my PhD fieldwork, I witnessed the urgent unmet needs by the seriously ill prisoners in Mukobeko Maximum Prison, and I expanded the work to this group. Out of a population of 1400-2300 inmates (fluctuating numbers), about a hundred inmates were very ill, and many were on the brink of death. I formally founded Ubumi Prisons Initiative in 2013 to do humanitarian and health related work in Zambian prisons. Many prisoners have survived due to the work of Ubumi. This is a way for me personally to deal with the pain of witnessing despair, death and the horrendous conditions of imprisonment.

Many researchers and journalists see interfering as a way of disturbing the observations and interactions with the field (Drake and Harvey 2013). The assumption being that informants could frame their answers in a way that could twist the results, hoping to gain something. I chose to see this as only one of many reasons that data would be compromised. The work turned out to be a strength for the research in the sense that inmates in general felt grateful for the support and felt as many expressed *you have a heart for prisoners*, even if they themselves did not directly benefit. Having the Ubumi projects also meant a higher level of legitimacy and access, because staff, more than through the more abstract ‘research’, could see the relevance of my being there.

I have not included interviews with patients benefitting from the Ubumi projects in the study, because I did not want to mix the two projects any more than necessary, and not including Ubumi patients in the research was a way to avoid that. Further, even if I have a goal of contributing to a human rights activist agenda with the results of this PhD, I did not have an action research approach to the study, simply because I felt it important to gain some more basic insights into the workings of a Zambian prison before combining research

¹⁴ www.ubumi.dk

directly with an activist agenda. Even so, as part of my monitoring and evaluation work in connection with the Ubumi projects, I discovered how many of our Ubumi inmate volunteers would find a sense of meaning in volunteering to help the seriously ill (by washing them, cooking and feeding, etc.). I thus discovered one of the ways in which some inmates attempt to cope with imprisonment through finding meaning in helping others. I have therefore included some of the quotes collected as part of the monitoring and evaluation exercises for Ubumi, even if these initially had no direct connection with the research.

Referring back to Murphy and Dingwall's argument of ethics not being distinctly separable from the politics of ethnography, it becomes clearer how my research approach and interpretation of integrity also includes a political agenda of challenging the status quo of how prisoners are treated, viewed and understood. The humanizing approach has the potential to 'humanise' the misrecognized individual as Crewe argues. But at the same time, one cannot always anticipate the reactions of the informants to this potentially powerful approach (Murphy and Dingwall 2001). It is for instance not unlikely that informants experience emotional struggles after having felt treated as human beings, because what they will re-enter after the interview is in many ways a de-humanising environment.

Indeed, one prisoner repeatedly expressed the pain of being left behind by the research team. It was a powerful experience for him to spend time with us, and he said it was worth the depression he fell into when we left. When I asked about the depression, he explicitly stated he felt treated as a human being with us, and he would not go without it at any cost. Even if he said this, it was disconcerting, and the way I chose to deal with the pain he went through was to stay in close written contact with him. The intense pain he went through was not anticipated, but in response to it I felt an obligation not to leave him completely. For his privacy and protection, I have chosen not to delve into any more detail.

2.3.1 Challenges and strategies to address them: Navigating prison as a researcher

Researching prisons comes with certain challenges in terms of access, in terms of protecting informants, in terms of confidentiality, in terms of upholding a level of ethics, and in terms of making observation, and more (Piacentini 2013, Piacentini 2004, Merotte 2012, Martin 2013, Drake and Harvey 2013, Jefferson, 2003). Below is my personal account of some of the challenges I encountered and the strategies I devised to address them.

Gaining access and building relationships in the individual prison

It is one thing to gain access at HQ level, it is quite another in the actual prison. In the beginning, at least officers did not really know how to deal with this white woman who insisted on conducting confidential interviews alone with prisoners. Junior officers were quite a challenge. They seemed eager to show their power, and afraid of getting into trouble with their superiors – and they gave the impression of having endless curiosity.

Officers in Charge and Deputy Officers were another challenge, but usually only in the beginning. Hours spent conversing with officers is part of the work. They must know you to trust you, and spending time with them is a way of showing respect and building relationships. With time, careful friendships would develop and officers would share information with me based on their trust in me; they would want to contribute to the research while I developed a deeper understanding of the prison.

Resistance

I have had to fight a few times for my right to access, and this is a common feature of prisons research (Martin 2013). I had permission from HQ, and prison staff must grant me access, but they fear the consequences of

that access. They are particularly cautious of whites entering prisons, and they feared me reporting abuse or other things to HQ or going to the media.

With time, my ability to deal with officers improved. I would be chatty and friendly to show them that I was not 'against' them, and only if they tried to obstruct my work, would I become insistent. With time, I learnt that the best strategy was to ignore junior officers when they bark their orders. I simply proceeded with my plan. If they were too insistent on wanting to stop me, which was very rare, I would refer them to the Deputy Officer in Charge, Officer in Charge or even higher up the hierarchy. Usually, it would end there. I learned that being too submissive invites bullying. In a very plain language, releasing my frustrations, I write the below section in my notes:

Sometimes – or actually very often – prison officers drive me mad. They are very different, and I don't know how I'd survive this if it weren't for (XX), who is so very nice and helpful.

They try to interfere with Siku's (research assistant) work a lot. Less so with my work, knowing that I am 'the boss'. Even so, they continue to have a thing about the door to the office, where I conduct the interviews, which I insist on keeping closed during the interviews. They want 1) to listen in, 2) to keep it open – 'for my protection', for security reasons – all that.

Then they come into the office to 'look for papers' or 'answer phones'. Today, there were no less than four phones, ringing on and off. It's possible that the visits are in part justified, but it's clear that they try to listen in. I stop the interview, not allowing them to hear a thing. Sigh(...). I do my usual thing, where I sternly tell them, that I have permission from the highest place, and I will have no problem calling xx and talk to him about what they are doing to prevent me from conducting my work.

Then they come in and tell me, I have to stop my work for the day. I ignore them and continue, which drives them crazy, but frankly, I know they are just trying their luck. The prime example was when one officer on a THURSDAY comes into the office, telling me WEDNESDAY is a half day, and I therefore should stop.

These interferences were not only disruptive and annoying to me, but obviously entailed consequences for my informants as well. I would therefore have to find ways to protect their boundaries.

2.3.2 Protecting boundaries and the informants

As mentioned, some officers might try different things to obstruct the interviews. If they entered the office I was interviewing in, I responded by pausing the interview, and keeping completely quiet (and the informant too) while they were in the office, deliberately attempting to create an uncomfortable atmosphere, thereby signalling that they would learn nothing of the content of the interview. It felt like a battle of wills. After a number of interruptions with phones ringing, I told them that there could not be phones in the office. They made a point of not removing them on the day, but after that, it did not happen again. At other times, they would wait right outside the office used for interviewing, trying to overhear what went on. I would ask them to leave. If they did not, I asked them to go and speak to the Officer in Charge about them disrespecting my permission to do confidential interviews. They did not return, but it happened repeatedly.

My Zambian assistants had more difficulties asserting their boundaries and protecting their informants. The officers found it easier to disrespect them, and as I was busy interviewing myself, it was not easy to intervene at the appropriate times. Sometimes, junior officers would shout at me and/or a prisoner, claiming I would not be safe with prisoners. The situations were dealt with by referring the officer to his superior.

On other occasions, the officers would insist on my wearing particular clothes (covering my shoulders, or wearing a chitenge, a piece of cloth tied around your waist and reaching the ankles). The requests were somewhat arbitrary, and I could find no other real pattern other than the individual officer's discretion. After some time, I invented my own guidelines which seemed to work quite well. If I entered the prison yard or outside of the reception/office area, I would wear the chitenge. I learnt to smile, and ignore them if they tried to convince me otherwise. At times, I had to enter into discussions, and sometimes I had to be quite steadfast. I am to this day certain these occurrences were a way for some junior officers to try to dominate me to see if I would give in. With a smile, a prisoner and friend said to me: *You're fearless. I even fear you when you become the strict school teacher. You're scary.* I was actually not fearless at all, but being assertive worked well.

Several officers have at several points in the process attempted to hinder the research. I have, however, been able to obtain the Deputy Commissioner's support when necessary. The Prison system is highly hierarchical and a call from the Deputy Commissioner will generally pave the way in no time. I just had to be careful not to push the limits and make the Deputy Commissioner uncomfortable or annoyed by my calls. A change in command of Mukobeko prisons happened to be an advantage because the new leadership was significantly more open than before. The new management was easy to work with, and I encountered very few problems.

The challenge of making observations – the scene change

There is little doubt that there was a scene change the moment the research team entered the prison. In the beginning there was hostility towards the research team, later openness and friendliness. High level staff were mostly relaxed and joked with inmates when I was around (junior officers' attitudes varied). Yet, repeatedly, inmates (and at times staff) explained that this was a front put up for 'my benefit' to get me to believe that officers were always 'good' to prisoners.

The scene change was less evident when my Zambian assistants would enter without me. They got more of a glimpse of how the atmosphere maybe simply because they were Zambians and cultural insiders. My 'whiteness' was an advantage sometimes in terms of receiving some respect (at least some of the time), but it also served as a disadvantage when staff felt a need to convey a certain picture. Yet I have the sense from observations and from my interviews with both staff and inmates that the prison social environment can be both friendly, with staff at times demonstrating kindness and concern, whilst at other times being very harsh. There is not necessarily a system to it. A prisoner cannot always foresee an officer's reaction, because this also depends on the mood of the individual. Like an Officer in Charge said:

If I am annoyed, I can sentence him to the penal block for 30 days! But then after a few days, I see he is not in a good condition, and then my heart softens, I let him out.

2.4 EMOTIONS IN FIELD WORK – BEARING WITNESS

In the classic work 'Psychological Survival: The Experience of Long-Term Imprisonment', Cohen and Taylor referring to Howard Becker provocatively ask 'whose side are we on?' (Cohen and Taylor 1972, p 180). The question is not whether we take sides, but of whose side we are ON. As Cohen and Taylor write: *Deviant groups have violated the moral order of society and are therefore thought to have sacrificed their right to be listened to* (Cohen and Taylor 1972, p 180-81). So, even choosing to focus on the prisoners' perspectives in this study is in itself a political stand. When researchers start listening, they will also find it difficult not to develop sympathy for those people who live under the devastating conditions of imprisonment. Yet, this does not mean a blanket approval of what some of the prisoners did to land them in prison (Cohen and Taylor 1972).

Entering the field of prisons and conducting in-depth field work requires practical and emotional commitment (Sloan and Drake 2012). And due to the delicate nature of prison ethnography and in-depth qualitative research, there is all the more reason to examine one's own personal point of departure as another issue relating to researcher integrity. Conducting prisons research entails encountering the pain of others and experiencing your own emotional reactions to the pain and to the prison environment. Yet,

To talk of the effects that research has on the researcher – who has freely chosen to enter the prison setting and can leave at any time – may seem self-indulgent, irrelevant to the production of knowledge and can be thought to betray inexperience or ineffectiveness as a researcher. (Sloan and Drake 2012, p 24)

Drake and Harvey suggest that even if the pain of the researchers *cannot* compare to the pain experienced by the prisoner, there may still be links. They suggest the prison ethnographer may experience a sense of mastering ('getting' the prison environment), and of meaninglessness (of the researcher's own life following the lack of meaning in the prison environment), and fragmentation of one's own identity may follow ethnographic research in prisons (who am I, what's the point?) (Sloan and Drake 2012).

Performing different roles also refers to the identities (Jefferson December 2003, Jefferson in Drake et al 2015) we have to perform to gain the information we seek. This entails quick adaptations, where openness has to be demonstrated in terms of conflicting view points and stories. For instance, playing the role of the 'neutral researcher' meant for me that I could not – if I hoped to gain information from staff on the issue – make judgments on the way staff 'disciplined' inmates through for instance sending them to the penal block. To me this is unacceptable violence, torture and abuse, but my personal view points had to be pushed aside by showing a 'neutral face'. This was emotionally taxing, and I felt more than once a fear that staff would assume that not only did I condone the behaviour but also that through the lack of response it would make their behaviour more legitimate.

Kleinman and Copp pose important questions of how to deal with the researcher's own emotions in terms of both data collection and analysis. One is that we as researchers must consider who we are and what we believe in, otherwise we may not see how we shape the story we are telling. The way we feel affects how we explore the field and how we tell the story, but our emotions can also tell us something important about the field itself.

Kleinman and Copp write about emotionally demanding fieldwork. They argue that if we stick to the (attempted) objective level of analysis and do not engage with feelings, we may miss the horrific core of the experience. By sharing feelings, researchers risk being dismissed as not scholarly and over-emotional. Not being able to convey the 'horror at the core' is in relation to my study a powerful argument for engaging with emotions (Kleinman and Copp 1993).

Like Harvey and Drake (Harvey and Drake 2013), I cannot make claims to systematically having analysed my own emotions, yet I have little doubt that many of my emotions were indeed a response to the 'horror at the core'. The conscious infliction of pain and the routine neglect of prisoners, the seeming indifference to pain shown by many staff members and society as a whole, compounded by the conditions under which prisoners serve their sentences, were reflected in the feelings of anger, apathy and helplessness of prisoners.

This in turn was reflected in my own emotions, where I too experienced anger, confusion and pain. Liebling says it well: *Their condition was simply unmanageable for them, and for us as their witnesses.* (Liebling 2013, p 22). These emotions tell us about how disabling, confusing, conflicting, and harmful the prison environment is, because *emotions is a source of evaluation* (Liebling 2013, p 21). My own attempt to manage the

impressions and the performance of different researcher identities also tells about the conflicts, harmfulness, ambiguities and dangers of prison life, which prisoners themselves have to navigate in far more challenging ways than I have to face.

Researchers and lay people frequently ask me how I deal with the emotions arising from working in prisons? How do I manage or survive myself? I think this is fundamentally a personal question. The defence mechanism I developed many years ago, working with vulnerable children in Malawi and South Africa, was 'never to feel sorry for myself'. I am not the one living the pain, and I am privileged if inmates allow me into their stories and share their pain. I will not help anyone nor contribute to research by internalizing the apathy, pain or desperation experienced by informants. This does not mean I do not get emotionally affected or involved. My view on this is: if one does not feel anything, then one should not be there in the first place.

The reward then of witnessing the pain was the extraordinary generosity of inmates sharing their life stories. It was also observing some prisoners overcoming extraordinary odds, it was getting a glimpse of the resilience of humanity, and the privilege of witnessing kindness and care in a fundamentally inhumane place. Throughout the research process, prisoners in various ways have told me: *The world must know how we are being treated, the world has to know or nothing will change.* That then, would be the point.

One thing is managing my own emotions and responses to witnessing, but quite another is that of managing my research team's responses. Most of my research assistants had never been in a prison before, and in many ways I had had much more experience with human suffering prior to my prisons work in comparison to some of them. One assistant writes in his notes:

I have always had compassion for the disabled. To see disabled here is like watching people drowning and there is nothing you can do. All the time, I am not talking, because there is nothing I can say. I have seen it all. I am very sensitive to the graphics of human suffering. My research partners, all women, go into see the cells of the sick, but this is not for me. I have seen enough. The scene resembles the movies I have seen of condemned Jews in Auschwitz concentration camp. Here, most inmates have lost hope of going out free as a human being. Very exciting for them to see a white woman for such a long time. We have learnt that some haven't seen a woman in five years.

He also writes

I am very shocked, very shocked, my legs are weak to see how horrible we as a people have allowed things to be. Some are not criminals, but we killed their souls, before we killed their flesh. Indeed, I admit in this library, how can the government care for these guys' education, if they would rather they died.

Anne has brought them essential exercise books to be able to study for grade 9 and 12 exams. Anne is happy explaining to our friend, the headmaster of the inmate school, the applications for her computer, that she has also brought to donate. I am lost in my own thoughts: How can one really help these forsaken souls?

Another of my research assistants almost fainted on one of the tours of the inside of prison and had to be helped to sit down and rest for a bit (and then she pulled herself together to work). The whole team was emotionally affected by witnessing the very real suffering. As I wrote in the above, pain should be part of the experience of witnessing suffering. In truth, I was surprised at how affected they were, and I think this probably says as much about me as them. A concern then was of course the extent to which they managed to *contain* the suffering they witnessed, so that their responses would not harm the prisoners. I had had a

very clear strategy on interviewing ethics and I had explained to them during the research assistant course how important it was to contain their emotions during the interview. What became clear was that I had to facilitate a space where we as a group had to off load and discuss the day's interviews and impressions over dinner the same evening, so that we could process them together.

My assistants followed my instructions well. We had a strong sense of team spirit, and we used each other to offload some of our own psychological reactions to working in prisons. The work was very intensive, as my visits were short. Therefore we generally worked weekends as well as weekdays, and as we were often away from home (Lusaka), we had plenty of time together, fostering a close working relationship and friendships. Two of my assistants chose my strategy for 'surviving prisons' – which is to try to do my small part to alleviate the pain. Carol and Namasiku both volunteered for Ubumi Prisons Initiative for years. Carol as of 2016 is a full-time employee, like myself.



Carol Chomba (research assistant, Anne Egelund (author) and Namasiku Wakunuma (research assistant)

2.4.1 Researching the unspeakable

Researching sexuality is an attempt to enter a very sensitive and intimate area for most people – researcher and informants alike. Silberschmidt argues: *in terms of existing knowledge on which HIV/AIDS programmes are based, much remains to be submitted to rethinking and further investigations (...)* Sometimes, the programmes refrain from dealing with crucial aspects of 'intimate matters' out of a presumed respect for privacy (Silberschmidt 2010 p 122). Yet, sexuality is linked to all aspects of life, to *pleasure, power, politics and procreation, but also to disease, violence, war, language, social roles, religion, kinship, structure, identity, creativity* (Tamale 2006, p 90).

Sexuality in itself is sensitive, but researching 'men who have sex with men' (MSM)¹⁵ in a context where it is taboo, provokes not only questions, but also scepticism and resistance. Merotte writes about the stumbling blocks of investigating sexuality inside prison:

Firstly, the inmates' reticence to speak about an unspeakable form of sexuality, with sometimes very violent appalling sex acts. Secondly, sexuality is used as a structure for maintaining peace in prison, and talking about violent acts might be considered dangerous for the institution itself. Before collecting elements about sexuality, we have to deal with denial used as a defence mechanism. (Merotte 2012, p 123)

¹⁵ MSM is a category constructed by public health professionals in 1990's in the wake of the HIV epidemic to capture 'males who have sex with males', who do not necessarily identify as gay, bisexual, transsexual or transgender or any other category. The attempt with the category is to capture the practise or the behaviour of sex between men regardless of identity (UNAIDS 2006).

In line with the desire to uphold researcher integrity, I also had to devise strategies where a balance between respecting the (sometimes initial, at other times continued) reticence and creating a safe space for sharing the important stories. See more on this aspect under interviewing methodology in Section 2.5.

Ethical dilemmas

Getting close or too close? – Paranoia and vulnerabilities

A typical feature of ethnographic research is the development of relationships with informants. Yet, as Drake experienced in her work in maximum security prisons in UK, there was a tension to manage between getting close and too close. The culture of a Maximum Security institution is that of suspicion, paranoia and plotting against each other (Drake 2012).

In Mukobeko Maximum Prison there are inmates and officers appointed as intelligence, and not only is the outsider (in this instance the researcher) viewed with suspicion, but people on the inside are also intrinsically suspicious of each other. Only after some time inside the prison, did I realize just how paranoid the environment is, and how much speculation was put into actual and imagined plotting against each other at all levels. Only towards the end of my fieldwork did I really understand what some inmates had said, when they told me that newcomers in prison are *blind*.

The distrust would entail quite specific problems at times, where the nature of this study necessitated developing relationships, while at the same time 'getting too close' would invite suspicion and possible sanctions. The potential responsibility of contributing to harm, to possible retribution by either staff or inmates for my unknowing indiscretions or lack of understanding of the power politics of prison, became a concern. On at least one occasion I am aware of the bullying and taunting by staff of one of my informants due to his being considered 'too close' to me. They tried to manipulate him into thinking I did not trust nor like him. He frantically told me about it, and I was able to dispel the myths and our good relationship resumed.

I would estimate that the majority of prisoners in the Maximum Security institution are fundamentally unstable – in the sense of experiencing prolonged serious stress and anxiety. The distrust between inmates and between inmates and staff cause inmates much emotional turmoil. In relation to the research team, they suspect propaganda by staff or other inmates, interference with our access to them, or they may fear we will lose interest. Their blatantly desperate situation meant that hopes and dreams of a better future could be attached to any outsider. The isolation from the world made them reach out to us and sometimes have expectations we often could not possibly honour. The psychological vulnerabilities of prisoners had to be taken into account and a response found to suit the situation of the individual informant and his circumstances.

Some prisoners would respond to us with an emotional attachment, which on the outside would not be expected. An example would be a long-term prisoner who wrote me a desperate letter after I had left in December 2013. I had spoken with him briefly during that visit, but he wanted to speak more to me. I was extremely busy on that visit, only being in the country for 7 days. I knew he needed some financial help for his medical condition, and I therefore left some cash and a message for him with an officer. Afterwards, he wrote me a letter saying he had 'missed an opportunity of a life time', because he had wanted to talk and to give me a Christmas card.

Another example would be an informant who had his appeal case coming up. We had known each other for a couple of years at this point. He needed USD 1,000 to bribe his way through the justice system to have a chance of release. He asked me in person, wrote emails, letters and had friends call me to beg for my financial

assistance. I will not enter any kind of corruption (nor did I have that kind of money readily available), but how hollow that argument feels when this man had no one else to turn to – and I turned him down.

On my last field day on the final field visit (but not my last visit to prison), I made a list of all those who wanted to see me, and set aside a day for ‘going through the list’. The genuine smiles were heart-warming because of this small gesture of kindness, but it was also saddening because no one should be placed in a situation of such a desperate need for recognition and care.

My own prejudices

My position from the very start was one of consciously setting aside prejudice of prisoners being violent, disrespectful or brutal, and instead going in open minded – inspired by a phenomenological approach to research. This is of course far more difficult than it sounds, because I did not know very much about what to expect, and it is not easy to put aside deeply rooted preconceptions constantly affirmed by other people, colleagues, friends, and general society.

When I first entered a prison, I was shocked to witness the conditions under which human beings live and how poor, sick and depressed people were. The only image I had of prisons was really from American films, where prisoners are often depicted as rowdy, violent and likely to harass female visitors. Zambian prisons and prisoners were very far from that picture. They were not rowdy, nasty or very violent towards visitors. Actually, it struck me how disciplined and well ordered the prison was, and how prisoners would treat us visitors politely in the midst of an environment of despair and misery. Now, this did not set me entirely free from a fear of sexual harassment or perhaps even fear for my safety. The fears proved unfounded. Not once have I ever been or felt unsafe, and only very rarely have prisoners approached me in an inappropriate (sexual) way. Even if I have received a few love letters and a marriage proposal, I have never felt intimidated.

This is not to say that I never witnessed tension. A group of death row prisoners had become very angry with my research assistant, Godfrey, who also heads a prison NGO. He had made a statement on TV calling on the government to release prisoners with short sentences on parole. He did not mention the prisoners with long term, life or death sentences, and they were outraged. They were very aggressive and intimidating towards him, shouting and threatening him with violence. Staff did nothing to diffuse the tension.

I obtained a glimpse of how dangerous some prisoners can be and of the extreme pressure under which those in the condemned¹⁶ section live. When the frustrations were at the highest, I had to withdraw (moving a few meters away), which I could do because I was not involved in the argument as such. Godfrey stood firm, and tried to explain to the group what he had meant on TV. The bottom line was that they felt ignored and not listened to. Some of them came over to me, expecting that I would refuse to speak to them as ‘a friend’ of Godfrey’s. They wanted to be interviewed by the research team, so we could get the ‘true story’. We agreed to interview two of them, which helped calm the situation down. The interviews turned out to be very informative and useful. Condemned prisoners are one of the most sensitive and psychologically vulnerable groups in prison. Being systematically misrecognized (which is a major theme of this PhD), the statements by Godfrey on TV, which had not intended any harm, had infuriated them. He was supposed to be on their side, and few are.

At the time, some of the prisoners were extremely aggressive, and I feared for Godfrey’s safety. I did not have the courage to interview one of them, who was extremely aggressive. Feeling like a coward, I made a

¹⁶ The condemned section only holds those condemned to death

mental note of him, and decided to interview him on my next visit, which I did. On that occasion, he told me that the relationship to Godfrey was now 'just OK' – and there was no aggression (but instead despair).

My point with explaining the above is that it has been important for me to attempt to see and accommodate the complexity. Prisons are places of despair and depression – and aggression is a common symptom of depression.

2.5 INTERVIEWING METHODOLOGY

2.5.1 Introduction

The principles outlined in Section 2.3 describe how the team in this study strived for a high level of integrity and ethics in fieldwork. In terms of interviewing methodology, this meant an approach based on departure in human rights. We used life story/narrative interviewing as a way of showing respect for the integrity of the incarcerated human being, while trauma psychology was used to complement life story interviewing techniques with the aim of protecting inmates from re-activating trauma.

The interviews were unstructured and open-ended and guided only by a list of general themes, but open to change depending on the informant's stories. With time, the interviews became more targeted, but always fundamentally open. As mentioned, we attempted to cover the important points in the informant's life story, including turning points, the experience of imprisonment and coping strategies employed to deal with the challenges that this person faced in prison. The plan was of course also to ask questions in the field of sexuality, but this was done carefully and only if the individual interviewer deemed it appropriate with the individual informant.

In the following, the approach based on human rights, the interviewing methodology used and informant responses are examined.

2.5.2 Human rights as a basis for interviewing methodology

Having worked with human rights as a UN employee, the terminology of human rights already made sense to me. Early in my PhD process, I was introduced to David Scott who builds on Stanley Cohen's work, where human rights are understood as solidarity, a concept of shared humanity and legal rights (Scott 2009). This definition spoke to me, because it adequately put into words how I had been working intuitively, and how I wished to continue working with prisoners. The guiding principle for me was the question that Scott poses: Are those we do not necessarily *like* deserving of human rights? Are thieves, paedophiles, rapists, robbers or murderers deserving of human rights? If we ascribe to human rights, there is only one answer: They too are deserving of human rights. Yet, legal entitlements are one thing, but quite another is experiencing the sense of solidarity and shared humanity which will fundamentally have an impact on how we meet those we may or may not like. This is not to say that prisoners are not likable – but to say that as a category in society they often are not, and regularly they are depicted as deviants, dangerous and less deserving of human rights.

The United Nations Charter for Human Rights has inspired the fundamental approach to the informants in this study. The inherent dignity and rights of the human being, the right to freedom of speech, to protection and security, and from cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment, are all rights that are infringed upon in prisons. When entering the prison environment, it quickly became evident how prisoners quite literally feel *treated like animals*, a common quote by prisoners. It was of vital importance that our research involving prisoners did not amplify these experiences.

It is widely recognized that many prisoners suffer from mental illnesses, depression and stress – and it is extremely important to be aware of not pushing boundaries when conducting qualitative research in sensitive environments. This does not mean that painful conversations should be avoided. Pain is part of life in prison, and therefore part of the story that needs to be told, yet the pain needs to be contained within a responsible framework.

Prisoners live a life of isolation and loneliness and the opportunity to speak to outsiders is considered a privilege and a very welcome break from the everyday mundane routines. It was also a welcome opportunity to share their own personal stories. At the very least it was ‘pondolola’, which is an expression of prisoners meaning ‘making the sentence feel shorter’. And at other times the interviews served as a way of sharing and examining one’s story with the relief associated with being able to do so with a sympathetic listener. Often, the interviews would show a person in severe distress, and a conscious effort was made to conduct the interviews in a fashion that would allow the informant to feel relief, rather than re-activating trauma or reinforcing the painful emotions.

In recognition of the fact that imprisonment is highly damaging, it was important to develop an interviewing technique which had more facets than the traditional approach to life story interviewing. David Denborough’s trauma model, which was developed to avoid re-activating trauma when interviewing torture victims, was adapted to this study.

2.5.3 Methods of inquiry: Ethnography and life stories

Life stories cross the embodied and emotional ‘brute being’ with the rational and irrational ‘knowing self’. They make links across life phases and cohort generations revealing historical shifts in a culture. They help establish collective memories and imagined communities; and they tell of the concerns of their time and place. They bridge cultural history with personal biography. And they become moral constructions, tales of virtues and non-virtue, which may guide us in our ethical lives. Indeed, the stories we construct of our lives, may well become ‘the stories we live by’. What matters to people keeps getting told in their stories of their life. Listening carefully to these stories may be one of the cornerstones of ethnographic enquiry. (Plummer 2001, p 395)

Crewe uses the life story approach because he feels it carries a humanizing role for prisoners who are used to being treated as a lesser form of human being, who cannot be trusted. He finds listening to them in an attentive way in itself is a powerful and humanising act, because imprisonment takes away so much of the individuality of the person (Crewe 2012). When an individual tells his story, a process of ‘becoming’ yourself happens. The telling of a life story is essentially a process for the teller of making sense of his life - grappling with his identity. When a person shares his story, the things that matter are told (Thorsen 2008).

Telling one’s life story is not just a summary of our lives. It is a way we tell what is important to us. Where we come from and where we are going. The story told about a person’s life is not a summary, but instead the ‘telling’ of the life history is to provide hope, direction and meaning for the ‘teller’; this is where ‘I’ stand, this is where ‘I’ am going. The life history of a person also includes ‘convenient’ rewritings and post-rationalizations, which are always there in order to give the individual hope and direction in life. Analyzing life histories then, is like doing a puzzle without having all the pieces, and without ever really being done. However, if done well, the analysis can point to central themes and turning points in this person’s life –

something that gives the researcher a chance to show something central about this person's life and / or experiences. (author's translation) (Thorsen 2008, p 21)

Like Crewe, we asked informants to tell us the story of their lives. We generally opened the interview by explaining that we were interested in hearing this particular person's life story. The informant was asked to start from 'anywhere, in childhood or adulthood', working from the assumption that the informant should have the opportunity to start their story at a time in their lives that was significant in some way or another.

2.5.4 Trauma – avoiding re-activating trauma

One of the things that shape a life story are experiences of and responses to psychological trauma. Trauma can be inflicted after a single event, or a number of events or a prolonged period of serious distress. It constitutes an injury to a person's psyche, and makes the world appear chaotic without meaning and purpose (Hollander-Goldfein et al 2012). Individuals often draw conclusions about the self in response to trauma, and in this way trauma may fundamentally affect identity – to the point of injury or break down of identity, and therefore the perception of self (Denborough 2006). This makes stories of trauma important to this study.

Typically, imprisonment in itself constitutes trauma (Liebling and Maruna 2005, Scraton and McCulloch 2009) and many have suffered trauma prior to incarceration as well. Often, the research team would ask about the experience of the first day. All prisoners remembered every detail of the day, even if it had happened years ago, and would share the shock, disbelief and alienation of the experience. The story of the first day carried a major significance in terms of a harsh introduction to the pains of imprisonment – not helped by the way other prisoners would treat newcomers.

The fundamentals of any research would - in line with the American Psychological Association guidelines and guidelines on 'Do No Harm'¹⁷ in Social Science Research - aim at preventing harm to informants/research participants directly or indirectly in any way. The guidelines prescribe a risk assessment in terms of the safety and security of informants, assessing the risk of provoking emotional distress, re-activating trauma or ostracism by peers or others. The assessment is relevant to this study.

The fact that trauma could be a part of informants' experience of imprisonment or prior to imprisonment, meant that the research team would have an obligation as far as possible to protect inmates from re-activating traumatic experiences. Part of the responsibility to protect informants was therefore making continuous risk assessments of the informant's psychological state of mind during the interview. Interviewing and getting the answers for the research could never be more important than protecting the informant from harm. We did not interview those known to be mentally ill in order to avoid speaking to prisoners who might be too vulnerable to interview. Yet it was not always possible to identify for instance suicidal prisoners before the interviews. If problems became evident in the interview, we implemented the trauma model's interviewing technique to avoid harming the prisoners, and to try to support them as much as possible. An example would be the below informant who gets very emotional when speaking about his wife leaving him because he landed in prison:

Informant: It was painful, it was very painful, even when I heard that my wife had gotten married it affected me but due to the word of God I could comfort myself.

Anne: What is it about the word of God that comforts you?

¹⁷ https://vlebb.leeds.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/orgs/INTF00001/page%201_22.htm

Rather than digging deeper into the pain, I would shift focus to what kept the informant going. In this way, I could support his identification of his own strength and resilience.

As mentioned previously, the practical technique of interviewing the prisoners was heavily inspired by David Denborough's work on documenting the testimonies of torture survivors. The method was adapted a little for this study, and the research assistants were trained in the interviewing technique of the adapted model. The model needed some adaptation because we were not asking about torture as such. Furthermore, while Denborough was interviewing people post-trauma, we could be interviewing prisoners in acute crisis which might become apparent to us only half way through an interview.

Specifically, with regard to the interviews, the aim of preventing harm meant attention to avoiding 'digging too deep' by showing empathy, accommodating the pain and by encouraging them through identifying their potential during and after the interview, if the informants were in distress. Having said this, it was a small minority who showed severe distress during the interview. For those who did, it is my assessment that they did so due to their desperate life situation and not because the research team provoked the distress as such. Some of those who showed severe distress were also individuals who asked to be interviewed rather than having been identified by us. Here we alleviated pain, rather than causing or (re-)activating it.

2.5.5 Denborough's trauma model

In short, the model requires that the researcher informs the interviewee of the themes that would be covered. The next step is establishing a caring connection to the informant. One way of showing care is explaining how the research is aimed at improving the situation in prisons in the longer term. We also aimed at conveying that we were aware that imprisonment is harmful and difficult, but also that the informant had most likely developed ways of coping and surviving. Showing recognition of the informant's willingness to share his story is important, but also that it would be completely acceptable for the informant to stop or change the topic at any point in the interview.

The next stage is then to delve into the story. If it turned out to be a story of trauma and distress, then we made sure to ask questions that help the informant identify his own strength and resilience. Questions along the lines of 'How do/did you get through it?' or 'What keeps you going?' are good examples of this. Questions which help the informant identify his positive developments and/or experience, and which could help others, could be questions such as 'What have you learned in prison? How would you advise others in the same situation?'

Denborough also emphasizes assisting the informant to identify social networks of support. Here we had to be careful because, particularly in the Maximum Security Prison, many informants had lost contact to the world outside. Only if we already knew from earlier in the interview that they had a supportive network, could we evoke that as a way to help them identify avenues for potential support or to help them get through. For most prisoners, the belief in God would keep them going and would help them find meaning in an otherwise disempowering life situation. This then, became one of the things we used to encourage them.

An approach that worked well with the informants was to ask about their hopes and dreams for their future. Managing stress through fantasy enhancement is a common feature of imprisonment coping strategies (French 1979 and Chapter 5 in this dissertation), and even if some fantasies were perhaps unlikely to come true, we would still spend time talking about them. This is also something that helps the informant identify the values he wishes to live by. An example can be an interview with a man who was sexually abused in prison and felt at risk of violence and death. After having spoken for some time about his anxieties, he mentions 'this is why I want to go to America'. I took this as a cue to move away from the painful stories and on to this

dream, which we then spoke about at length, providing him with the opportunity to focus on something else. Even if we never encouraged completely unrealistic rambling about dreams (because that would be insincere), we took informants' dreams very seriously as a means to cope with the pain of imprisonment.

Finally, the interviewer offers his or her reflections on the story in terms of some of the take home points, and repeats how important and useful it was to get this particular story. The point is to show the informant respect for his important story which will hopefully contribute to making a positive difference in the future.

2.5.6 Responses to being interviewed and how we dealt with the situation

Responses to being interviewed varied between the individuals. Mostly, informants took the opportunity to offload painful experiences. Sometimes, even if traumatic experiences were described, it was not in a way that seemed to connect trauma with any feeling. Rather, the aim seemed to be to 'get the interviewer' on their side to gain something – a pen pal, money, or material goods. At other times, it was perhaps a reflection of shielding themselves from the pain, or not wanting or needing to confide in us. Other prisoners were very proud to be selected. One referred to himself as a 'representative of the guys', and he had made sure to speak to his cell mates to get their views on what needed to be conveyed to the research team – and this regardless of whether I tried to convey that we were interested in his story. Still others were very eager figuratively speaking to 'taking my hand and leading' me into the world of prison. They took on the role of experts, and even when things became controversial and difficult, they would use their self-appointed 'expert role' to be able to give me a 'real picture' of what went on in prison.

In the following I will describe some of the reactions by the informants, and how we responded.

Severe distress

Two prisoners interviewed by my assistants turned out to be suicidal, and after the interview the assistants referred them to me to take further action. In both situations, we were able to alleviate the problems. We had good contact with a local NGO, PRISCCA, an organization working for the promotion of human rights of prisoners. The director of PRISCCA was a trained psycho-social counsellor. When we encountered prisoners with a suicidal risk or in serious emotional distress, we would refer them to PRISCCA, and that organization would take over providing counselling services or assistance. Many prisoners were in a judicial limbo which caused severe distress. If informants needed free legal aid, we would establish contact to PRISCCA's legal aid department. This was also a way to alleviate problems and make sure we did not merely leave the informant alone with the devastating thoughts to process on his own. For instance, one of the suicidal prisoners was counselled by PRISCCA, after which the legal aid team took over. Part of his suicidal thoughts was grounded in his case being faulty. He was released and returned to his home.

Danger

One very frightening risk was if an interview would harm an informant through resulting in ostracism by his peers. Apart from a formerly mentioned friendship between a prisoner and myself, only once did I get a very specific indication that there was a risk involved:

Informant: What I learnt from (prison) that is that you do not need always to tell your secrets to everyone. For instance, this (the interview) is a secret and I cannot go and tell everyone that well, I was interviewed and we spoke about this and that. No, I have to learn to keep some secrets to myself sometimes and not always tell someone.

Interviewer: If you were to tell that you were interviewed today what would happen? What is the risk of telling them?

Informant: Like this issue I talk about in here that is an issue even the people that are outside right now cannot be happy. Which means I am giving information do you see what I mean?

Interviewer: It is dangerous to talk about it?

Informant: Yes, so they cannot be happy even though they hear that I was interviewed and I said this or that they cannot be happy with me.¹⁸ They cannot.

Interviewer: So you have to keep secrets from me as well?

Informant: Yes (...) if they find out that I have told you all this they can beat me. Yeah.

This interview illustrates why it is so difficult to access first-hand information on sex in prisons. It entails real risks by those involved, and in particular those who act as 'women' in the sexual relationship. We cut the interview short after he expressed this. I was not aware at the time, but a group of people who did not want him revealing anything to me had decided to stand right outside the office (where the interview took place), speaking loud enough for my informant to hear. He took that as a clear signal not to speak any further with me. It was a frustrating experience because he had started out talking quite openly, but then he shut down, fearing repercussions.

Essentially, I had no real way of protecting him after the interview. He protected himself by not speaking to me alone and only with a friend of his (whom I also interviewed), and I decided not to interview him again. I had a contact to see that he was alright.

Relief

Other informants did not express being suicidal, but were still suffering from the effects of imprisonment. Often, I asked informants what it was like to be interviewed after the interview, or before the next interview (if there were follow ups).

Interviewer: I would like to start with asking you how it was to be interviewed last time?

Informant: Yes, it was very revealing by being able to express my thoughts to you. I dug into those most deep recesses of my mind. Things that never come to mind often, but because I was asked to talk about them it came out, and I also felt relieved in a sense. Because certain things I spoke to you about, the things I opened to you about, I would not normally open up to the guys on the inside. (...) If I can get things off my chest then that is good for me, because I need that. Because I always keep things locked up inside.

Another informant (an ex-prisoner) explained how he felt relieved after an interview with me:

Speaking to you, I find relief (...) I believe that eventually a time will come, when I will start to forget about it (his experience of having sex in prison). But, I must mention that I felt very relieved and (...) I am of the belief that every problem has an end.

Yet, another said during an interview (an inmate I also corresponded with):

I think at one time, I wrote to you saying that I am very grateful that you are part of my life. Because at least I have someone I could speak to about what I am going through because

¹⁸ Not being happy refers to the guys in his group getting angry with him and punishing him. They were waiting outside the interviewing room.

people in Zambia expect men to be quiet about your inner feelings and not go on about your personal problems.

Contributing to improved conditions

Other informants focused more on the goal of the research, and how they felt they could contribute to improving the conditions in prison:

OK, the interview was just OK, especially after all this, the study of some kind is going to help the Zambian prisoners at large and not only those that are interviewed. I understand that it won't be now, but it can be in the near future, which is good because there are so many things that need to be in the open and hoping that can be done by the modern generation here now.

As seen in the above, the responses to being interviewed varied, yet we encountered only one person expressing fear of his safety. Others simply seemed to enjoy the break of routine, and enjoyed speaking to an outsider. Many expressed relief and an eagerness to contribute to research. Most were in a situation of distress – sometimes severe distress. My assessment is that the research methods used took informants' vulnerability into account and dealt responsibly with their situation. We did not just offer a 'sympathetic ear', but if necessary, actively did something to alleviate the situation by establishing contact with relevant NGO's, staff or social network outside prison. On rare occasions, we channelled funds towards food or medicine.

2.6 A CRITICAL REVIEW OF MY POSITION IN THE FIELD

2.6.1 Unpacking the dissertation title - survival

In Western prisons, it is rarely a physical struggle to survive – at least not in terms of access to food and basic health care. Yet even so, the term survival is frequently used, but then the focus is on psychological and social survival (Sykes 1958, Taylor and Cohen 1972). In the prisons of the Global South the term survival extends to physical survival, but the psychological and social features remain equally important. Martin, Jefferson and Bandyopadhyay write that survival is one of the universally relevant questions for understanding prison life in the Global South (Martin et al 2014). They write:

We might think of survival in its bluntest "biopolitical" form – the art of staying alive. But disaggregating this blunting of human experience, we usually find an incremental, detail-driven everyday process in which practices of negotiating position or maintaining a hopeful prisoner identity actively minimises risk to oneself. (Martin et al 2014, p 11)

The title thus points to the central theme of the dissertation. 'Surviving Zambian Prisons' carries with it a commitment to understanding what the prison experience is made up of, and how various coping strategies specifically contribute to survival in the broadest sense of the word. Here the aim is to try to understand the prison on its own terms, even if my approach from the start was a normative one.

2.6.2 My position in the field

My motivation for writing this PhD is very much grounded in empathy for the plight of prisoners. This corresponds well with the research approach based on Honneth's normative approach. However, critical voices may rightly ask what this empathy and even subjectivity might mean for the research findings.

I have little doubt that it has affected the research process and the research findings. There has been a conscious ethical stand with respect to the field and to the informants. My approach called for trying to understand prisoners – and the result was that they opened up and many showed immense vulnerability. At

the same time, many of them also had an agenda of showing me that they were not the animals they felt they were made out to be by the public and in the media. This of course means that some may equally have been reluctant to speak of the less-than-flattering features of their behaviour, which is of course not a phenomenon only associated with prisoners (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). We are all defended subjects:

It is a fundamental proposition in psychoanalytic theory that anxiety is inherent in the human condition, specifically that threats to the self create anxiety. Defences against such anxiety are mobilised at a largely unconscious level. This idea of a dynamic unconscious which defends against anxiety is seen as a significant influence on people's actions, lives and relations. It means that if memories of events are too anxiety-provoking, they will be either forgotten or recalled in a modified, more acceptable fashion. Defences will affect the meanings that are available in a particular context and how they are conveyed to the listener (who is also a defended subject). (Hollway and Jefferson 2009, p 299)

This means that we all invest in certain discourses to protect ourselves from anxiety (Hollway and Jefferson 2009). This could be anxiety grounded in prior experiences which activate defence mechanisms. It could also be that the informant aims to protect himself from the anxiety related to fear of how the interviewer may approach or judge him. I see this as not only a risk, but rather a fact to be aware of when interviewing prisoners, as well as others.

Jefferson, whilst being aware of being positioned in all sorts of ways during his field work in Nigeria, did not write much of being 'white', except that it would entail perceptions of being powerful (Jefferson 2003). Cupples and Piacentini speak of being women researchers. I most certainly felt positioned in a combination – as being the naïve and *ignorant* white woman, and then at other times a powerful white woman, or both. One thing is being treated as naïve and ignorant. Another is fearing *being* just that.

I have frequently feared overlooking or downplaying the self-interested behaviour, the abusive relationships and the 'evil' in prisons, because my privileged background simply does not grant me access to sufficient imagination to spot such behaviour. Furthermore, interviews give access to important information, but I could not 'fact-check' all stories of kindness for instance. This relates closely to the valid critique of how I as a Westerner, a woman with no personal experience at all of imprisonment, could even imagine being able to portray the experience of imprisonment in a Zambia?

How to access the life world of the Other without mis-representing it, has long been a concern in a number of research traditions, including disability, feminist and black research traditions. Feminist debates have addressed issues such as whether researchers can only speak on behalf of their own social groups or whether there is legitimacy in speaking on behalf of the Other. Justification for this often arises from the fact that dis-empowered groups may not have access to a public forum where they can be heard, so that social researchers see their role as 'giving a voice' to those who would otherwise not be heard. By contrast, other researchers see commonalities with their respondents as a particular strength. (Agyeman 2008, p 77)

Yet does empathy and willingness to understand entail blind spots? Is it then my naivety that - as we shall see in the coming chapters - makes me portray prisoners in such a humanising light? Again, as noted by Crewe and Levins earlier in this chapter, the informant is more than his crime, but he is also more than what we see when we meet him. Does this then mean that I paint of rosy picture of inmates? Does it mean that there were things I did not see? After all, I interviewed murderers, robbers, thieves and sexual offenders – and one might expect quite a high level of deviance, at least if we look at media representations of 'criminals'.

Prisoners would frequently refer to new prisoners as 'blind', because they could not see what was really going on. The power plays and the games, and especially how they felt one could not trust anyone. I too was surely and am still somewhat blind, even if I am aware of it. The question is how it matters to the analysis. It is my role to synthesise and analyse and thus I am a mediating factor to ascribing meaning to the data.

As I have already stated earlier in this chapter, it is one of my aims to give voice to prisoners. My goal was not to unravel the various intrigues between prisoners, but to explore prisoner experiences and coping strategies in broader terms centred around an analysis of prison pain. The reason for this was quite simply that this is what the prisoners would describe took presence in their lives. This strategy for data collection, combined with Honneth's normative approach allowed me to see human beings in an inhumane place. I cannot make claims to cover every feature of prison life, even if I have attempted as much as possible to include the main features of prisoner experiences and coping strategies.

2.7 CONSIDERATIONS OF VALIDITY AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, many of the limitations and challenges faced while conducting this study have been presented, but there are a few more important points to make.

First of all, the results presented in this PhD are not representative of all prisons in Zambia. Rural and smaller prisons were not included in the fieldwork, and therefore there are no claims to relevance for rural prisons, particularly in terms of sexuality. I make no claims to how representative my informants are of the prison population in Africa, or even in Zambia, also because the average age and level of education was higher than the likely average.

This does not mean that there are not important findings which are or could be representative. However, especially since there is so little research on the social and psychological effects of imprisonment and of sexuality in prisons in Africa, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which my findings are generalizable. For a qualitative study, the number of informants was large. For the individual prison, even if there were limitations in terms of random sampling, I was free to interview whom I wished to through the snowballing technique. I did not, however, use the snowballing technique to find a strictly representative group of informants, but to find informants who would be able to share information about sexuality in prisons.

Further, quite a few hundred inmates in Zambian prisons are refugees or illegal immigrants, but due to limitation in terms of language and because of the research purpose of the PhD, the particularities of refugees' problems were not included. The same applies for handicapped and (seriously) mentally ill prisoners, who even if they too deserve attention in research and practice, could not be included in this study. Since this study focuses on men alone, it does not contribute to the field of women in prison.

Even if comparatively speaking there is a lot of research on prisoners, prisoner-staff relationships, prison subculture and prisoner adaption and coping strategies, there is very little research on this in an African context, and the research that exists on prisons in Africa is often focused on staff. This study focuses little on staff. Even if staff play an important role in terms of the social climate in prison, this study does not examine staff rationales or perspectives in much depth. This means that the study risks conveying staff in unintended stereotypical or perhaps even one-dimensional ways. Here I would like to stress that I as a researcher am aware that the individual staff members must manage, negotiate and interpret the social environment, rules and regulations under very difficult circumstances; even if I am directly or implicitly critical of some staff practices, I do recognize these challenges. It is, however, not part of this study to explore staff perspectives or their role in-depth.

The use of qualitative and open-ended life story interviews meant that the study can provide rich contextualisation and the method allows for in depth understanding and interpretation. The study can therefore provide relevant information on the experience of imprisonment and the effects of imprisonment, and on how inmates aim to survive the hardships. Nevertheless, even if many interviews were conducted, and patterns emerge from the data material, the methodology used does not suit a more quantitatively oriented analysis, simply because inmates were not asked the same questions systematically.

There is very little research similar to this study in Africa, which makes comparisons difficult, and consequently provides a challenge to claims to representativeness. Despite this, other research does point to many of the same issues and patterns presented in this study.

2.7.1 A word on 'prisoner' and the use of names in the dissertation

During the process of writing this PhD I have contemplated writing for instance 'incarcerated individual' or 'imprisoned individual' instead of 'prisoner'. Like Goffman (Goffman 1961, Goffman 1963) argues, we tend to construct individuals based on their situation or status, which may lead to stereotypes and stigmatisation. We may call them 'cripples', 'disabled', 'prisoner', 'schizophrenic' and so forth. If we for instance said 'an individual or person with schizophrenia', we draw on a less stigmatising language in the sense that the word *schizophrenic* seems to encompass, stereotype and define a person as only that. A conceptualisation for instance of 'a person with schizophrenia' makes it a little more possible to view the person in broader terms, as more than just a schizophrenic, but as a whole person who happens also to be ill. For most people, 'prisoner' conjures up a number of immediate associations, including those of violent and deviant characteristics, which quickly and un-reflected becomes a characterisation of every person in prison – even when this is far from true in most cases. Yet, in almost all literature on prisons, academics still use the word prisoner.

In Zambia, the word prisoner is possibly considered even more derogatory, because it is often understood as linked to the Bemba word *kaili*, which is a negative and stigmatising term for prisoner. Several individuals incarcerated in Zambian prisons preferred the word inmate, even if some may argue that the word deflects from the fact that the prisoner is indeed in prison, and this is an important awareness. I use the word prisoner and inmate interchangeably in this dissertation, and I am aware of tensions associated with this use. I do this for readability more than anything else, because I too recognise the potential stigma or political tension linked to the use of the words.

As mentioned earlier, I followed a few inmates continuously over three years, where I interviewed them repeatedly. Adam is one of them, and even if this is not his real name, I have chosen to show when he is quoted. Readers will be able to glimpse his particular personality. John – again not his name – was an ex-prisoner, whom I did not get to interview a second time, even if I planned to. He struggled for a long time to get a job, but failed to do so, and was shot dead when he tried to break into a house to steal. Even so, he is a central source, and I have therefore chosen to use a name for him. The other key informants interviewed cannot be identified for their own safety and privacy.

3 PRISONERS



3.1 INTRODUCTION

The experience and survival strategies employed by prisoners in Zambia is the focus of this PhD. Central to this chapter is therefore a review of existing ethnographic, sociological and psychological scholarship on prisoners to establish the research context to which I aim to contribute.

Even if the focus is on prisoners – and not prisons as an institution, the chapter briefly introduces the prison as an institution to establish some historical context and explore contributions of the classic prison scholars. There has been very little scholarship produced around prisoners' experiences and coping strategies in an African context. This is one of the reasons why the results of this PhD are an important contribution to the field of prisoner scholarship in Africa.

There then follows a review of some of the central contributions to understanding the experiences and lives of prisoners. The central works of Goffman, Sykes and Cohen still influence today's prisons research, addressing questions of how the closed emotional world of the prison serves to socialise prisoners, affects their identity, and of how inmates struggle to adapt and survive the extreme environment of the prison. The chapter closes with a brief account of the scholarship on African prisons with a focus on prison governance and the interdependency between staff and inmates.

3.2 PRISONERS – LITERATURE REVIEW

It is only in the last two centuries that prisons have emerged as a form of punishment and rehabilitation of those violating the law. Prior to European influence, the punishment for minor offences tended to rely on compensation and fines. Sometimes, punishment took the form of mutilation or flogging. For the most serious crimes, punishment was the death sentence or radical exile from the community. Sometimes criminals were sold into slavery, subjecting criminals to social exclusion as well as geographical displacement

(Bernault in Dikötter and Brown 2007). Penal servitude (enslavement) was also used as a form of punishment in ancient times (Ferro 2006). This system persisted – in some places even up to today – in combination with Western style law and order (Dikötter et al 2007).

Prior to colonisation, prisons did not exist in Africa. Punishment existed but it was exercised more as a power over people rather than power over space. In the 1500s, gaols were set up by the Europeans along the coastal forts and garrisons. They served immediate needs, but there was no systematic incarceration based on law. In the 1880s, military lock ups were used during imperial conquest. At the time, prisons were a place of captivity, not custody, and served immediate political and military needs. Only after 1910 did colonisers start to build a methodical network of custodial facilities and the first prisons in Sub-Saharan Africa were constructed. In colonial times, Europeans would sometimes lock up people (Africans), but that was mainly as part of the slave trade. After 1910, the prisons served the purpose of punishment, rather than correction. In most cases, judicial confinement and captivity were temporary and preventive. From the 1950s, Sub-Saharan Africa experienced a dramatic increase in sentences. Prisons played a central role in the transition from a superficial European presence to a much tighter network of permanent administrative posts, where prisons played a vital role in terms of controlling the local population (Bernault in Dikötter et al 2007).

The principle of repentance was very strong in the European penitentiary, but less so in the African colonies. Here the African prisons constructed the Africans as 'objects of power'. Colonial prisons did not serve to detain a marginal population of criminals, but rather participated in taming the political, economic and cultural resistance to white domination. Prisons emerged as central instruments of state power and achieved little legitimacy among the African public, and the penal systems could not be separated from the reproduction and consolidation of colonial inequalities. Prison regulation and architectural design worked to achieve a few basic goals, which centred on separation of black and white prisoners, the de-individualisation of black prisoners and very low standards of living for African convicts (Bernault in Dikötter et al 2007).

Today, together with fines, community and death sentences, imprisonment is by far the most popular form of punishment and rehabilitation, even though it has failed in achieving anything but punishment. Instead, imprisonment seems to promote the things it claims to deter (Dikötter et al 2007), which is anti-social behaviour that often results in (continued) crime. Dikötter describes prison reformers' approach to the idea of the prison:

(Historically) four missions have generally been proposed for the prison, namely retribution, incapacitation, deterrence and rehabilitation. Retribution was decried as by most prison reformers as 'populist' and reprehensible impulse: Instead restitution has generally been emphasised by penal philosophy since the late eighteenth century. Incapacitation and deterrence, on the other hand, were rarely portrayed as adequate goals in themselves. Correction through segregation was thus the key notion which distinguished the modern prison from previous spaces of confinement. Reformation has been the most powerfully seductive idea espoused by modern penology, although the history of prisons, if it demonstrates anything, shows how they have generally failed to rehabilitate prisoners. Prisons from the very beginning have resisted their supporters' intended purposes, generating wretched institutional conditions where humanitarian goals were heralded.
(Dikötter et al 2007, p 3)

Today, the Sub-African prisons are of course diverse, but they have their roots in colonial times, and often many of the dilapidated buildings and infrastructure stem directly from colonial times. According to Bernault:

Most African prisons remained shaped by colonial legacies, localised power relations and uneven deployment of public and private violence on the ground. In the early 1990's new initiatives surfaced among the public, voicing concerns about criminality, prisoners' rights and the need to reform penal practices. (Bernault in Dikötter et al 2007, p 87)

In July 2015, Zambian President Sata urged Zambia Correctional Service to move from a punitive approach to a correctional one, whilst he also pardoned all 322 death row prisoners in a significant move away from the death penalty, even if it has not been abolished. The commitment to improve prisons is also witnessed by the change in name from Zambia Prisons Service to Zambia Correctional Service in January 2016. Zambia Prisons Service had worked for the name change for more than 10 years because they wished to signal a desire to create an improved prison environment and an increased focus on correction and rehabilitation.¹⁹

Research from Western countries clearly establishes that prisoners are significantly overrepresented in terms of having been in foster care, having had a family member incarcerated, having used drugs, having experienced traumatic events, having had troublesome schooling and family history – and in general having experienced social exclusion (Bennet in Crewe and Bennet 2012). Generally, it is the poor, the (significantly) less educated, the unemployed, the mentally ill and/or psychologically and socially vulnerable persons who end up in prison, and rarely the educated, the middle class and the wealthy. The discussion of incarcerating the vulnerable and the poor is therefore part of a larger politicised discussion of resource distribution, fairness and power in societies (Wacquant 2004, 2009, Bennet in Crewe and Bennet 2012). Bennett writes:

For many prisoners, coming as they do from circumstances of poverty and social deprivation, crime becomes a means through which they can pursue and realise conventional dreams of material success, the acquisition of status and emotionally enriching relationships. Crime allows people to achieve a degree of social inclusion that is otherwise unavailable to them, even if its form is fleeting and unstable. Rather than being a pure rejection of the conventional community, these accounts illustrate that crime is closely linked to the dominant values of society. (Bennett in Crewe and Bennett 2012, p 11)

Research on prison social life tells us much about the specific expressions of life in prison in terms of the social system of relationships in prison, behaviours, hierarchies and social norms. Yet studies of life in prison also tell us about wider themes of endurance, distress, adaption and social organisation (Crewe in Jewkes 2007, Crewe and Bennett 2012). Crewe argues that *'the sociology of prison life covers a vast landscape, but one that has been mapped selectively and sporadically'* (Crewe in Jewkes et al 2016, p 96) with a particular focus on high security facilities which (particularly in the Western context) may yield different results than more ordinary prisons. In other words, according to Crewe, much remains to be explored.

One of the first to study prison life was Clemmer, who worked within the Correctional Service – as opposed to today, where researchers are largely from outside the prison system. He was occupied with what was termed prisonisation, which describes the process undergone by inmates upon incarceration, where they adjust, assimilate and adapt to life in prison. Here, the inmates were seen to generally accept inferior roles passively, and to accept the power of the prison institution. This adjustment and passivity was understood as a way to survive imprisonment (Clemmer 1940, Liebling in Crewe and Bennet 2012).

¹⁹ Conversations with Commissioner General Percy Chato March 2016 and my own observations from my 11 years of working with prisons in Zambia

In the post war years, the works of Erving Goffman's (*Asylums, Stigma*), Stanley Cohen and Laurie Taylor's (*Psychological Survival: The experience of long term imprisonment*), and last but not least Gresham M Sykes (*The Society of Captives*) called attention to the harmfulness of imprisonment. In his classic work, Sykes presents *'the pains of imprisonment'* (Sykes 1958). The most obvious pain would be the loss of liberty: The prisoner is doubly restricted – he is confined to the institution and within the institution. The prisoner cannot move around freely and is, to a significant degree, cut off from family and friends. Sykes also states deprivation of goods and services, deprivation of heterosexual relationships, autonomy and security as the major pains of imprisonment.

Sykes makes important contributions towards understanding the inner workings of the prison, in particular how the people within it are socialised and adapt to the harsh terms which life in prisons offer. The 'inmate code' provides a set of values and norms to guide behaviour, and serves the purpose of surviving imprisonment as well as possible (Sykes 1958, p 65). The inmate code offers an 'ideal' for prisoners, but it is not necessarily lived up to in practice. Crewe summarises Sykes chief tenets of the code:

'Don't interfere with other inmates' interests, or 'never rat (grass) on a con', 'play it cool and do your own time' (Sykes and Messinger 1960, p 8), 'don't exploit or steal from other prisoners; 'Be tough, be a man'; and don't ever side with the authorities or representatives. This normative system had been described before (see particularly Clemmer 1940/1958). However, Sykes sought to explain both its origins and its broader social functions within the prison institution. Noting that this was a 'strikingly pervasive value system', which could be found among apparently diverse prison populations and regimes (Sykes and Messinger 1960, p 5), he reasoned that the roots of the code lay in the fundamental properties of imprisonment. These properties were identified as the 'pains of imprisonment. (Crewe in Jewkes 2007, p 125)

Goffman's contribution to the field of prisons is broad, but one of his central concepts in relation to prison research is the total institution. There are several types of total institutions as defined by Goffman, including homes for the elderly, the orphaned and army barracks. However, one category is the institutions where the people kept are considered a danger to society, and the main purpose then is to protect society and not the betterment of the people lodged there. This would be prisons, penitentiaries, P.O.W camps and concentration camps. A similar institution established both to care for ill but also to protect society (even if the danger perceived is unintended) includes mental hospitals and TB sanatoria, and similar institutions for isolation of patients (Goffman 1961).

The general feature of the total institution is that the individual lives there permanently (or long term) and under the same singular authority, which would be different from people in general society where individuals move between different spheres of life; usually work, home and leisure activities. The persons in a total institution are collectively regimented, supervised and surveyed. Contact to the outside world is limited. Often, the inmate is excluded from decisions made about their life, and exercise very little control over their own fate. Prisons, Goffman argues *in our societies, they are the forcing houses for changing persons; each is a natural experiment on what can be done to the self* (Goffman 1961, p 12). Imprisonment therefore affects identity. Goffman's writes of *mortification of the self* – which refers to the process where the inmate on reception into prison is shocked, dehumanised and traumatised, and following that will have to find a way to navigate prison life (Goffman 1961).

Another of Goffman's important contributions to the understanding of prisoners is his work on stigma. Social stigma is severe social disapproval of a person because of a particular characteristic that indicates a deviance

from societal norms. He speaks of the relationship between *normals* (Goffman 1961, p 22) and the deviants or stigmatised, and argues that those who are stigmatised are denied a full identity, which he calls a spoiled identity. Views of normality are closely linked to a society's rules, norms and values. What is normal is taken as a given and is largely un-reflected and perceived as natural. Its function is to set boundaries for what one can and cannot do in a society. Yet it is also what creates social categorizations of 'them' and 'us', where the stigmatised are denied the status of full humanity (Goffman 1961).

Those who were not born with a so-called deviant trait but has acquired it later in life, are at a particular risk of self-stigmatisation and will consequently have a particularly difficult time re-identifying themselves. This would go for anyone acquiring a serious disease, mental health problem, physical disability, etc., but also for prisoners. Prisoners would most likely have stigmatised incarcerated individuals before becoming one themselves, which may lead to self-stigma but also a particularly painful awareness of how others would view him (or her. This PhD, however only focuses on men) (Goffman 1963/1990).

Cohen and Taylor's classic work 'Psychological Survival' depicts how long term imprisonment is a struggle for psychological survival in an extreme situation of an isolated and closed emotional world. In this world, individuals experienced profound challenges in terms of identity and self as a consequence of the disrupted life that takes the individual away from his normal life. Cohen and Taylor's contribution was centred on prisoner experiences, coping strategies and adaptations to prison life for long term prisoners. Surviving the extreme conditions of life that imprisonment poses is central to their work. They study how the life course of individuals was disrupted by imprisonment and the important implications that this would have for everyday matters of identity, time and deterioration (Cohen and Taylor 1972).

Yet in the 70's and 80's an argument of 'deep freeze' emerged. The argument was that prisoners entered prison, and that for however long they spent there, they would go into 'deep freeze' and be able to pick up their life where they left off, once released. This position has been effectively rebutted in research in recent years through the argument that *psychological resources and individual circumstances of prisoners had been insufficiently examined in the prison effect research* (Liebling and Maruna 2005, p 11). The consequence, however, has been a widely prevalent belief that it does not matter how harsh imprisonment is. The human being was in this line of thinking seen as resilient, and the understanding was that the human being would survive anything (Jewkes in Crewe and Bennet 2012, Liebling and Maruna 2005).

French philosopher Michel Foucault worked from an entirely different basis when he in 1975 published his widely-recognised work '*Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*'. Here he argued that following capitalism, a structural change occurred where law breaking became intrinsically linked to property/ownership rights – and theft in various forms then became central to the understanding of crime and punishment. Following this, a focus on resocialisation followed, and in the 16-19th century focus changed from bodily punishment (torture) to a focus on the soul and the individual. Techniques were developed to control and change individuals through controlling, regulating, managing and manipulating the body (and consequently the soul) to create submission. Reporting, surveillance and registration were some of the ways to create docile and manageable individuals (Foucault 1975).

Since the 1990's the classic prison scholars have been revisited and newer scholars have made significant contributions towards the recognition of the prison as being a harmful institution (Liebling 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2013, Rhodes 2004, Liebling and Maruna (Ed) 2005, Jefferson 2003, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2014, Martin 2014). Prison has profound negative psychological, behavioural, social, emotional effects – regardless of how the institution itself is run. This is not to say that it is pointless to make improvements to the prison, but

rather than the institution itself inherently and unavoidably will cause harm (Liebling and Maruna 2005, Liebling 2004).

Adding to Sykes' work on the pains of imprisonment, Irwin and Owen discuss how health and disease in the shape of an inadequate health system engender significant pain to those who suffer from illnesses that are a little out of the ordinary. They examine how the social process of routine and restriction translates into a loss of agency, which affects prisoners after release because they find it difficult to make decisions and exert choice. The learned routines and forfeiting of agency means adaptation to prison life and surviving the sentence, but has negative implications for the inmate's life chances upon release. Irwin and Owen explore how lack of privacy and the accompanying reduced ability for private reflection will affect the prisoner's ability to hold on to a sense of self. They also argue that not only is there the pain of lack of heterosexual relationships, but there is also the imminent threat of prison sexual predators, who may rape, seduce or abuse. The fear of this form of sexuality is prevalent, they argue (Irwin and Owen in Liebling and Maruna 2005).

British criminologist Alison Liebling draws upon Goffman's mortification of self when she researches 'what matters' in prison life. She has focused much on the effects of imprisonment and on suicides in UK prisons, which reflect broader issues of prisoner vulnerabilities and the causes and effects of different forms of prison governance. She focuses on perceptions of what matters to inmates, which includes fairness, safety and trust in the prison environment. She focuses on the destructive and/or constructive role which the prison system (particularly prison officers) may play in connection with creating a supportive social climate in the prison where prisoners are offered empathy, time and support, as well as a chance of rehabilitation (Liebling 2004, Liebling in Crewe and Bennett 2012).

Anthropologist Lorna Rhodes focuses on an American Maximum Security Facility in her book '*Total Confinement: Madness and Reason in the Maximum Security Prison*'. She analyses the living conditions for offenders in the Maximum Security unit to explore how inmates are affected by the extreme environment. Rhodes is interested in the effects of these conditions on inmates' abilities to make rational choices in the environment characterised by exclusion, isolation and intense control of every part of inmates' daily lives. Rhodes explores the question of what characterises sanity under these extreme conditions, and the extent to which mentally ill prisoners can be held accountable for their actions. She also explores the internal contradictions of a system aimed at both punishment and treatment of the offender, and questions whether punishment and rehabilitation are compatible (Rhodes 2004).

British sociologist and criminologist Yvonne Jewkes studies a wide range of issues in relation to crime, including the media's role in connection with crime. Her main current research interest is the sociology of imprisonment, especially prison design and prison culture, including social networks, constructions of masculine identities and power dynamics in prisons. Her work on adaptation, identity and masculinity is of particular relevance to this PhD. Jewkes explores how prisoners serving life sentences adapt and cope with their sentence, and compares their experience with that of persons suffering from a severe or terminal illness, in the sense that conflicting experiences of time becomes central. Prisoners experience a sense of endlessness of time and a lack of control over time by the disrupted life course imposed by imprisonment. Prisoners have a sense of *too much time*, therefore they pass time and 'kill time', yet at the same time they experience far too *little time* because of the sense that their lives have been foreshortened by the disruption of imprisonment (Jewkes in Liebling and Maruna 2005)

Jewkes explores how prisoners, like the terminally ill, must come to terms with lack of control over their situation. Referring to Liebling's work on suicide, she asserts that some inmates do indeed not cope at all. On

the other side of the spectrum, there are those who learn that their physical freedom has indeed been taken away, but they retain the freedom of how to respond for instance with acceptance, resistance or conformity – even in the light of uncontrollable circumstances. Jewkes also argues that even if prisoners lose their sense of identity on entry into prison, it is possible to rebuild or reconstruct a new and sometimes improved identity which marks a break with for instance past destructive behaviour (Ibid).

Scholars have also studied the inner workings of the prison, and how prisoners adjust and adapt to the painfulness of imprisonment (Scruton and McCulloch 2009, Jewkes 2007, Crewe 2009). Jewkes explores how masculinity becomes a way to cope with imprisonment. A hyper-masculine front or mask is a way to stay safe, avoid exploitation and violence. This identity serves the purpose of fitting into the prison sub-culture, which draws on patriarchal values from the outside society. At the same time, much in line with Goffman's concepts of front stage and backstage (Goffman 1961, Goffman 1963), the inmate '*must be able to maintain and nurture a private, interior (and usually non-“macho”) sense of self*' (Jewkes 2005, p 46).

The inmate code, which is closely linked to masculinity and 'doing time', is another way of coping with imprisonment. The main features of the inmate code as described by Sykes above have been remarkably persistent over time (at least in Western prisons), and have since been confirmed and nuanced in studies (Crewe 2009). Crewe documents that the first feature of the code is:

not to inform or betray other prisoners. The second relates to interactions with prison representatives and tends to involve the promotion of anti-authoritarian views and the discouragement of fraternisation with custodial staff' (...) Attitudes of submission or commitment to authority were prohibited (...) However, oppositional cultures are not inevitable, and almost all accounts of prison life have identified private deviations from these norms of antipathy and mistrust. (Crewe 2009, p 392)

According to Crewe, some prisoners reject the notion of a code and emphasise 'do your own time' – understood as stay out of trouble and do not interfere with anything unless it has something directly to do with your own situation (Crewe in Crewe and Bennett 2012). I particularly assert 'Western prisons' in the above section because from my studies in Zambia, I do not directly recognise this version of the code, except perhaps from the relatively few 'hardened criminals', as the Officer in Charge of one prison would call certain inmates. These inmates would not abide by the rules of the establishment and would frequently be found to threaten other inmates and/or disobey instructions from staff, and in general pose a threat to social order in the prison.

The prison has long been considered an exemplary site for the study of power, order and resistance (Crewe 2009, p 79). The prison has been studied from several perspectives, including prisons as power from society (Foucault), and as case studies of power dynamics (Sykes 1958). Indeed, prisons are regularly viewed as examples of extremes in social power while imprisonment by contrast is viewed as extremes of powerlessness.

Power may take the form of direct *coercion*, which is generally perceived as illegitimate and often indeed inefficient. Another form of power would be *manipulation or inducement*, where inmates will obtain privileges from staff or other inmates for desired purposes. A third form of power in the prison would be that of *habit, ritual or fatalistic resignation*. The mundanity of everyday life in prison slurs the senses and the ability to act as a result of the strict regimentation of prisoners' time and resources. Finally, Crewe writes of the fourth mechanism of power, which is the *normative justification or commitment* that creates compliance through a sense of legitimacy of power. One, acceptance of power through personal morality, where the prisoner agrees that a certain behaviour is morally correct. Two, attachment, where the prisoner will accept

certain powers bestowed upon him because of attachments to others to whom he feels loyalty. The third way would be where inmates find the assertion of power by the powerful to be legitimate.²⁰ Crewe writes:

Where prisoners feel that power is being exercised fairly and their treatment is respectful, they are more likely to grant it legitimacy and therefore accept its demands even when these run counter to their personal wishes. In this formulation legitimacy is conditional. It must be reconstituted perpetually through the moral dimensions of routine interactions and procedures. (Crewe 2009, p 85)

Those incarcerated are largely at the mercy of society's prevailing values, policies and management practices at the time. Nevertheless, power dynamics in prison may have very different characteristics, and inmates – even if robbed of vital means of self-determination – do have the power of (some) agency within the environment in both constructive and/or destructive ways (Crewe 2009). In this way, power dynamics in prison are complex and dialectic. In terms of staff-inmate relationships, staff depend on inmates to maintain social order and vice versa. Between inmates, power dynamics can contribute to both order and disorder, to control and lack of the same, to abuse and to kindness. In prison information is power and therefore trust and close friendships are generally difficult. A sense of privacy is fiercely guarded, as information about others has the potential for harm because teasing and bullying are common features of imprisonment (Crewe 2009, Crewe and Bennett 2012).

Imprisonment poses an assault on the functional self – that is to say an assault on the inmate's sense of identity (Goffman 1961). Yet the individual response by each prisoner is not the same. Studies tend to look at patterns in undifferentiated samples. However, even if prisoners often experience imprisonment as traumatic, the individual response to imprisonment differs depending on the individual's psychological and social resources, the specific prison environment and the individual circumstances of the arrest, sentencing etc. In addition, different groups in prison have different experiences and different vulnerabilities: i.e. the young, the old, women, indigenous peoples, refugees, prisoners segregated for their own protection, the mentally ill, the jailbirds, the newly incarcerated, those who have contact to family, those who do not and so on will all experience imprisonment differently and will have different social, psychological and emotional difficulties, even if common themes will of course occur. Little is known about the experiences and effects of different groups in prison. Liebling and Maruna call for intensified research on mental health, post-traumatic stress, imprisonment as desistance from crime, the effects on prison staff and the effects on prisoners' families (Liebling and Maruna 2005, Cuneen in Scraton and McCulloch 2009).

As illustrated in the above, scholars have studied the vulnerability of prisoners in terms of the harmfulness of the prison environment, the harmfulness of social exclusion, and of stigma and isolation from loved ones and society. The focus has been on stigma, abandonment and pain, control and power. As Bruce Western concludes in the foreword of G M Sykes 'The Society of Captives':

The modern prison corrodes the inmate's person and sense of moral worth. By losing his freedom, the inmate surrenders the powers that define citizenship in a liberal society. Deprived of nearly all possessions, the inmate also forfeits the markers of biography and individuality. The prisoner loses autonomy as well as individuality because movement and routine are minutely controlled. (Western in Sykes 1958, p xi)

²⁰ Crewe 2009

The clear majority of literature on prisoners comes from the Western world. Ethnographic, psychological or sociological studies from African prisons are few. In recent years, a few scholars have ameliorated some of the gaps, but the focus has been mainly on the staff in the African prisons (Jefferson et al 2014, Jefferson 2014, Martin T 2014, Ayete-Nyampong 2013).

3.3 PRISONS IN AFRICA

Human rights reports and media tell stories of overcrowding, human rights abuses, inadequate food, health care and dilapidated buildings and so forth when it comes to prisons in Africa. Yet the reports say little about the social dynamics and processes that characterise life in the African prisons linked to these conditions. Only in recent years has scholarship emerged that sheds some light on the African prison. The scholarship, however, is fragmented and does not provide a complete picture of prisons in Africa.

Studies have focused primarily on the prison as an institution for reform (Jefferson 2014, 2015) and on prison staff and the relationship between inmates and staff. This relationship in Nigeria (Jefferson 2008), Ivory Coast (Marcis 2014), Sierra Leone (Jefferson 2014, Jefferson and Gaborit 2015), Ghana (Akoensi 2014, Ayete-Nyampong 2013, 2014) has been characterised as 'inter-dependent', 'entangled' and 'symbiotic' in the way that staff are deeply dependent on inmates for maintaining order and the everyday routines and running of the prison. Prisoners are of course equally dependent on staff in terms of providing an overall framework for the institutional practices. This interdependent relationship is underlined by the fact that due to understaffing and overcrowding the officers have to delegate significant powers, duties and responsibilities to prisoners. Further, it is visually difficult in some countries to tell officers and prisoners apart, as the officers rarely wear uniforms (the latter is not the case in Zambia).

Morelle continues along the same lines when she writes about power relations between guards and prisoners and between inmates themselves:

The daily order of the prison cannot be understood simply by appeals to formal procedures or rules but by understanding the informal arrangements, architecture and discourses especially of prisoners and guards. (Morelle 2014, p 21)

Martin explores prison reform in Uganda, where he focuses on the appropriation of a human rights discourse and human rights practices in the prisons. He shows how staff adapt the human rights discourse to the local environment where staff on inmate violence is reduced to 'reasonable caning'. Here staff does indeed appropriate, adapt and re-invent human rights into their everyday practices.

As Jefferson and Martin note, there are vast differences between the prisons in Africa. Organisation and social relationships cannot be assumed to be the same in prisons across the continent, and the existing prisons research only offers a glimpse of the everyday practices and social relationships that structure life in prisons (Jefferson and Martin 2014). Yet based on the existing documentation, it is probably fair to say that African prisons are characterised by a high level of mutual interdependency between staff and prisoners, more so than in the Western prisons. It is also fair to say that the extremes of overcrowding, staff shortages, lack of food, hygiene and health services, and levels of general deprivation do provide a framework for how prisons are governed and experienced by both staff and inmates.

The focus in the above-mentioned research is mainly the institutional and staff perspective. Ayete-Nyampong moves towards the inmate perspective when she writes about Ghanaian youth correctional centres:

Life in prisons and correctional centres is not only about material deprivation and oppressive officers. On the contrary everyday detention life features social interactions, which are

mundane and intimate as well as governance practices which do not always exhibit a neat marked boundary between officer and inmate, but are entangled. Entanglement in this regard suggests a loose and episodic mesh of social relations that are mutually supportive and interdependent. (Ayete-Nyampong 2014, p 32)

Examples of how inmates are involved in everyday prison management are described by Akoensi and Ayete-Nyampong (Ghana) and Marcis (Ivory Coast) in their research where they explore how inmates gain official or quasi-official titles and responsibilities in the prisons. Prisoners are delegated functions from cleaners, and cooks in the kitchen, to managers of education, vocational training, daily activities, such as head counts and lock ups, etc. In this way, the prisoners themselves contribute vastly to the everyday organisation of the prison. The prisons cannot function without their services and commitment to keeping social order.

The inmates themselves have well-organised internal hierarchies, sometimes supported by official regulations and at other times more informal. Akoensi writes that *'the prisoner hierarchy has become intrinsic to the culture of male prisons'* (Akoensi 2014, p 34). The fact that the prisoners have such powers creates a certain tension between the institutional aim to control and subdue prisoners on one side and the inmates' actual responsibilities and abilities to shape (some level of) social control on the other side (Ayete-Nyampong 2014, Akoensi 2014, Marcis 2014, Onojeharho and Bloom 1986). To the outsider, it may seem paradoxical that it is often those imprisoned who contribute significantly to running the institution that holds them under painful and extreme circumstances. However, this situation may also be seen as an expression of conformity and as a way to survive imprisonment by creating a sense of predictability and social order (Tertsakian 2014).

The appalling physical conditions play a vital part in how imprisonment is experienced and endured by prisoners. Alexander sheds light on how the physical conditions of imprisonment contribute to the experience of dehumanisation amongst prisoners. Alexander recounts an inmate's frustrations: A malfunctioning latrine with an unbearable stench *'took on an almost malevolent persona: it was a source of stench and disease that had to be slept with every night, and a constant reminder of the loss of dignity and bodily control that prison entailed'* (Alexander 2010, p 494).

The physical conditions cannot be separated from the social. They contribute to a sense of denigrating humanity, but so does violence and abuse. Violence and humiliation by guards assumes different levels in different countries and in different prisons, but commonly the function of the prison is to denigrate prisoners' humanity and dignity. It is not necessarily beatings but equally the verbal abuse and taunting as well as forcing inmates to perform 'circus tricks', like jumping in specific 'silly' ways, carrying rocks for no apparent reason or as 'punishment' for perceived disrespect or other wrongdoing (Alexander 2010, Dignity 2014).

Violence between inmates also performs some of the same functions. Gear and Lindegaard explore the specific context of the post-apartheid South African prison, which according to their research is characterised by quite extreme forms of violence between inmates. Yet the violence has a rationality to it, in the sense that it is necessary as a means for self-protection (Gear and Lindegaard 2014). Based on my experience in the Zambian prisons, however, I would caution against assuming that violence between inmates is an everyday occurrence.

Environments characterised by extremes give rise to exceptional circumstances where – in this case prisoners – are required to devise strategies to survive the environment where the consequences of not coping can mean literally death. The prisoners would respond in different ways with *a combination of brutal selfishness and unexpected generosity, rivalry, creativity, resilience, patience and despair.* (Tertsakian 2014, p 5)

3.4 CONCLUSION

The prison has received much attention in research in the past 80 years or so. The prison is an obvious site for the study of power and social control. Indeed, prisons are regularly viewed as examples of extremes in social power while imprisonment contrastingly is viewed as extremes of powerlessness.

Even so, prisoners do not only exist at the mercy of staff. Staff and the prison institution are highly reliant on prisoners not only to comply with the rules, but also to contribute to social order and the everyday functioning of the prison. This is the case in Western prisons, but it is even more pronounced in the African prisons where inmates are assigned to or take on various managing and coordinating functions.

Imprisonment is well documented to be harmful. Sykes describes the prison as a closed emotional world. It causes profound psychological, social, behavioural and emotional effects. The prison is characterised by significant amounts of social control over movement and physical representation. It is characterised by deprivation of liberty, privacy, basic necessities, relationships to family and loved ones. It is a place of exclusion, social isolation from the outside society and possibly isolation inside the prison (in cases for instance of solitary confinement).

Imprisonment poses a real risk of harm to the incarcerated person's identity and sense of self. The prisoner must adapt and struggle to survive imprisonment psychologically, socially and in the case of the African prison also physically. The effect of imprisonment is no doubt harmful. Yet prisoners are not only passive receivers; they experience imprisonment very differently depending for instance on personality, education and social background. Prisoners do have some options or possibilities to react and act in order to adapt, resist and/or survive imprisonment.

The appalling physical conditions play a vital part in how imprisonment is experienced and endured by African prisoners. Environments which are characterised by extremes, such as prisons, give rise to exceptional circumstances, and inmates must devise strategies to survive in an environment where the consequence of not coping may entail death. The prisoners will respond to this environment in different ways. Yet there is remarkably little literature on prisoner experiences, and in particular few in-depth analyses of how prisoners in Africa experience their time in prison and how it affects them.

In the following two Chapters, we shall delve into how imprisonment is experienced by Zambian inmates and what strategies they employ to survive.

4 THE EXPERIENCE OF IMPRISONMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Conditions of overcrowding, ill-health, lack of proper nutrition and hygiene as well as human rights violations are widely documented in Sub-Saharan prisons (Sarkin 2008) and also specifically in Zambian prison (Kamocho 2005: Human Rights Watch 2010, CARITAS 2007, Zambia Human Rights Commission 2013). How these harsh conditions affect the people incarcerated psychologically and socially is scarcely documented, in particular in an African context. Further, human rights and similar reports typically say very little about psychological reactions and effects, social processes, dynamics and relationships.

This chapter provides an overview of the main features of the experience of imprisonment, revealed through analysis of my interviewing data. Every prisoner's experience is unique and his own, yet common themes occurred in the interviewing data. This chapter will shed light on the concept of chronic crisis, inmates' experiences of trauma in connection with arrest and entry into police cells and later prison cells, and the chapter explores staff perspectives and inmate-staff relationships. It will touch upon how conditions of ill-health, forced intimacy, injustice, social networks, stigma and social abandonment and ontological insecurity together with routine, the endlessness of time, guilt and the loss of liberty, are experienced by inmates. Further, a short analysis of the precarious situation of mental health in prisons will be explored. Finally, I will sum up how the chronic crisis of imprisonment poses a threat the inmates' sense of self and identity.

4.2 IMPRISONMENT AS CHRONIC CRISIS

Psychologists typically speak of two distinct types of crisis: the development crisis/life (span) crisis, and the traumatic crisis. The development crisis is characterised by the normal events individuals encounter during their life span, where they have to make decisions which will affect their future and they will be made responsible for these decisions in one way or another later in life. This form of crisis can be positive in the sense that the crisis strengthens the individual's psychological development and maturity, even if the crisis process may be challenging (Beckmann 2000, Cullberg 1975). The traumatic crisis is somewhat different in the sense that there is a risk of developing serious psychological disturbances (Cullberg 1975). Trauma in itself is not a crisis. It is only if the trauma is subjectively experienced as a threat to safety or meaningful existence, that it can be labelled crisis (Gilliland and James 1997). The traumatic crisis arises in a situation where the individual's prior coping strategies no longer suffice:

A traumatic crisis is caused by some external, sudden and very taxing threat, which constitute a threat to one's physical existence, social identity or security or against one's fundamental satisfaction with life. (author's translation) (Beckmann 2000, p 1438)

So, the typical forms of trauma consist of loss or threat of loss of loved ones or possessions, violation or threat of violation of bodily integrity, which means that the individual's sense of self is fundamentally shaken. Finally, there is the type of trauma which entails catastrophes (e.g. natural disasters, accidents or similar). Imprisonment in a Zambian prison arguably contains elements of all three, if one characterises the disastrous living conditions in the prisons as a form of catastrophe. The threat to the individual's sense of self is profound in the sense that the total life experience is disrupted. In a sense, imprisonment is one long disruption where the individual will find it hard to find a new sense of equilibrium after the trauma and psychological stress of imprisonment.

Henrik Vigh criticises the crisis theory of always looking upon crisis as an isolated event from which one can recover. The concept crisis originates from the Greek verb 'krinein', which means a 'decisive moment', a turning point or a decisive time period, and this is how it is used amongst most psychologists (Beckmann 2000). However, there are many instances where crisis is not an isolated 'turning point' or decisive moment, and Vigh proposes:

The phenomenon is seen as a temporary disorder, a momentary malformation in the flow of things. Yet, for a great many people around the world crisis is endemic rather than episodic and cannot be delineated as an aberrant moment of chaos or a period of decisive change. For the structurally violated, socially marginalised and poor, the world is not characterised by balance, peace or prosperity but by the ever-present possibility of conflict, poverty and disorder. (Vigh 2008, p 1)

He speaks of prolonged crisis, or the 'chronicity of crisis', where '*crisis is not rupture, it is fragmentation; a state of somatic, social and existential incoherence*' (Vigh 2008, p 1). The chronic crisis is cyclical and becomes an expected manifestation of disorder. He calls for an understanding of crisis as context:

When we look a bit closer into the phenomenon of crisis, it becomes clear that conflict, violence and abject poverty can become so embedded in the social fabric that they become indistinguishable from it, making crisis chronic and forcing people to make lives in fragmented and volatile worlds rather than waiting for normalisation and reconfiguration. (Vigh 2008, p 8)

What is important to note here is that even if the state of affairs (crisis) is chronic, this does not entail a 'getting used to' or indifference to the pain. Those in chronic crisis do not experience less pain simply because what they experience is somehow 'normal' in the given context. Conceptions of normality are linked to ideals of how things should be. Therefore, persisting in a state of chronic crisis does not mean accepting it as normal or how things should be (Vigh 2008).

Even if I consider Vigh's contribution pivotal, we may still learn something about inmates' experience and responses to imprisonment from the more traditional psychological theory on crisis. Psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Johan Cullberg is one of the most prominent researchers on psychological crisis theory in Scandinavia. Cullberg has developed a model for a traumatic crisis trajectory. There are many different theories of the normal course of grief or psychological crisis. Even if different scholars describe several different phases (somewhere between three and eight phases), the main features are still arguably the same: the greater the subdivision of the theory, the greater the detail and further subdivision of a process where individuals may pass back and forth between phases (Bowes 2015, Hyldgård Larsen 1990, Maciejewski 2007). In Cullberg's version, we see four main phases which may overlap and where individuals may move back and forth between the phases. It is also important to stress that individuals will respond differently and with varying severity to traumatic experiences based on features of their personality and life trajectory as well as on the nature and severity of the traumatic event (Cullberg 2007, Bowes 2015).

The first is the phase characterised by shock. Here the individual is in a state of disbelief, and even if the individual may or may not outwardly seem affected by the situation, the individual in shock fails to understand or see any meaning in the situation. They may panic, act aggressively or be over-active, or desperately try to cling to others. A feeling of disbelief may set in, and the individual may react with denial, numbness, emotional isolation or emotional withdrawal. Physically, the individual may react for instance shaking, nausea, sweating, heart palpitations and mouth dryness. The initial reaction of the shock phase may be seen as an attempt to shield oneself from the terrifying and painful event or situation (Ibid).

The second phase is the so-called 'reaction phase'. This is where the individual reacts to the trauma, and this is when the individual typically goes through intense pain and anger. Emotions are intense and shifting. The individual will often experience loss of appetite, restlessness, psychosomatic symptoms, bitterness, anger, depressive feelings. A central feature of the reaction phase is anxiety, and a reliving of the traumatic event. Often, the individual will experience feelings of grief, pain, guilt, shame and anger. At this stage the individual is often overwhelmed by emotions (Ibid).

In the third phase, the individual starts processing the trauma. The overwhelming emotions have ceased somewhat and even if they may resurface, a process of acceptance begins. If the process is successful, the individual will slowly experience more energy and self-respect. In the fourth and final phase the individual starts re-orienting him- or herself. The traumatic experience is not forgotten, but the emotional pain has lessened significantly, or completely disappeared. Psychological crisis holds the potential for personal growth and for learning new ways of coping with life and of understanding life (Ibid).

I did not meet any prisoner who experienced that the emotional pain had lessened to a point where I (as a non-psychiatrist/psychologist) could argue that they had safely entered the fourth and final phase. Instead, I would propose that most prisoners found themselves somewhere on the crisis continuum where they were moving between phases, and were unable to move out of being in some state of processing psychological crisis or distress connected to their generally challenging life situation. Even if many prisoners did describe periods of re-orientation, they were – much in line with Vigh's argument of the crisis being chronic – thrown back and forth between the different stages of crisis, mainly stage two and three. They did not describe – unless a new trauma occurred – going back to stage one of shock, but they certainly did describe elements of phases two, three and four. In the following chapter (Chapter 5), we shall explore how prisoners cope with the ongoing crisis of imprisonment.

Psychiatrists describe – again in connection with an isolated traumatic event – various forms of pathological responses to a stressful event:

Some people seem to experience stressful or traumatic life events with minimal symptoms, while others seem more susceptible to developing a diagnosable disorder. Depending on the severity of the stressor and their underlying vulnerability, patients may develop: 1) An adjustment disorder, 2) An acute stress reaction or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or 3) a dissociative disorder, or 4) another major mental illness such as depressive, anxiety or psychotic disorder. (Bowes 2015, p 92)

Without entering into in-depth description or analysis of psychiatric disorders or diagnostic criteria, as this is not the purpose here, it is still worthwhile to assert that even if psychologists and psychiatrists typically speak of trauma as an isolated event, some also focus on chronic distress or repeated traumatic experiences in terms of long periods of stress or of mal-adaptions following stressful experiences which leave the individual in a state of chronic distress. Jefferson in his analysis of imprisoned refugees in Sierra Leone adds the following:

(Suffering) is of the moment but not momentary—it endures. Through this lens, suffering is not related to a single discrete event or even a sequence of events. Suffering is immediate—both immediate and enduring. (Jefferson in Jensen and Rønsbo, p 310)

Gilliland and James argue that a psychological crisis is not simple, but very complex: *The symptoms that overlie precipitating crisis events become tangled webs of that crisscross all environments of an individual* (Gilliland and James 1997, p 4). The social environment surrounding the person in crisis – as in family, co-

workers or in this instance other prisoners and staff – is decisive for how the trauma is dealt with. For problems of long duration, there are no easy ways of solving them (Gilliland and James 1997).

4.3 THE EXPERIENCE OF IMPRISONMENT

As we have established in Chapter 3, the prisons in Africa are ill-understood and understudied. Martin, Jefferson and Bandyopadhyay write:

The prisons of the global South remain systematically ignored and, when deigned worthy of consideration, poorly understood. A great deal of scholarly debate on prisons and worldwide shifts in penalty depend, to an unacceptable degree, on material gleaned from Western contexts. This is to say, prisons located outside the context of Europe, North America and Australasia have been analysed in terms of the Western prison, as therefore lacking bureaucratic rationality and contaminated by the traditional, hence discriminatory and unaccountable orders. The comparativist error can be ascribed to the fusion of two hegemonic imaginaries: on the one face of the coin, scholarly accounts of the Western prison as universally relevant, and on the other side popular perceptions of the non-Western prisons' inevitable fate of misery and absolute inhumanity. When (pre)conceived as a state institution mainly recognizable through its inherent dysfunction, social life within the walls of these spaces of confinement is read exclusively in terms of deviance and the perpetual need for reform – in short, as a void or a lack – the absence of which signals abject failure. (Martin et al 2016, p 4)

In agreement with the argument presented, I will attempt to avoid a one-sided analysis of imprisonment viewed solely in terms of its' failures. I will aim to focus on the nuances of the experience of imprisonment and of the so-called 'absolute inhumanity' of the non-Western prison and attempt to understand the prison on its own terms.

4.3.1 The shock of the police cells

The police cells are in some ways different from prison. No food is provided in the police cells, and inmates rely entirely on well-wishers from the outside or family members – if they are allowed to contact them. Torture to extract confessions or as simple punishment is commonplace, which is much less so in the prisons. The police cells are far more violent, and I encountered several inmates in prison who had been victims of serious torture and were disabled for life. It is not only staff who are violent, but also other incarcerated individuals.

A double-bind process begins as soon as suspects enter police cells. All around the world an important prisoner code centres on 'being tough', 'being a man', 'being strong' and 'doing your time' (Sykes 1958, Crewe and Bennet 2012, Scraton and McCulloch 2011, Sabo et al. 2001). But, contrastingly, the tough prison environment does the exact opposite to the confined – it places the individual under extreme stress. Inmates often described a process of humiliation and 'humbling' upon being incarcerated. Many come from the police cells having been beaten and tortured by police officers and inmates in over-crowded cells (Zambia Human Rights Commission 2013, CARITAS 2007). An ex-prisoner speaks of how inmates would struggle over food and how he would try to avoid being beaten in the police cells.

Ex-prisoner: (...) they will start now taking your food by force and not by asking and no matter what, you will surrender. If you try to refuse they will beat you so it was some kind of suffering.(...) You will find that there were some other inmates there (and) when something

happens they try to retaliate. But for those they used to be beaten badly and they struggled a lot.

Interviewer: So your strategy was to humble yourself so you could avoid the violence?

Ex-prisoner: (Yes) so I could keep myself (alive), because the negative aspect of it is, if you decide to react to any situation, you end up dying in the cells. They beat to kill and not just for the sake of teaching you a lesson. (...) When I am free, like I am now, someone comes and tries to beat me, I am free, ok? And I can try to resist or duck the punch. Now what happens in the cell in the prison, if such things happen, there is nowhere you can run to, really. We had some that tried to say no one can beat me like that, but the end result is that they ended up (with) much more suffering than they could have, if they had humbled themselves. (...) I used to humble myself, I used to freeze myself. You see, if you are beating someone, and he has frozen, even if you were so angry it is not really exciting, because the person you are beating is not reacting to that. Now if you are trying to punch back as well, you then raise the other person's temper, and so what I was trying was to cool that one's temper down and in the end, I found it was a way to defend myself. That was a way of protection. (...) I took it as a means of protection, but it was not really protection. Because the people we are talking about are not merciful people. They are criminals and of different mind sets (...). And yet, some, when they find you being accommodating, they will beat you hard, you see.

Inmates often described a process of humiliation and 'humbling' upon being incarcerated. It begins at the police cells, well known for violence and torture.

4.3.2 The shock of entering prison

The police cells are chaotic and violent, and even if prisons can be violent as well, prisons are far more organised and disciplined mainly due to the prison hierarchical system where inmates have ranks and act as organisers of prison activities. The prison authorities' focus is to keep order and control in the prison environment. For them it is essential to prevent escapes and to manage the prison with the resources available to them. The prisons are run in a quasi-military style where the hierarchy amongst staff resembles that of the military (Evaristo Kalonga June 2009).

The Zambia Correctional Service remains in practice far from achieving its mission to provide humane custodial and correctional services. Prison staff recognize this issue openly, and are concerned about the 'enormous problems faced' in terms of infrastructure, congestion, poor diet, health care, sanitation and water supply and rehabilitation facilities. This is not to say that the Zambia Correctional Service has not in recent years made progress within their limited means to find solutions to the problems faced, and place more emphasis on human rights in their work. Programs do exist e.g. to educate or reintegrate ex-prisoners in their former communities, but the Correctional Service cannot meet the demand (Human Rights Watch 2010, own interviews with staff).

Like in other post-colonial African prisons, an elaborate prisoner leadership system is well-developed. A group of powerful inmates assist with keeping order and control as a response to staff shortages (Akoensi 2014, Onojeharho and Bloom 1986). The highest ranking is the special stage (SS) who are special trustees. They are long term prisoners who have earned a special place in the hierarchy through good behaviour. A special stage can only be appointed directly by the Commissioner General of Prisons. They refer directly to staff and can mete out more severe punishments than the captains (see below). Activities which are illegal in Zambia such as sex between inmates and violence must be referred to staff to mete out punishments. No

more than 15 special stages are appointed at a time in Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison which held between 1400 and 2300 prisoners during the period 2011-2016.

The next level of command is so-called 'blue bands'. They are generally 'cell captains' who receive their position based on good behaviour or leadership capabilities or based on position in the prisoner hierarchy. In practice this means that cell captains may possess both leadership capabilities and be examples of good behaviour, but at other times the ability to command respect and control is the decisive factor rather than good behaviour. They are appointed to ensure discipline, and to be the eyes and ears of staff. A special stage explains to me:

As we debate possible appointees we try as much as possible to base our selection on good conduct, but then not all the people who conduct themselves in a good way make good cell leaders or captains. You need a person with a strong character in order and who is feared or respected generally in order to control a prison cell. And yes, there have been times when a name has been proposed of an inmate who is involved in same sex sexual intercourse.²¹

The cell captains, also frequently referred to by prisoners as 'masters' or 'wazungu'²², ensure discipline in the cells, and they coordinate various activities. Violence may be used in the name of discipline, and inmates reported severe beatings, with bare hands, canes, shoes or pipes and other abuses to Human Rights Watch in their 2010 study (Human Rights Watch 2010). Although it is against official policy, violence for punishment or for discipline by cell captains or other prisoners placed at the top of the prisoner hierarchy seems accepted to a certain extent and sometimes supported by staff (Human Rights Watch 2010, Zambia Human Rights Commission 2013). Yet the prevalence of staff violence is highly reliant on the local prison management, staff sub-cultures and is changeable depending on the values and management style of the individual Officer in Charge and his deputy. Reports by the Zambia Human Rights Commission show that human rights abuses, including torture, beatings and other forms of inhumane treatment is widespread, but at the same time there are vast differences between prisons (Zambia Human Rights Commission 2013).

Even if there were severe beatings and other serious forms of punishment following a prison escape in Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison and following certain riots, violence was not the order of the day over the years the research team spent going in and out of this prison. The fear of encountering violence or abuse from either staff or other inmates, however, was prevalent.

Prisoner hierarchies play a major role when it comes to organizing everyday routines. Contrary to public expectation²³ of prison as being chaotic, it is – in terms of organization - well ordered, and prisoners generally abide by the rules. When it is time for lock up, they queue up and despite the extreme overcrowding where they often must sit on each other's laps in the cells (for instance 165 people in a cell designed for 40). They are counted and locked up in a matter of minutes (own observations). The procedure of cooking, handing out food, going to the toilet, washing, the organization of inmates in the cells and all other activities are supervised and controlled by powerful inmates, the cell captains.

²¹ Inmates would refer to same sex sexual relationships as sodomy or homosexuality. It is only because this informant knows me well that he has adopted this expression. After spending much time together informally as well as in interview situations, and because we worked together in Ubumi, I started sharing more information about my research, because he was interested.

²² 'Wazungu' means white person, and is used as a sign of respect in the prison environment. There is an interesting trajectory here, where the history of colonialism is evident in the prison hierarchy. When used towards a white person it is more controversial.

²³ ZNBC documentary 2012: A Day in the Life of a Prisoner

Further down the ladder of hierarchies are the red and yellow bands who also have responsibilities in terms of the everyday organization of activities. Remand prisoners cannot be ranked formally but in some prisons, like Lusaka Central Prison, they have their own informal ranking system where there are also 'captains' and other categories of prisoners in powerful positions.

Around the world, new prisoners are tested in humiliating rituals which act as a 'welcome' into the prison subculture (Goffman 1961, own observations). In the inmate subculture, recognition is often awarded based on a different kind of hierarchy compared to the 'outside'. This poses major challenges for the newcomers. They have to learn quickly in order to avoid various kinds of abuse and to gain access to even the most basic necessities, including food. This is also the case in Zambian prisons. Typically, inmate's belongings are confiscated by staff and put in storage. Once the new inmate enters the general prison population, other inmates strip them of their last belongings, often down to shoes and clothes, which are taken by stronger inmates. At this point the weaker inmates are quickly spotted and bullied – and may become victims of future sexual abuse. One inmate explains his own story:

Because of firstly, we have what we call lecture. Here is where they tell you what goes on in prison and what to expect and what not to do. It is more intimidating than a person telling you that these are your boundaries and this is not allowed, and you are not expected to do this or that. Instead, you get someone shouting out to you the do's and don'ts of prison. The following day you will be too scared to do anything, also because when you just get here, you don't know who to approach for help. When you go there, you are likely to find they are a lot of people. When you stand and wait for your turn everyone will shove and push, because they know you're a new guy. Then one will notice and come over and be nice and the newcomer will trust that person not knowing what his intentions are. If you are lucky he will be nice, unlike others who are involved in the line of sodomy. Those who let that happen to them, it shows that they are weak and easily intimidated. You have to be tough. By being tough you have to make sure no one can intimidate you.

As the new inmate enters the prison, new routines, strictly regimented, are introduced (Goffman 1961). One inmate describes his first day, and describes the typical reaction of human beings in acute crisis – denial (Cullberg 1975).

When I arrived here I was more in a kind of shock, I didn't accept the situation I was in. The things we started seeing, the environment, the conditions the sleeping arrangements. It was all too much and too sudden you can't take it and say that this is what I am going through. It was just like you were thrown in the bush or on the streets, a life that you are not used to.

Another describes how he fainted and was mocked by other prisoners on his first day:

The first day was very difficult. I even fainted in Chimbokaila the first day. And I could just... ah... the last word I could hear was, the guys were shouting to say: Ah, he's done it deliberately, thinks we'll feel pity on him... But I had fainted seriously.

The desperate physical and material conditions also shock the new inmate:

The things that really shocked me in here. One is the food we eat. I have never ever seen such food, and I have never ever eaten such kind of food. Secondly, is the way I sleep or the way we sleep in here and it is totally different from the way we slept outside. So, these two things are the key things I find abnormal in prison.



Kapenta – dried fish – typically served with nshima (a kind of thick maize porridge). No cooking oil, spices or relish.

4.3.3 Physical conditions and ill-health

In 2012, Zambia Correctional Service employed 6 trained health staff, including one doctor for a prison population of 16,666 (at the time).²⁴ In 2015, a further 32 trained health staff

professionals of varying expertise were recruited, underwent training for 6-7 months and are now serving in various facilities around the country. There are two medical doctors employed at headquarter level. Todrys et al reports that the clinics are often ill equipped with only paracetamol (2011). My observations from Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison showed that the clinic was not well stocked, but did have at least two different kinds of antibiotics, paracetamol, ibuprofen, benzodiazepine (calming psychoactive medication) and a few other drugs. To save on costs, the clinic also had placebo (pills with no medical effect), which I observed handed out instead of paracetamol in 2013. When asked in 2016, a clinical officer reported that this was no longer done. The director of Medical Services in Headquarters would report the same.

The clinical officer at Mukobeko Maximum Clinic worked tirelessly, sometimes attending to 100 patients a day in times of acute crisis (diarrhoea epidemics or similar). Yet, when the clinical officer went away for medical school, the prison was left with substandard medical care for a long periods of time causing even greater health problems. This was only remedied after several months. Prisoners are mostly sent to the hospital if necessary, but when they go there, it is often too late, and many prisoners die shortly after arriving at the hospital. Lack of competent prison staff to make health assessments, corruption, staff shortages, lack of transport, all contribute to this situation.²⁵

66% of HIV positive prisoners receive Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ART) (Zambia National AIDS Council 2014). Yet, more than half of patients report missing doses, and therefore adherence is an important problem. One of the main reasons is lack of food, because it is not possible to take the medication without food to avoid serious side-effects. This amplifies the human suffering caused by HIV/AIDS, and it increases the risk of developing multi-resistant viral strains. Malnutrition-related illnesses are common (Human Rights Watch et al. 2011, Ubumi Prisons Initiative June 2016).

Ill-health, lack of proper nutrition and hygiene issues constitute threats to prisoners' life and opportunity to freely dispose over their own bodies. Prisoners are regularly moved between prisons to reduce

²⁴ Correspondence health director of prisons

²⁵ own observations in Lusaka and Mukobeko prisons, Zambia Correctional Service reports and reports by MA student Lena Kresojevic as part of her MA work studying Ubumi Prisons Initiative's work.

overcrowding²⁶, but this can leave them geographically isolated from their families, who can no longer visit or provide food for their incarcerated family member (Human Rights Watch 2010, own interviews). There is a general lack of access to health services, as many prisons have no health clinics or health staff who visit regularly. In 2004 alone an estimated 449 prisoners in Zambia died due to AIDS-related illness, out of a total prison population of approximately 14,500 at the time (In But Free and Ministry of Home Affairs 2008, Kamocha 2005).

People with compromised immune systems are vulnerable to numerous infections. Tuberculosis infection is ten times that of the general population, and diseases such as malaria, gastric disorders, scabies and various skin diseases are common (Human Rights Watch 2010, CARITAS 2007). One informant describes: *We are like dogs scratching ourselves, (we are) treated like animals*. The experience of feeling less than human is also documented by a high-level officer who, joyful on behalf of a pardoned and released prisoner, said to the prisoner: *You are now a human being*. This indicates that the prisoner was considered less than human, when he was still a prisoner. This was an officer who was generally perceived to be humane and fair by prisoners, and who did work for the welfare of inmates.

In the Zambian prison context, another threat to physical integrity is overcrowding. The official total capacity of the Zambian prisons is 7,500, and the occupancy level was 207.3 per cent in 2009. However, capacity is particularly stretched in some prisons, where for instance Mukobeko Maximum prison in Kabwe is at 433 per cent of capacity, Lusaka Central Prison is at 573 per cent (Human Rights Watch 2010). The inmates interviewed for this research all mentioned congestion in the cells at night as one of the major challenges. They described how uncomfortable it was to sit so closely at night, but also itching and sweating and the easy spread of diseases as major concerns. The worst place in the cell to sleep was the *chitakataka*, the most congested areas in the cell, which is in the centre and by the walls. Several talked of the prisoners devising strategies not to sweat too much at night, by for instance avoiding drinking after morning hours. Access to clean water and sanitation remains a significant challenge, contributing to health problems. One inmate explains:

(There was) lack of fresh air, the sweat was coming from congestion and not just ordinary sweat, like someone just pooled water, and these guys just keep on sweating.

Prisoners are fed twice a day and the food is far from nutritionally adequate. Many prisoners suffer from malnutrition, and it is not possible to survive on the food the prison provides alone in the medium and longer term. Remandees²⁷ suffer especially in terms of food, because remandees eat after the convicts, and if there is not enough food, they are left to go hungry (Human Rights Watch 2010). One NGO report from 2007 states that at times prisoners go without food for several days (CARITAS 2007). However, this is not something I have encountered. I have, though, encountered a couple of instances related to severe lack of water, where inmates would only get one cup a day for at least a week, before alternative water provision was organised. Some prisons suffer from chronic lack of water.

The key problems in here are one congestion and secondly food. We don't have good food, and we have a lot of diseases in here because of the congestion.

²⁶ Conversations in August 2009 with Commissioner of Prisons, G Nawa (deceased), observations and interviews with staff

²⁷ Remand refers to detention of suspects.

Deaths are common. One staff member was frustrated and angered at the situation when he spoke about inmates in Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison: *You don't expect them to survive anyway.* An inmate explains:

There is no place I know where people die like this, and we are talking of a human being dying like a chicken. Maybe as we speak right now there is some dead in the cells, the way we get sick in here.

Prisoners are at times desperate for help, and feel abandoned by the authorities. As one inmate explains:

If I don't have money to give to the officers and I am sick, I will not be taken to the hospital, and for the four months since I have been convicted I have seen eight people die in my presence because of negligence.

Due to lack of staff and transport only a few will have the option of going to hospital, and it is sometimes those who can either bribe or otherwise convince the officers, who get the option to go, sometimes at the expense of those in most need. Sometimes, they die within hours of arrival in hospital. The below is an extract of my field notes documenting a situation where an inmate did not survive:

Today, I witnessed a man who was very sick and weak, but still conscious. He was carried into the yard in front of the staff offices where I was conducting interviews. He was left on the ground in the burning sun. I did not realize how seriously ill he was, but asked staff what was happening. They informed me that he was going to be taken to the hospital, but they were waiting for transport. Later that day, I was told that he had died within hours. I don't think he even made it to hospital.

Yet sending patients to the hospital is not always an ideal option either, due to stigma, lack of food and proper health care that patients from the prisons get in hospital. A prison clinical officer reported that he only sent inmates to the hospital when he had no choice – because he knew they would be worse off in hospital if they did not have relatives to care for them. An incentive for staff to send inmates to hospital shortly before death would be to avoid a protocol investigation of the death. If an inmate dies in hospital – even if it is within hours of arrival – the death does not involve an investigation. An investigation could result in staff being accused of for instance negligence. For many reasons staff will aim to avoid deaths in prison, and this may explain why many get to hospital when it is too late to save their lives.²⁸

4.3.4 Staff perspectives and inmate-staff relationships

Staff commitment, attitudes and the reform paradigm

As shown in Chapter 3.2 and 3.3, there is general agreement amongst prison scholars that staff play a pivotal role in determining the social climate of the prison and prisoners' perception of fairness and accountability as a part of their prison experience (Liebling 2004, Jefferson 2004). Prison climate can be defined as

a composite category, encompassing material conditions, values, relationships and the political and moral economies – including the (ir)rationalities – that sustain them. It is inscribed in material things and physical environments, and experienced quite differently from one actor to another. (...) The point is that prison climates are always in need of local explanations. (Martin et al 2016, p 6)

²⁸ Observations and interviews with staff and inmates

On a typical day, there will be five staff members on guard duty for approximately 2100 inmates. In addition, during the day shift, there will be the Officer in Charge (OIC, the overall responsible for all activities, administration, conflict resolution, and metering out the more serious punishments), Deputy Officer in Charge (Key assistant to OIC, work duties related to supporting OIC), Cash Officer (who administers inmates' money), Intelligence Officer (who works to pick up on unusual, suspicious behaviour, and who is rumoured to have snitches amongst the prisoner population) and the Duty Officer (who deploy the officers on shift to their posts and the inmates to their working parties). The Duty Officer checks and reports on officer and inmate welfare, monitors and supervises prison activities and ensures security standards are met. The Reception Area has five staff members (registration and management of visitors, inspection of food donations, etc.). The Offender Management Unit has one officer (social worker, who works with inmate welfare and rehabilitation) and there is also an education officer (responsible for the overall coordination of education in the prison). Then there are two staff members in the store rooms, a security officer (who supervises guards, and is responsible for monitoring and administering general security), and one in the kitchen (responsible for organising cooking). The different workshops have in total about five staff members who run the different activities (tailoring, carpentry, metal and woodwork, etc). There is also an officer responsible for the garden and firewood collection outside the prison walls. The health clinic which caters for inmates, staff and their relatives, will have at least one staff member. In 2016, there were five, including two clinical officers, a nurse, a pharmacologist and a physiotherapist, the highest number of health staff ever in this prison. In other prisons than the Maximum-Security prison, the clinic caters for the general community as well. In all, apart from the health staff, we see 25-30 staff members on day shifts. Almost all staff functions are closely supported by special stage prisoners. Evening shifts and night shifts only have 5-7 prison officers in all.

Staff experience many frustrations in their daily work: staff shortages, witnessing the aforementioned poor conditions of imprisonment, including dilapidated physical environments, lack of resources for the most basic things to keep the prison running, such as fuel for transport of sick prisoners to the hospital, sufficient staff to transport them there, resources for proper food and so forth. The larger maximum and medium security prisons – regardless of security category – have more or less the same staffing levels, even if the Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison is slightly better staffed compared for instance to the medium security institution of Lusaka Central Prison.

Even in the face of all this adversity, several prison staff would often express interest in various ways in and commitment to their jobs:

Interviewer: So how has it been to work for the prison service all these years?

Informant (staff member): It is very interesting. We are now used to meeting a lot of people, interacting and solving problems. When you are looking after such a very big number and so you will look at yourself and say, you are working. So, it makes one to count, and it is a very interesting job.

Many staff members would show much commitment to their work, including finding meaning in it and doing their part to make the system work and alleviating some of the inherent challenges. Examples of this are how some staff members would bring their used bottles for cooking oil for the inmates so that they could use them to store water. Some inmates explained how they had received a plate or a cup from a staff member's personal belongings when the prison could not provide for them. At other times, staff would use their personal phones at their own expense to make calls for inmates, yet at other times they would take payment for the same. A high-ranking officer spent his personal funds on growing fields of vegetables for the inmates.

This would at times contrast dramatically to the apparent neglect which could cost prisoners their health or even their lives.

Crawley in her work has documented prison officers to experience emotional hardening, distancing and distrust (Crawley in Liebling and Maruna 2005). An officer explained how the misery would sometimes get to him:

Yes, even though I project being positive, there are times, when you just wake up and say everyone wants a piece of me, and I am not giving anymore. And it is unfortunate (...) You can imagine working like an officer working inside there. There are flies all over there are people crowded everywhere, coughing, confused, all sorts of things, and a guy works in that environment (...) I think it is expecting a human being to take in more than he can.

Many staff members would also regularly explain how they had to be somewhat cynical or at least pay careful attention, because they felt prisoners would try to cheat them in various ways. In my interviews with staff I was particularly interested in their attitudes towards the prisoners. In general, even if they may caution against trusting, or speak of them as children, or express wariness of inmates, most would show empathy towards the prisoners' situation and they expressed a wish to do what they could to alleviate or improve the situation. A high-ranking HQ officer explains how different categories of staff members may have different approaches to the inmates, depending on the job they are assigned:

I must say that we preach a lot of rehabilitation (to our staff), but rehabilitation has an underlying philosophy and the underlying philosophy has the inherent capacity of each and every offender to be corrected. But of course, the predominant preoccupation depending on levels for instance, if you are talking about the lower level staff the predominant preoccupation is to prevent an escape. So, for him his approach to the way he understands a prisoner is that he is a guy that can put me in hot soup, because he can escape from me. And again, depending also on position there are guys whose job for instance if he is an offender management guy and his job is to be the positive guy. He thinks, ok I can work with this prisoner, I can help him to identify his true potential that is for those who really get to that level of needing help. (...) For those who are in a position of leadership I think their values are a little broader. They want to ensure that the basic support systems are available both to the officer and the inmate. So, their perception towards an inmate, I think is a little bit more administrative, but generally speaking the values of each and every officer will be shaped by the point at which he is.

However, much misery is part of the prison experience for both staff and inmates, the belief in prisoner reform or prisoner change seeps through the whole organisation. The interviews conducted showed immense support from all levels of staff for this 'reform/change paradigm'. A deputy officer in charge explains to me:

Informant: When these people are brought here as prisoners, they are brought here to learn that what they did was bad. It is for them to change to be a better person, and that is what it means. Prisons of long before prisoners were taken there to be punished, but these days prisoners are not brought here to be punished, but to be changed. They are brought here and expected to come out as a proper person. But when he goes out when he goes to join society he is easily accepted and that is what they are brought here for. Just to come here for some time to learn one or two things to learn that next time he goes outside he is not to repeat that ever again.

Interviewer: And what is your impression, does this happen, do people change?

Informant: People change, because we expose these people to a lot of things when they come here to prison. I think that yesterday you visited the workshop where they are doing carpentry, tailoring and other skills and we are pumping skills in them so that when one goes out he goes out with knowledge as a carpenter. So, that when he is out of here, he can go out and continue his life with the acquired skill. Even those who came in without knowing how to write there is a school and maybe you visited the place where they conduct classes from grade 1 to grade 12. GCE all those what we are trying to do on that one is to change them so that that thing that makes him steal or do those crimes is removed from them. So, that when he comes out he becomes a better citizen, yes.

One Officer in Charge explains of his role in relation to the inmates:

We have to love them like our children, we discipline them, we care for them. They are our children. I have to think for them. They must make no decision on their own. The system makes them closer to children.

Being seen as a child has implications, including loss of control over one's own life. Being seen and treated as children clearly shows the loss of status and lack of negotiating power. This deprivation of autonomy severely hampers the possibility of maintaining a self-image as an adult (Sykes 1958). Along with the widely used derogatory term for prisoner *kaili*, inmates face a particular form of stigma; infantilisation. Importantly, even if staff assert power over inmates in this way, it can also be understood as a way of showing care and concern for inmates' wellbeing. When staff expressed sentiments along the lines of 'loving them as our children', I feel confident that they meant to convey this genuine concern to me. I am less sure about the extent to which they were conscious of the serious implications of infantilising grown men.

Even if many prisoners and staff alike may be critical towards the possibility of prisoner reform under the extreme prison conditions, it remains a powerful discourse which envelopes prisoners and staff alike. In the following chapter, we shall explore the dynamics of the prisoner reform paradigm, and how some prisoners draw on it to survive imprisonment.

The prisoners interviewed seemed largely to agree that staff members were very different. At least, amongst long term prisoners, staff did not have a collective negative image. Instead, many inmates would explain how staff members were different. Some staff members were liked, respected, others feared, some despised – and sometimes a combination. Several inmates told stories of helpful staff, for instance staff who would seek them out to talk to them and encourage them, or staff who would be helpful in making phone calls to families. Staff members would also sometimes donate things like clothes, a plate or an empty bottle (in high demand). Even if staff may show kindness – important kindness – this does not take away the general negligence that characterises prisons, some of which is the direct responsibility of staff, some structural. The focus for the research was not staff, but inmates. But one thing I could not help observing was the time that staff members would spend on other things than their core function. Many would spend time listening to the radio, doing homework for various studies, or reading the paper for a long time. This was not the case for high ranking staff, but I would often find medium level staff doing entirely different things from what I would have expected them to do.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, my entrance – as an outsider, as a woman, as white-skinned - is likely to have affected the everyday running of business, and therefore it is probable that I have seen a more polished surface than the everyday experience. Prisoners and sometimes staff members would tell me so. Even so,

over time I experienced staff who were indeed very different in their attitudes towards the prisoners. I experienced staff members verbally abusing inmates, and I experienced what I perceived to be genuine care and concern for inmates' welfare.

Contrary to what one might expect after reading human rights reports (Zambia Human Rights Commission 2013, Human Rights Watch 2010) where torture and ill-treatment are well-documented and kindness is not, I have experienced or learnt of several situations where one could assume that punishments would be harsh, but where significant leniency was shown towards those who offended against prison regulations. One example is an inmate who – on several occasions – would hide in the clinic and masturbate (and sometimes even flash his genitals) when a woman (nurse or similar) was in the clinic. He was well known to be depressed and had tried to commit suicide on a couple of occasions. He had had (unpaid) jobs in the clinic, and was – after a few warnings – removed from duty in the clinic, but no further punishments were meted out. On other occasions, verbal abuse from some prisoners towards high level prison staff were explained by staff as '*it's just the environment. They get frustrated*', and often they were not punished or punished less severely than they could have been. It is my impression that tolerance would mainly be shown to those who in various ways were close to staff.

A staff member explained his role as deputy officer in charge:

To look after such a number of men, we need to sit down and use a lot of psychology. Just to make one understand his fellow prisoner, and also you need to understand the prisoner himself, and you say to yourself what type of prisoner am I talking about? How does this prisoner behave? When you have done that, you know, some you can just talk to and ask him not to do it again. Then there are those stubborn prisoners. So, you will look and say these type of prisoners how do I take him. So, you then sit and say this prisoner requires this, and when you do that, then he is calm. You don't have to use threats or become violent, you just have to study the prisoner, and say well this type of prisoner is like this. This other one, you handle him like this, and the other one the way he wants. That is what I am talking about, and you exercise a lot of patience, that is what I am saying.

An inmate explains:

I believe that they (staff) are the ones who are supposed to do all that (comfort, counsel). We see maybe they come in, and they are upset from home, maybe they quarrelled with their wives or something. They did not sleep well, they will come and release their anger on you, and can you imagine, if you as well did not get off from the right side of the bed. He starts to tell you bad things, like we are here especially to execute you, and you are already having a stressful day, you are feeling bad, how would you feel? So, that also drops the hope in you and breaks your heart completely to the ground, but there are times when you find some officers, who are different. Not all officers are like that. You may find sometimes he notices, calls you to come outside and see him. He may like you just like a person. The way you are, the way you conduct yourself, you often humble yourself, and because of that he will sit with you, have a chat, some even come and chat for two hours with you. He is just there the whole time with you.

From the analysis of the interviews and my observations from prisons, I would argue that the lack of staff at the higher levels, including social workers (even if there is typically only one in the larger prisons) and other staff with competence and interest in health and welfare of prisoners prevents a sufficiently systematic approach to prisoners' health, welfare and development. Many of lower ranking staff are – just as shown in

the above quote from the high-ranking officer - more concerned with preventing escapes and disorder than with prisoner reform or health related matters. The local appropriation of human rights and prisoner reform, as Martin shows in his work, is a process with local interpretations and appropriations (Martin 2013). The history of punishment (rather than rehabilitation) remains prevalent at all levels, and the practice of treating prisoners as 'animals', 'thieves' and in other ways not worthy of respect, is part of the picture.

As much as the prisoner reform paradigm is spreading and there is increasing focus on human rights, the results of disregard or negligence of prisoner pain and health are evident every day. My Ubumi ground staff have followed inmates to the hospital where their arms were handcuffed to the bed in extremely uncomfortable and harmful positions due to 'policy' to prevent escape, even when they were dying and unable to leave the bed anyway. I have met several men who had lost their lower legs because their blood supply had been cut off due to being chained too tightly for too long, or following infections due to the same. Health staff in the prisons are of varying quality and commitment, and some leave patients to die with glaring neglect, while others battle every day to secure the best possible health care. Some clinical officers would at times of crisis, typically diarrhoeal outbreaks, see a hundred patients in a day.

Corporal punishment and (non-)violence

According to high ranking staff, corporal punishment as a sentence has not been passed since 1998, and violence in prisons is therefore no longer sentenced by a judge. Beating with a sjambok (a very strong whip made from hippopotamus leather), a remnant from colonial times, could be ordered. One stroke would equal one month in prison. The cuts were painful, deep and disabling. This means that there is no sentencing of violence, nevertheless violence is a well-known phenomenon in prisons around the world (Sarkin 2008, Jefferson 2007).

Martin writes in his study of Ugandan prisons:

Corporal punishment in Uganda has a distinct colonial dimension. This might not be so clear in terms of how Ugandan parents beat their children, but it is significant in terms of the ways in which caning is stitched into state practices as both instrumental but scandalous, and as mutating but persisting. Caning is illegal, but also tolerated. It is violent, painful and administered by state officials in positions of power but it is adamantly distinguished from torture by prison staff. And the practice of caning is changing. The decline (or rise) in physical violence is an ever-present point of entry in efforts to understand and assess prison life.(...) Caning is discursively denied by the management, who take this opportunity to stress both their human rights commitment and their power to launch departmental retributions against their own staff. However, in the actual everyday prison management, caning is only mildly suppressed by the OCs. In cases of caning "I do not go deep", an OC said – unless prisoners complain. (Martin 2013, p 242)

Certainly, some level of violence exists in the Zambian prisons too. Zambian prison staff at all levels, however, will largely deny the existence of corporal punishment in the prisons today. The Human Rights Watch report from 2010 (Human Rights Watch 2010), well known in Zambia, described that staff order or sanction violence even if they do not themselves take part in it. In my work, however, prisoners rarely told me about violence by staff members. Inmates reported serious violence (torture) by police, but only in rare instances were prison officers reported to be violent. It is possible that they simply did not consider 'lighter' forms of violence worth mentioning (slapping, pushing etc.), and that this kind of violence exists. However, I did not find any evidence in the Zambian prisons of the 'reasonable caning' (described in Martin's PhD) or violence as part of a routine disciplinary practise, as Martin described for Ugandan prisons (Martin 2013). Rather, violence in

the Zambian prisons seems to be against official policy and practice but still occurs in arbitrary ways, dependent on the management of the prison and the individual staff members and on their internal dynamics.

One day, in the office of the Officer in Charge in one of the prisons studied, he showed me a baton, a thin polished wooden stick, maybe 60 cm long. I tried to conceal my emotions when he slapped the baton in his palm and told me how he would discipline prisoners – and in the end, he laughed out loud:

No, Annie, we don't beat them. But I have them, and I can show them to the prisoners, if I want to. But this we did in the old days.

Interestingly, he still had the baton in his office, and I was told that it was a precaution to be used in extreme cases of riots or other emergency situations. Other high ranking staff would also carry batons.

Some physical force or violence by high ranking inmates could be ordered by staff. Some special stage prisoners would describe to me how they sometimes had to use some level of physicality (restraining, pushing, slapping) to calm down inmates who were being disorderly in one way or another. A staff member informed me that sometimes cell captains would be punished by staff for beating other prisoners. As a general rule, it remains my impression that violence in the shape of beatings or any form of physical abuse is not used routinely, but that it does happen, and sometimes it is by order of staff. I should state that I am certain there are important differences between prisons in terms of staff violence. A staff member explains to me when I tell him of an inmate who told me about serious violence against an inmate with European descent ordered by staff (which the inmate, released at the time I interviewed him, had not dared report to the Officer in Charge or Deputy Officer in Charge):

Sorry about that report, dear. If it is true, then that is unfortunate. If at all, officers are reported and identified, I am sure the administration would take action against the erring officers, especially since he is a foreigner. It is the same standard in all prisons, but you know here in Africa levels of understanding isn't the same. Illiteracy and poverty are the worst enemies against civilization. Therefore, you find officers, who behave so barbaric against some inmates. Just to make them loyal to them or pay them. Be assured that that isn't part of admin or operations of the service. We uphold human rights and try to create a humane environment for inmates to rehabilitate them and create a sense of belonging to the society to motivate them embrace to reformation.

The formal sanctions available to staff in the Prisons Act include time in the penal block and adding extra time to a sentence (weeks up to a month, not years), and any problems can be recorded on the inmate's personal docket. In most prisons, the penal block is not used. In 2013, I highlighted to two high-ranking HQ officers that the penal block was still in use in Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison. They were surprised, but did nothing to stop the practise. In 2016, I communicated with another high-ranking HQ member who initially did not believe me when I reported the penal block was still in use at least up to 2015. He asked me to report it to the Commissioner General, as he was convinced that the Commissioner would be 'appalled' and would put an end to it. My impression is that there is some disconnect between HQ leadership and ideals which at least to some extent reflects the transition and modernisation of the service, and implementation in practice on the ground. It is also my impression that some Officers in Charge (directors of the individual prisons) are not always informed of abuse, and that some inmates fear repercussions from other staff members or inmates. In 2016, the penal block practise in Mukobeko was abandoned due to change in leadership.

Inmates can generally be released two thirds into their sentence for good behaviour. However, any issues on their docket may prevent (early) release. Even if violence may not be common, inmates must be submissive to staff, respect their position and follow orders, even unreasonable ones. They must take verbal abuse with little or no chance of retaliation. Prisoners will sometimes be granted access the Officer in Charge or other higher ranking officers for requests, administrative issues or in cases of conflict resolution between staff and inmates or between inmates themselves. Prisoners may be helped, but at the same time the staff have overwhelming power over their lives. In general I observed that most prisoners were very subservient in their attitudes towards especially higher ranking staff. Prisoners, if admitted into the office of the Officer in Charge, would sit on the floor (even if there were armchairs) and show every sign of inferiority.

The picture in terms of staff behaviour and attitudes are in other words varied and complex with inherent contradictions, dilemmas and differences. Zambia Prisons Service changed its name to Zambia Correctional Service in January 2016. This was the culmination of a long-term push over the past ten years by the Prisons Service towards a correctional paradigm of prisoner reform as well as a stronger adherence to human rights. Initially, it was not much more than a name change, but the UN and NGOs then came in to support and push for a consistent human rights approach. Currently, there are many activities aimed at reforming the prison officer education curriculum to include a more structured education with a much-increased focus on reform, reintegration, human rights and health. There are also strong efforts towards capacity building of existing staff and structures in Correctional Services, even if critics say the process lacks leadership and coordination.²⁹

Inter-dependency between staff and inmates

Prisoners are not only dependent on staff. Staff are highly dependent on prisoners too. Prisoners assist in running all everyday activities and keeping order in the prison. As previously mentioned, the prison could not be managed without the prisoners – both in terms of the prisoners organising activities, but also in terms of the general prison population accepting the power yielded over them. Often, prisoners who can demand attention – either by having some rank and respect or simply because they are loud and demanding in their approach – receive preferential treatment. An inmate explains:

Informant: (...) One more thing you need to know is the issue of the officers and the problem with these officers is that I am not violent. I am not violent, I don't bring in marijuana or use it. I don't use those tablets for the psychiatric patients. (But) when I come here to ask for help from the reception... Oh, Bwana I want help or maybe I would like to have a look at my bag, or maybe I left some money, and I would like to use it. The way they are going to handle me is in another way. Say when someone, who is violent and does not conduct himself respectfully. If he comes, they will give him attention very quickly and in a nice manner. He will not say anything to him, and that is the problem, which I find in here especially with the officers.

Interviewer: Is that to say that they favour some of the inmates?

Informant: I don't know maybe they are scared because those people are violent, and those people that are humble, they look at them like they do not matter.

²⁹ NGO and UN interviews, 2016

Another inmate explains why staff give preferential treatment to prisoners who are physically strong and aggressive:

Yes, because in case anything happens, they rely on their physical strength. Say when you have a riot or any sort of disorder the officers will depend on them to bring back order in a situation where it is lost.

There are not enough prison officers to keep the prison under control, so they must rely on other prisoners to bring order and control back in cases of disorder or similar. Often, staff also send Special Stages into the prison when there is aggression or violence between inmates or protests against prison conditions. However, it has to be added that protests are usually peaceful according to both prisoners and staff.

4.3.5 Forced intimacy

Sibley and van Hoven explain how space is an important determinant of the prison experience:

The design of the prison and the ways in which space is configured and allocated to inmates affects levels of privacy, the desire or need to avoid or associate with others, and relationships between prisoners and officers. (Sibley and van Hoven 2009, p 200)

Inmates' movements and ability to choose whom they wish to associate with are restricted. The physicality of overcrowding adds to the inflexible spaces and strict routines which produce a threat to privacy, integrity and makes one vulnerable to trickery, abuse and harassment (Sibley and van Hoven 2009). An inmate from the condemned section explains:

The most frustrating thing, which I may tell you, is this. While we are locked in our cell, we find that there is different attitudes. We are 5 of us in a cell³⁰, where it is meant for one person. A normal human being, you have to think with no one to interrupt you. You are focusing or rather let me say, in short you are meditating, and you do not want anyone to interrupt you, no radio or TV. Now you are in this shared space, and you find the one friend is singing, the other one has his radio on and then the other one is smoking, do you understand. You can turn away and start sweating. You see, you cannot stop him from what he is doing you understand? You see what I mean, and you cannot stop that person, because he is facing the same fate as you. You are not his captain, and so you cannot stop him from what he is doing, and so no one can tell someone what to do. So, you have to find a way for those people to understand you. You will say to your friend, my friend what you are doing right now is disturbing me, and he will say to you mind your own business. Sometimes, someone cannot sleep, but you are sleeping, and so as he goes past you he steps, where you are sleeping and like you know, as a normal human being, any movement, while you are sleeping you may want to wake up and check what is going on, and so you are disturbed. Sometimes you fail to sleep, you cannot think too well you end up with your thoughts stuck. You mind feels like it is stuck, and it is like I don't know how to explain it.

Even if one always must engage with others, this does not mean that one cannot feel lonely. In the following quote an inmate explains the tension and painfulness of never being alone and at the same time being lonely.

³⁰ In the condemned section, they do not have dormitory cells, but tiny one man cells of 4-5 square metres, which then holds five inmates.

Putting my relationships, thoughts, ideas and many other things into proper context has been a bit of a challenge. I am not denying that this prison is heavily congested, but even so I feel just as poorly off as a prisoner in solitary confinement. I yearn every day for company I can easily relate to - especially when I wake up in the morning. (Letter 2014)

A common theme in many of the prisoner narratives explored, was exactly this sense of never being alone yet being lonely. Many also described how they in their desperation aimed to create private time. Many inmates also describe reading books or listening to the radio to remove themselves from the present. In the following quote, an inmate explains in a letter how he tries to retreat or become invisible by trying to find a sense of peace in his own inner world, where he holds on to his past and sense of himself.

Sometimes I find myself roaming the prison grounds as if I were invisible, not that I would expect people not to take notice of me, but rather that I did not wish to be taken notice of and that I did not want to be taken notice of or to smell, to touch, to see and generally feel prison. Left alone I am able to disconnect like this for periods of two hours or so (...) I feel raped and soiled by the environment. Not just once but plenty times. I have not had the space to retreat from others like I used to on the family farm. I wouldn't meet another soul for hours. Anyway, at least then I had full control of the sort of people I admitted into my life. PRISON IS HELL. (Letter 2014)

4.3.6 Injustice and inmate-on-inmate violence

The majority of prisoners interviewed complained of the injustices and ineffectiveness of the justice system. The majority if not all prisoners in my study expressed a strong sense of powerlessness in relation to the authorities and society in general. Many of the injustices experienced stem less from imprisonment itself than from the justice system:

My life has an obstacle and I have never stolen, later on never been arrested, has never committed a crime of any sort under the sun. I was brought up by decent parents and went through Sunday school, faced temptations of all kinds, but had sound morals growing and completed my education. Today my life ends in prison for something I have not done, and I mostly suffer at the thought of my two children.

The prisoner in the above claims innocence, but whether guilty or not, prisoners generally experienced an inefficient and corrupt justice system. Jefferson documents how prisoners in Sierra Leone under similar prison conditions felt suicidal and worthless (Jefferson May/June 2009).

Inside prison walls, experiences of injustice take on a different form. Even if many staff members do try – with the (personal and prison) resources and professional competence available – to provide some sense of fairness inside prison in terms of trying to perform conflict resolution, counselling, and generally use punishment (isolation, reduced diet, adding time to sentence etc.) as a last resort in the prisons studied³¹, there is little doubt prisoners feel their rights are violated, as one inmate (notably a lawyer) claimed: *There are no human rights here whatsoever.*

Human rights are one thing, quite another is everyday conflict which would frustrate inmates immensely, which would be struggles over access to water, or access to clothes. For instance, being called to appear in court would bring about lengthy negotiations between inmates over whether they could borrow a suit or

³¹ Interviews with staff in Lusaka Central Prison and Mukobeko Maximum Prison

shoes to attend court. Not appearing poor or dirty was essential to them, convinced that looking poor would mean a dismissal of their pleas. As seen above, inmates would also regularly complain that staff would give preferential treatment to certain prisoners. This preferential treatment could be based on prisoners' status in the prison hierarchy, their access to resources, their education levels. A prisoner would describe how he had coached several officers, as they were writing their exams.

In the section under staff perspectives above, we have explored the extent to which staff make use of violence as punishment or as a means of control. As the inmate hierarchies play a pivotal role in ensuring discipline and control in the Zambian prisons, it is worth exploring how these play out. Generally speaking, inmates would not report routine violence by cell captains or special stages, even if violence would sometimes happen. A staff member also reported to me that occasionally they would punish cell captains for such violence.

A high-ranking inmate explained his own inability to control his temper, leading to 'slapping':

You know for us men it is not easy for me to cry, so you will find maybe sometimes that I will slap someone and only after doing that, that is when I will realise that oh, what I have done is wrong, and yes that is one way of taking it (stress) out.

The fact that he is high ranking makes it even more difficult for lower ranking inmates to retaliate. Even if inmates typically did not experience systematic beatings, violence was always an option. As cell captains and special stages have the power to make an inmate's life 'heaven or hell', the threat of force in one way or another would be omnipresent, and inmates would have to shape their conduct to avoid getting into trouble. Inmates would not describe beatings as punishments. Rather, punishments would take the form of being ordered to sleep in the *chitatataka*, which is the most crowded place in the cell, or being forced to clean the toilets without gloves or other protective materials.

Violence generally takes the form of eruptions of aggression in conflicts between inmates. Here, the condemned section stands out as having very high levels of aggression. Notably, the condemned section does not have the cell captain system, and therefore conflicts are much less regulated. Violence between inmates is not allowed, and will often be punished by staff, although to a much lesser extent in the condemned section.

4.3.7 Social networks in prison: kindness, friendships - and lack of trust

Social relationships between inmates are of course a major part of the experience of imprisonment. Prisoners form social relationships which help them through their sentence in one way or another. Yet forming friendships in prison is not an easy task:

(...) it is difficult in prison to develop trust and establish close friendships from scratch. Thus, imprisonment encourages prisoners to develop social ties while also limiting the forms they can take. Most prisoners consider the environment distorted, transient and inauthentic. It is hard to evaluate another prisoner's character when one knows little about his or her past behaviour; the prison offers limited options to observe someone's moral conduct and trustworthiness or gauge their future behaviour; and there may be more to lose than gain in opening up to other people. (Crewe and Bennet 2012, p 36)

Confiding in others is dangerous and holds the risk of betrayal (Sabo et al in Sabo et al 2001). Prisoners around the world, as well as in Zambian prisons, explain how trust is impossible in a prison setting. Not trusting anyone is in this way also part of 'doing your time' and 'being a man'. Like the English prison that Crewe

describes above, the prison Zambian environment is equally characterised by lack of trust between inmates (Crewe and Bennet 2012). Many prisoners interviewed expressed how forming friendships is impossible or at least very difficult in the paranoid prison environment where every inmate has to fight for his own survival, and may therefore be encouraged to take advantage of other's vulnerabilities, if they offer the potential of short term rewards.

Even so, the interviews showed that most prisoners do form social and mutually supportive networks which they call 'friendships', even if they are not to be understood as close friendships. It is common for inmates to form smaller groups where they for instance share food and eat together. They may also lend each other clothes or other things. These connections do not necessarily entail much emotional intimacy or trust in personal matters. The data shows that social connections between inmates are typically formed between those who are related, come from the same geographical area or tribe, and are sometimes based on social class. Having been so-called 'co-accused' in the same criminal case also often establishes a connection – if they did not betray on each other at the trial.

Despite the less than conducive prison climate, strong friendships do form for some. I quote a prisoner who explains how his friend supports him, and how this mutual support is manifest in the companionship of shared chores. Together, they help each other through the pains of imprisonment:

Informant: (...) he encourages me to say don't give up, and he generally will not allow me to give up.

Interviewer: So, you lift each other up between the two of you?

Informant: Yes, we normally get to share chores like cleaning around our area and washing the blankets and so on.

One of the inmates, Adam, whom I interviewed regularly over the three years of research was – in my impression - a thoughtful and gentle person. Adam felt exceedingly lonely in prison, and failed to form friendships. He had become a devout Christian during his time in prison, and wanted to show kindness and care for others. He worried about younger inmates when they entered prison, knowing that they risked becoming victims of sexual abuse. He also worried about others who were vulnerable in one way or another. Even so, his attempts to help were often denied:

Even if I try to help, genuine care can be misinterpreted. Intimacy and trust are very difficult in prison. You put yourself at risk, when you try to help.

Adam explained that if he approached for instance a young and vulnerable inmate, he would be accused of trying to *recruit* him for sexual favours by other inmates and the new inmate may then fear to establish any form of contact. On the occasions where he managed to establish a trusting relationship to the vulnerable inmate, this person may eventually enter into sexual relationships anyway to gain food and other materials. Adam did not have resources to support them with food.

When a prisoner is weak, kindness and friendships are often hard to come by.

In prison, it (kindness) is rare in prison. Here you have to fight for your own life. It is fight for your survival.

A seriously ill patient suffering from AIDS explained:

(In prison) everyone cares for himself. You're left out when you are weak. You have to be strong, even when you are sick.

The tendency of viewing kindness with suspicion is – for good reason - prevalent in the Zambian prisons. Prisoners describe kindness as having the potential to cause them to be hurt, and genuine kindness risks being mistaken for manipulation. Nevertheless, important stories of kindness, compassion and care for others emerged during the research. One ex-prisoner told me that *you find the best and the worst in prison*. The interview continued to explore ways in which prisoners would show kindness and care in situations where they themselves were highly vulnerable, and despite all odds would manage to show kindness and care for others. Phillips and Taylor define kindness as *the ability to bear the vulnerability of others, and therefore of oneself* (Phillips and Taylor 2010, p 6-7).

One inmate speaks of his own acts, which I would describe as kind and caring:

Informant: This fellow had HIV/AIDS, and I remember during his last days, he had a running stomach and had no one to take care of him, not even the friends. And so, you can imagine, he was failing to eat because of sores, and so I would get salt and then clean his tongue for him to have an appetite - without gloves, I tell you.

Anne: That close?

Christopher: Without gloves, I tell you. I would be getting his clothes on which he messed himself and I would be washing, and at the time his friends would have run away. So, I totally suspect that I don't know if I am safe may have caught it, but nothing was found in me and the friend passed on. By that time there were no drugs, and so he passed on. There are those moments, which I have been through in the night, and your friend is powerless, and he will tell you Chris I have messed up and you would take those beddings clean them up and change them. Then in the morning look for soap and wash him, and so when the family came they thanked me and whatever.

Anne: What drove you to help him?

Informant: Yes, you can imagine you are sharing a bed and then someone you were sharing everything together with especially the room and eventually he gets sick, and he has no one. The friends he came in with, the co-accused, have scampered and run away. I think that is the only way you can be able to help him because I know that there will come a moment also, I will need help somehow, because I am also a human being and so we should look in the future. There will be a time where you will be worse than the way my friend is actually and that is what actually made me want to help him and to do that.

Even if there was a self-interested element in his acts of kindness, because he hoped he may receive help from others in similar circumstances, this is arguably at a very abstract level. Many others would probably not have stayed on to help such a serious case of terminal illness, which would entail all sorts of risks to their own health. This inmate chose to do so and this, according to Phillips, would be a way to not only show compassion but also a way to recognise one's own vulnerability, which arguably holds some risk in an environment where you have to be strong. The kindness shown by this prisoner is arguably an example of our capacity for basic humanity in an inhumane place.

4.3.8 Stigma and social abandonment, social death and ontological insecurity

The prisoner becomes an 'other', an outcast, when placed in prison. Using Goffman's writings on stigma, where stigma is a 'significantly discrediting' attribute (Goffman 1963) and Honneth's concept of recognition (see Section 1.9), the reason imprisonment puts the individual's identity at risk of severe injuries is the lack of recognition, reflected in the eyes of general society where the stigma affects the incarcerated individual profoundly. The (relative) isolation of the individual and limited access to friends and relatives, who may be able to provide recognition in the shape of love and support, affects the incarcerated individual in a way that undermines or corrodes the sense of self. As Cohen and Taylor write:

Like most men, the inmate must search for his identity not simply within himself, but also in the picture of himself which he finds reflected in others. (Sykes 1958, p 72)

Prisoners risk the social death of banishment – not just from his community, but from all conventional society. Prisoners risk the breakdown of family ties, as the family is often under significant financial and social strain due to the absence of the imprisoned family member (Roberts 2004), but also due to stigma of prisoners and their families. Guenther writes about social death:

Social death is the effect of a (social) practice in which a person or group of people is excluded, dominated, or humiliated to the point of becoming dead to the rest of society. Although such people are physically alive, their lives no longer bear a social meaning; they no longer count as lives that matter. (Guenther 2013, p xx (introduction))

Parker and Aggleton argue:

Stigma plays a key role in producing and reproducing power and control. It causes some groups to be devalued and others to feel they are superior in some way. Ultimately, therefore, stigma is linked to the workings of social inequality. (Parker and Aggleton 2003, p 16)

Inside prison, stigma and social death are tangible. An AIDS patient spoke of health services in prisons, and his experience of not having a voice to speak puts adequately into evocative words how stigma and social death affects inmates:

Your freedom is cut, you can't have a voice to speak. I am a prisoner, why would they help me?

Prisoners are well aware that stigma not only affects them inside prison, but as much once they leave prison. This quote describes an inmate's worries about how stigma will affect him once he leaves prison:

The reason I would not want to go back to (village name) is because my name and reputation is tainted or ruined. It is as good as dead. Even if I was found with someone else's child or with a friend they will be told to avoid me because I am an ex-convict. That will be a hard life for me because everyone in this world needs a friend. Any person in this world needs a friend to talk to, share thoughts with and things like that.

Inmates on death row experience social death particularly intensely, although many prisoners experience the characteristics which Guenther describes, such as their lives not mattering anymore. Being alive while having received a death sentence carries with it a particular pain: In the below, it is worth noting how the informant says 'world, you kill me', which arguably shows how completely the inmate feels rejected. It is not just the state, or the prison, but the whole world, he feels rejected by:

Informant: I am tired, and Bwana officer kill me (...) and world, you kill me.

Interviewer: Tell me about the thing of being tired tell me a bit more about that?

Informant: Being tired is about the period you have spent, where you have come from, the suffering, you have endured, would you like for it to carry on? You wouldn't, you would say I prefer dying than suffering. You would say that I am tired, and I can no longer hold on to this suffering anymore. So, I am better off being dead than continue suffering.

Inmates' contact to the outside world is significantly diminished or even lost. The vast majority of inmates interviewed expressed the pain of losing their loved ones. Many marriages break down during the incarceration. Wives leave for various reasons, such as stigma, the need to find a provider, or due to the lengthy incarceration. Other family members may also abandon their imprisoned family member for a variety of reasons. Often the family is physically far away, and does not have the means for transport – and sometimes, not the motivation. According to the inmates, sometimes there is a wish to disassociate themselves from the incarcerated to punish him, or due to the general stigma of imprisonment. One prisoner explains the consequences of the family abandoning him entirely: *If I died today, no one will care.* Another inmate writes to me:

Immediately when the crime took place a dark cloud would fall on me. And the power of rejection was cast against me. Even the very close people who I thought would be there to comfort me casted their hands away from me. Truly, the rejection from the loved ones is more painful than imprisonment itself.

And of course, there is simply the longing for home.

You don't want people to think you are a sissy and you put on a face but this time it is really getting to me. I want to go home. You know as difficult as it is, I want to go home.

Even if many lose contact with their families, not every prisoner's experience is the same. Visits also give the inmates a much-needed sense of love, support and hope for the future:

(being visited) is a good feeling. You realize that even though I am in problems, I am encouraged by these people, and it shows you that they still need you. (it's like you) are able to rest from the problems.

One ex-prisoner says about his wife, who kept him going throughout his eight years in prison:

Imagine that woman, I have a lot of respect for that woman, because I have been with her. Imagine, I have been in prison for almost 8 years, and she managed to wait for me.

Not all prisoners are rejected or left alone by their families and loved ones, but relationships may change. Even if the inmate in the above quote had a loving wife, reuniting with her proved difficult. The inmate was changed by the experience of imprisonment, and the wife had struggled hard to support their children alone for eight years. Any married couple would suffer from the years apart, but this inmate left prison severely traumatized. Adding to the stress, due to stigma he was unable to provide for his family because he could not get a job. Many inmates whose wives had not left them were deeply appreciative of the love shown and vowed to be loving and caring husbands and fathers, once they left prison. It is, however, not only the prisoner or the wife who is changed or affected by imprisonment – it is also the social relationship between the inmate and his family. An inmate explains:

Remember I talked about being dissatisfied with my current circumstances? Part of that stems from the shame. Currently I never felt that as strongly as I do now first of being a prisoner, because people now don't even respond the way they used to my communication.

They don't respond the way they used to, and it is very difficult. It is like you have dug in you these claws, ok?

Here the inmate expresses how his family no longer responds to him the way they used to. His social role in the family has changed and he must struggle to retain the relationships under vastly changed circumstances, and over a long period of time. In this way, many inmates experience having difficulty in holding on to meaningful social ties.

4.3.9 Routine and the endlessness of time

In prison, time itself is a punishment. Inmates have been sentenced to *time* in prison, but the time is not their own, and it is not a resource like it was before and/or is in general society. Prisoners experience time as a major tool of control over their lives (Cohen and Taylor 1972, Wahadin 2006). This is of course true particularly for those serving long term sentences, life sentences and death sentences. Cohen and Taylor write:

The marking and passing of time are then major elements in long-term prisoners' lives. Time presents itself as a problem. It is no longer a resource to be used, but an object to be contemplated – an undifferentiated landscape which has to be mapped out and traversed. Conventional markers cannot be used and neither can one's journey be expedited by recourse to conventional methods. Nevertheless, the length of the journey continually occupies the mind, for only after it has been made, can life effectively be resumed. (Cohen and Taylor 1972, p 104)

One inmate describes how he experiences time: *Imprisonment is all about routine*. When the research team asked about a typical day, inmates would describe days that were similar or *'the same'*. Inmates would often look confused, if I asked about a typical day. When probed, they would describe days where everyday routines, such as brushing their teeth, doing exercise, going to church and other mundane activities, would pass the time. The issue at stake is how to make time pass as quickly as possible, both to make each day pass and prevent *'too much thinking'*, which according to many inmates would lead to depression. One inmate describes how he finds it hard to cope with the seeming endlessness of time:

I am not happy at all. I have suffered, and even when a new day comes, it is just the longest day ever.

Even if many prisoners aim to establish routines and avoid speculation, it is hard. An inmate writes:

If there is a commodity that I have in great abundance in here, it is time. I have literally spent any hours every single day reflecting on my life — my indigence, lack of social contact, and a future wife and children I probably will never have. (Letter 2013)

Because it is impossible to avoid idleness, many prisoners will often spend hours and days, weeks and months and years contemplating the future. Many are stuck in a place of prolonged *'not knowing'* their fate. This was particularly true for those who had been incarcerated for either long periods of time, or who had a longer sentence ahead of them, and particularly for those who had not yet been convicted.

I don't know my fate and don't know what will happen to my life. That is that, and only God knows, and that is my story.

Time becomes something to be managed, and prisoners go to great lengths to avoid the innate boredom that follows a prison sentence. Time in prison is boring, monotonous and inmates wish time to pass, yet so much of their time is spent waiting. Waiting to go to the toilet, waiting to go to court, waiting to be sentenced,

waiting for visits, waiting for food. Inmates try to use each other to get time to pass. They try to teach each other things, they provide business advice or spend great lengths of time talking about things, though not personal stories. As Wahadin writes: *Time in prison is something, which is lived through but not in the real sense lived* (Wahadin 2006, p 8).

Prisoners would describe cyclical movements between making plans and despairing, when such plans cannot be implemented. Time takes on a different form in prison where regular markers of time take on a different meaning. Time becomes unstructured and takes on a dimension of unreality (Cohen and Taylor 1972). Time also brings with it the risk of deterioration, and many inmates struggle hard against this by attempting to try to do something meaningful, as seen in the following chapter.

Individuals serving very long prison sentences live their lives along two very different trajectories. In one sense, they indeed have 'too much' time and the copious references to 'doing' time, 'marking' time and 'killing' time that underpin sociological prison research indicate the amorphous, monotonous, endless nature of temporality in prison (...). But while prison inmates must find ways passing significant amounts of unstructured time and of adapting to being caged (...) they must simultaneously cope with a sense of their lives being foreshortened (...) life sentence prisoners frequently feel a profound sense of time being stolen from them. (Jewkes 2005, p 372)

Those sentenced to death, and those in the general prison population who are sentenced to life in prison, experience the endlessness of time in a particularly painful way. In the quote below an inmate describes how there is no end to his sentence, and how he cannot have something to look forward to. He cannot afford to have dreams of 'next year'. He fears that the rejection by society may even reach into the afterlife.

In our section (condemned section), there we don't have maybe the luxury of maybe tomorrow or next year. Maybe after 5 years I will be done with my sentence - we don't have anything like that. What we have only is the grace of God and that is what we survive by. We live by faith and constant hope that one day if God says that my life ends here then so be it. Now the question comes in when my life ends here, am I going to be received, since the society has rejected me? Am I going to find peace, while I am dead or will it only be when Jesus comes will I find peace with him? That is the question each and every one asks.

4.3.10 Lack of control, loss of liberty, guilt and feeling useless – a threat to identity and masculinity

As shown in Chapter 3, the most obvious pain of imprisonment is the loss of liberty. The prisoner lives in a highly restricted space where his freedom of movement is confined to a specific place he did not choose himself. He is cut off from family and friends in an *involuntary seclusion of the outlaw* (Sykes 1958, p 65). A juvenile of just 18 explains how basic and yet how profound is the experience of not being able to freely move about:

Then also the freedom to do things. When we were outside we did things as we pleased. When you missed your sister, you go see her. You get to do all sorts of things or see a friend, you go see her. You get to do all sorts of things or see a friend when you want to, you can do it. Now, in here, even if I want to see a relative of mine, how do I see them? We are far from everyone, and they can't afford it, do you know how much it is to come here from my place? They spend about 40,000 – 50,000 kwacha (USD 8), they can't afford it.

When a person is incarcerated in a Zambian prison, he loses his former status in society. An old man for instance, who would normally be regarded with respect because of his age in Zambian society, is now a 'child'

to staff. As shown earlier, many staff members speak of prisoners as their children. Not only is the inmate restricted from the outside world and inside the institution, but he is also restricted in terms of making meaningful decisions about his future:

It (the lack of control) is really beginning to get to me in ways, you cannot image. And the worst of it all is the feeling of obscurity and insignificance. My powers fail me.

As previously shown, the narrative of change and reform is very powerful in the Zambian prisons. Inmates would describe how they had been encouraged to change their lives on several levels – in terms of personality, in terms of education and religion, in terms of living in a morally sound way – whilst at the same time not experiencing any real control for realising these plans. The pain of losing control is profound:

My life seems to have lost control, and it is ruined, I don't know, where I am going, all I know is where I came from. I don't know, whether I will get help one way or another.

Losing control also means that it is very difficult to fulfil the role of father and provider. Many explain the guilt of not being able to be there for their families:

I am 39 now, and I entered prison when I was 29 and now look at all these years I have spent doing nothing in prison. If my punishment say was only for two years, that is also good enough. Rather than me being tormented everyday tortured by my thoughts, and when I leave this place, I will be useless. And there is nothing I can do for my children. What hurts me the most is when I think about my children, they don't know me. I have not contributed much to their lives. All I can say is I have children, and all they know is we have a father, whom they don't know. ... That hurts me a lot.

This overwhelming guilt following imprisonment and the consequences for inmates' sense of masculine identity as provider for their families, has hardly been touched upon in prison research. Yet the interviews conducted show a clear pattern of men experiencing intense emotional pain and a strong sense of guilt for not being able to contribute to the upkeep of their families. Typical idealized traits of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005) is being in control; over women, but also over own lives. Therefore, through losing liberty and control over his life, imprisonment constitutes a threat to masculine identity. The cultural expectation of men as providers in general society is also under threat – due to poor material conditions and lack of income-earning opportunities – and undermines the self-image of many men as breadwinners and heads of households. In prison, this challenge is arguably magnified, because prisoners are robbed of almost any opportunity to earn and income and contribute (Silberschmidt in Barret et al 2010).

In Chapter 7, we shall delve deeper into this important aspect of imprisonment.

4.3.11 Christianity

In asserting the role of faith in prisons, Sullivan argues:

Punishment is usually understood as the core function of the modern state; it is what distinguishes the modern state from premodern societies, where punishment was a private prerogative for settling scores or obtaining compensation. The power of the state might be understood to be concentrated in the prisoner's situation and in the shadow the prisoner casts across the landscape. But prisons are, perhaps ironically, places where one cannot escape the state's relationship to religion. The modern state is also perhaps at its most religious when it exerts total control over its citizens and attempts to coercively remake them into new human beings. Religious and political authority and sovereignty in prison are

homologous with each other in several ways: state/church, judge/god, crime/sin, prisoner/penitent. Even when religious language is absent, the sacred haunts the prison and all who work there. (...) Religion in prisons and prison religion are distinctive products of the modern state and its ongoing interest in producing certain kinds of subjects. (Sullivan 2009, p 6)

Christianity plays an important part in the everyday structuring of prison activities, and most prisoners must relate to Christianity in one way or another through their stay in prison. In 1991 Zambia was deemed a 'Christian Nation' by the then newly appointed President Chiluba, and Christianity is at the forefront of political debate as well as in all strata of community living (Phiri 2003). For many prisoners, Christianity and faith take on a new presence and meaning in prison, and several of the informants claimed to be 'born again'. Some inmates become preachers, preaching the word of God in the cells or during the day to anyone interested. Much like studies in the Western context have documented, the born-again experience radically changed perceptions of self, attitudes and thoughts (Kerley and Copes 2008, Maruna et al 2006).

Zambia Correctional Service allows a heavy presence of prison chaplains. Commissioner General Percy Chato writes on his facebook wall on 25th October 2016:

The church lays its mission to the Inmates on the Christi mission that 'I was in Prison and you came to visit me' Mathew 25:36. The late Pope John Paul II called for prisons reforms and humane treatment for those in prison when he stated that, "Prison methods which focus only on repressive measures are inadequate since the real goal of correctional institutions should be authentic rehabilitation of inmates. He also contended that a prisoner's dignity as a person must be recognized, as a subject of right and duties. In every civil nation there must be shared concern for preserving the inalienable rights of every human being.

As we embrace Chaplains in penal reform process, it is important to note that Religion comes in as a handy tool for rehabilitation of even the most hardcore offenders. The chaplain revitalizes this desire by word and example as a mentor, preacher and spiritual counselor.

Many religious affiliations enter prisons to promote Christianity to support prisoners to cope with imprisonment and to facilitate a spiritual journey towards changing their lives. There is prayer in the cells at night, there are sermons in the chapel every Sunday and various religious denominations enter prison every day. There are a few Muslims and other religious affiliations, but the clear majority are Christian. The research team only met one Muslim (from another country) and one Muslim who had converted to Christianity and now believed that Islam promoted war and conflict. Every interview conducted for this dissertation touched upon faith in one way or another.

A chaplain interviewed for this research explains how Christianity can be a way to move forward in life:

I think it's a policy of the prison service. And also part of it, you know, the word of God is what is the most important. For instance, God does not punish us anyhow. (...) When you make a mistake, you have to admit that you made a mistake and I just have to confess and then God will forgive you. That is what God does. That is what we are supposed to do as human beings. When one offends you, you talk to that person and then you forgive. You bury the past and continue going forward.

An inmate explains how Christianity permeates the prison experience, and how he draws on Christian messages to hold on to a sense of hope for a better life:

Interviewer: Please tell me more about hope?

Inmate: Well, hope in prison actually is being instilled in us through the word of God and so my coming in here I received Jesus as my personal Saviour and many people have died this is what I have seen. But God has always been saving me and since I came I have never been in the hospital before. So I thought let me start serving God and I have studied theology in there and started teaching others and have taught many others. One of my friends Mr. Malembeka³², you know him he is one of my disciples he was here in prison but has since been released and many others including these chaplains. Many were taught by me and now you can see and this hope that I am talking about is from the Lord. Especially when you know you have spent a lot of time in a place like this and you wonder what else is there for me to do outside because you have seen that life is short now. So you give your life to the Lord Jesus Christ so that when he comes you are in the Lord Jesus Christ's presence.

Faith is also a part of the prison hierarchy which the prisoners must navigate. Different denominations may be able to award different benefits. Sometimes, staff members belonging to a certain church will allow only prisoners of a certain observation to be part of educational activities, or they may award these prisoners other forms of special treatment. It can be difficult to know when and which denomination will be able to afford privileges or which staff member may or may not exercise this power (not least because staff are replaced at regular intervals). Therefore, it can be difficult to know which church to choose if one wishes access to the benefits. Therefore, inmates are regularly disgruntled when they are overlooked or excluded from certain activities. Even so, this shows that Christianity is not only a part of the inmate change and reform paradigm, but also a currency which has the potential to yield benefits.

In the following chapter, we shall explore how prisoners may use Christianity to cope with imprisonment.

4.3.12 Mental health and psychological vulnerability

As illustrated above, imprisonment has both psychological and social consequences for the individual.³³ His or her sense of self and identity is under threat. More specifically, the experience of imprisonment translates into depression, anxiety and stress, not to mention loneliness, trauma, and powerlessness, loss of control, injustice, ontological insecurity, violence and uncertainty. It is well documented that some prisoners have symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress, which include high levels of anxiety, sleep problems, depression and problems with maintaining social relationships. The situation of mental health in prisons is a double bind. Persons with mental disorders are overrepresented in crime statistics and are thus vulnerable to imprisonment, which alone contributes to the alarming levels of mental health problems in prison. At the same time, prisoners are particularly vulnerable in terms of risk of developing mental illness due to imprisonment itself. Incarceration is extremely stressful and generally detrimental not only psychologically, but also physically and socially (Liebling 2005, Liebling and Maruna (Ed) 2005, Sykes 1958, Cohen and Taylor 1972, Goomay and Dickinson 2015).

I suffer mental torture in here (...) So, that's that. When you are going through that and someone says something bad to you, you start to think that maybe you are cursed, that is why you having to go through something like this.

³² Ex-prisoner and director of PRISCCA (NGO)

³³ And economic consequences, but this is not explored here. In short, the inmate loses the opportunity for earning a real income inside prison, and is usually cut off from the opportunity of working outside prison.

Worldwide, the estimated prevalence rates on mental health problems in prisons vary, but estimates range from 50% - 90% of prison populations around the world (Birmingham 2003). A study conducted in Lusaka Central Prison and published in 2011 documented a prevalence of mental health issues, with 63% of prisoners having at least one mental disorder (Nseluke and Siziya 2011). Another study on the same issue referring to Mukobeko Maximum Prison showed a prevalence of 29 % (Nseluke and Siziya 2016). The authors could not explain the difference between the two prisons, but suggested that the high number of remand prisoners who do not yet know their fate contribute to the higher rates of psychological vulnerability in Lusaka. A recently published study from Ghana showed a prevalence of 70% of 'psychiatric stress' amongst prisoners with little education. In the general population, 18-34% were deemed to have moderate to severe psychiatric stress (Ibrahim et al. 2015). The two Zambia studies did not explore the relation between education and mental illness. Suicides are an expression of mental health problems, and in Western prisons, suicides are common (Liebling 2004, Liebling and Maruna 2005, Liebling in Crewe and Bennet 2012). They are less so in the Zambian prisons, seemingly for the simple reason that ending one's life is far more difficult in an overcrowded environment where one is never alone.

In Zambia, certain categories of mentally ill (schizophrenics etc.) prisoners (named HEP – His Excellency's Pleasure) will be sent to a mental health hospital, but many remain in prison for a long time, awaiting transfer. There is only one visiting psychiatrist in Zambia, who visits the prisons twice a year. In conversations with him, he called attention to the problem that in Zambia it is only the court who can sentence a person to psychiatric hospitalisation, but as the courts generally do not have psychiatric counsel, it becomes very arbitrary as to whether mentally ill patients receive the help they need. Even if the visiting psychiatrist identifies a person needing specialised attention, he cannot refer him to the hospital. This means that there a good number of prisoners, who rightly should be hospitalised, but are not.

Depression, stress and anxiety is common and often not considered a mental health issue needing professional attention. Even if I am not a psychiatrist, it was not difficult to observe signs of depression³⁴ in many of the interviews conducted. A number of inmates were or had been suicidal. Some had attempted suicide and others were contemplating suicide, or had lost any sense of purpose in life. Prisoners believed depression (the word they used even if they did not have the diagnostic tools) was a major killer.

It seemed that prisoners would treat those suffering from depression resulting in loss of appetite by assigning them humiliating and unhygienic tasks such as cleaning the toilets without gloves. According to inmates, this would with time result in the depressed starting to eat again in order to avoid cleaning the toilets. Kindness would rarely be shown to such inmates – perhaps because men have to be 'strong' and 'do their time', and perhaps because showing kindness brings with it the risk of recognising one's own vulnerability (Phillips and Taylor 2010).

A prisoner explains to me that many do develop mental health problems after they come to prison:

Informant: Some are mentally ill, yeah and that is when I look at someone using my own judgment sometimes you may find that someone is not himself. He may act in strange ways today you will talk to him and tomorrow he says something else. He says to you, when you want to talk to him 'get out' and you see there are some people like that in here.

³⁴ Slow and low tone of voice, anxiety/tension, aggression, tiredness, inability to feel 'normal' positive feelings, even if events happen that ought to make you for example happy. Loss of appetite, low self confidence and self-esteem, feeling miserable and persistently sad are also symptoms of depression (Boehringer Ingelheim 2008).

Interviewer: Some people have been here for a long time would you say that they are mentally ill when they come in already or they develop it?

Informant: They develop it because they stay too long in this place and just like me. You may think that maybe I am 100% normal, but the situation I am passing through there is something that goes wrong mentally. You see we stay for a long time in a small place. We are there too long in this small place, but what you need to understand, is that the human mind is fast to explore. You come from somewhere and the next thing you are here. Your mind needs a way for it to cope, and now to keep you in this room for the next couple of years just in this very room. Do you think that you can call yourself a 100% ok?

To my knowledge there are no quantitative estimates of the extent to which the mental problems are imported from the outside, or to what the extent inmates develop them on the inside. However, a fair assumption would be that a combination is very possible, and there is no doubt that the stressful experience of imprisonment will create emotional insecurity and amplify any existing vulnerability (Crewe and Bennet 2012).

Another thing I observed in my interactions with inmates was a heightened emotional sensitivity and psychological instability. An example would be one inmate, who in fact had maintained bonds to his family who visited regularly. But the inmate nevertheless suffered from paranoid thoughts of his family and friends not wanting to be with him after all – a typical feature in several of the interviews conducted for this research. He explains:

I thought everyone would abandon me. I don't know how I felt this. You get that feeling when you are in prison like no one wants to have anything to do with you, like members of your family. You are exceedingly insecure, when you are in here. I tell you that you don't know where you stand with a lot of people.

This emotional vulnerability was evident everywhere. In my field notes, I find the following:

Inmates seem to be in constant need of a kind of affirmation from me. When I remember faces and names, the inmates appear overjoyed. Many are exceedingly anxious that I will forget them, or what they ask me to do. If I telephone loved ones for them, the fear evident on their faces of what their loved ones might say or not say, moves me. Their desperation and their anxiousness of wanting to trust me, and at the same time fearing that I will let them down, is not always easy to handle.

Once, on the last day before departing from Zambia, I was not able to see an inmate because I was too pressured for time. He was deeply hurt, and exceedingly angry with my research coordinator inside prison for not making sure he got to speak to me. He wrote me a long letter of pain and disappointment, despite the fact that I had left unexpected money and a greeting for him. I had not at all imagined he would be this attached to me.

A staff member also explained: *Prisoners are very vulnerable. These small, small things become very, very big.* Research from the UK has shown that prisoners express that the harshest thing about imprisonment was managing one's own psychological distress. Putting up a front, hiding emotions, appearing strong to survive requires an immense amount of emotional energy in an already very strained situation. This pressure may result in suffering, aggression, depression and/or violence (Liebling and Maruna 2005). Several inmates spoke of paranoia and I experienced many inmates being deeply suspicious of other inmates' interactions with the research team – most concerns were unfounded, but the fear of back stabbing and lies/unwanted truths

being leaked to us was highly prevalent. One inmate explained how he feels the imminent risk of going mad and his attempts to control it:

...something changes (...) the situation we are passing through inside there. You sometimes can run mad. You start to imagine things, but you have to try and keep the focus.

Another feature of mental health in prisons is personality disorders, specifically psychopathy which is now called dissocial disorder. Even so, many studies still use the term psychopathy, and I will therefore use both here. Dissocial mental disorder is a strong predictor for violent behaviour, and dissocial personalities often inhibit certain psychological and social traits such as failure to accept responsibility for own actions, low levels of empathy, poor behavioural controls, lack of remorse or guilt, pathological lying or manipulative behaviour (Pajerla S and Felthous A 2007, Coid et al 2009). Even if there are big differences between the studies, it is documented that the prevalence of dissocial personality disorders, psychopathy, is significantly higher in prisons compared to general society.

The so-called household prevalence rate for psychopathy is for instance around 1% in the U.K., whereas studies from various Western prisons show a prevalence rate of 3-73% (Coid et al 2009). The figures differ enormously between for instance the UK and the US, with the US producing far higher prevalence rates. This, however, is not sufficient to conclude that psychopathy is more prevalent in the US because the diagnostic measurement tools differ and yield very different results (Decety et al 2013, Cooke in Millon et al (ed) 1998). A study from South Africa found a prevalence of anti-social personality disorders (amongst these, psychopathy) of 42% (Loots and Louw 2011). There is no data on Zambian prisons, and I would caution against assuming that South African and Zambian prisons would have the same prevalence of psychopathic individuals.

Nevertheless, persons with this particular form of mental disorder are part of the prison environment in Zambian prisons, and since psychopathy is a predictor of violence and manipulation, this behaviour may continue inside prison walls. This of course has implications for levels of stress and fear amongst the general prison population.

4.4 IMPRISONMENT AS A THREAT TO IDENTITY

As Section 1.9 outlines the details of how I draw upon Axel Honneth's concept of recognition and identity, I shall be careful about repeating too much of that here. In short, identity and self is not a static thing. A sense of self and identity is dependent on the social backing of significant others and of general society. In Honneth's language, identity formation and maintenance is dependent of recognition in terms of love, rights and respect, as well as shared solidarity – a recognition of one's humanity and value as an individual contributing to society.

Specifically, when imprisoned, inmates are met with a challenging social and physical environment where they do not only have to fight for psychological and social survival, but also very basic physical survival. The most basic form of human recognition is arguably being able to live without fighting for physical survival. Another struggle for survival, namely a social and psychological struggle, begins on the day they enter prison, where they are placed under stress which can often be described as trauma – and then a state of chronic crisis, which persists throughout the sentence, and possibly afterwards as well, although this is outside of the scope of this dissertation.

When imprisoned, inmates live in a state of chronic crisis, and they experience profound threats and injuries to identity, as seen in this chapter. They are threatened on several levels. They can no longer interact with

family and loved ones as they could before, they are physically restricted by imprisonment, they have lost several rights, including civil rights (they cannot vote for instance) and social rights, and they have lost many markers of their previous identity as workers, or providers, or just as persons with 'freedom' of movement.

In Honneth's terminology disrespect in the form of threats to the ability to freely dispose over one's body will affect prisoners deeply. Several inmates explained how the forced physical intimacy does not translate into other forms of intimacy such as friendships: Several inmates would confide how they felt *lonely in the most crowded of places*. It is more than 'just' painful discomfort or health issues. Imprisonment is likely to damage prisoners socially, physically and psychologically, because their identity, their fundamental self-confidence, is under threat. The abuse, neglect and the inability to maintain physical integrity and control over one's life entails a risk of inmates feeling deprived of a stable reality.

Prisoners are targets of contradictory demands. They are being told to change and reform, whether they indeed see the need or not. They are told to change their personalities and life trajectories in an environment where their sense of self is under threat and they have very little influence over their own lives. They are asked on one hand to take responsibility for their wrongdoings (assuming by default that they have been fairly sentenced), to reform and to change, whilst on the other hand they are treated as children, experiencing profound ontological insecurity, overwhelming lack of control and little to no social support from loved ones. The prisoners in this study expressed how imprisonment would have severe consequences for how they could perceive themselves as men performing the expected masculine roles, and for the sense of meaning and purpose in their lives.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The chapter presented the experiences of imprisonment in a Zambian prison. Every prisoner's experience is unique and his own, yet common themes did occur in the analysis of the interviews.

This chapter has explored inmates' experience of crisis and trauma in connection with arrest and entry into police cells and later prison cells. Harsh hierarchies of punishment, lack of food and basic necessities, lack of justice, lack of access to heterosexual relationships and major health issues can result in severe stress, depression and anxiety – and possibly other mental disorders, such as for instance paranoia. It has touched upon how conditions of ill-health, forced intimacy, injustice and lack of recognition, (lack of) social networks, stigma and social abandonment, Christianity, ontological insecurity together with routine, the endlessness of time, guilt and the loss of liberty may affect the individual prisoner's sense of masculinity and identity. Imprisonment is harmful physically, socially and psychologically, even if there are rays of light in terms of kindness and forming friendships despite the less than conducive environment.

The prisoners in this study expressed how the social and physical violence of incarceration would have severe consequences for how they could perceive themselves as men performing the expected masculine roles, and for the sense of meaning and purpose in their lives. When translated to Honneth's terms, what is at stake is disrespect in the three spheres of love, law and solidarity, which again constitutes threats to the identity of prisoners. A key finding is that prisoners experience a sense of ongoing, chronic crisis in which they must continuously manage their psychological and social stress whilst struggling for basic physical survival.

Prison is a place of chronic crisis, defined by deprivation, social abandonment, and dehumanisation, and it is a place of contradictions and dilemmas. In the following chapter, we shall explore how prisoners attempt to employ various coping strategies to deal with stressors of imprisonment.

5 SURVIVING PRISONS: STRATEGIES OF ATTEMPTED COPING

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter is concerned with understanding the survival strategies employed by individuals in Zambian prisons in order to survive. Imprisonment typically constitutes an acute trauma upon entry into prison, and even if the prisoners learn ways to (attempt to) survive imprisonment, the pain persists throughout the course of imprisonment. The prison environment poses a constant stressor, so we can hardly speak of successful coping in the sense of finding a new equilibrium after the initial trauma and subsequent psychological crisis of entering prison. Rather, I would propose the trauma and the struggle to survive persists, and repeats itself in new forms, in particular for long term prisoners, who are faced with surviving prison over long periods of time.

I was able to identify several ways in which the inmates in this study struggled to survive imprisonment. Honneth's 'struggle for recognition' in combination with Henrik Vigh's concept of 'chronicity of crisis' offer an analytical lens through which to understand how prisoners employ different strategies to cope with the injuries to their identity for psychological, social and physical survival. As they are placed in the destructive prison environment, and by virtue of that to a large extent are cut off from conventional society, all the categories of strategies will cover largely compensatory struggles. Yet they draw on differing values – some draw on society's conventional values of for instance religion or education, other struggles could be labelled as anti-social.

I identified five main categories of ways inmates would respond to imprisonment imposed by the chronicity of crisis. This chapter is structured around these categories. The first is the category of 'not coping at all', where the inmate gives up in response to the lack of recognition. The second category is morally grounded organised struggles of resistance in groups. The third is individual struggles for recognition, where I identified three sub categories: a) constructing a (new) pro-social identity; b) holding on to pro-social identity from before prison; and c) a combination of the two, where masculinity is drawn upon as a specific coping strategy. The fourth category is compensatory alternative struggles for recognition, which may stigmatise and alienate inmates further from conventional society's moral conduct and perceptions. And finally, the fifth category, which entail strategies which do not have a specific link to recognition, but remain important survival strategies. Here we see d) instrumentalism and e) stress management strategies. Finally, we shall briefly look into the importance of social support from the outside, which is relevant for all the categories.

As we shall see in the following, some categories take up more space than others. To a large extent, this reflects the importance of the individual category and the data available for the respective category. When I for instance write at length about constructing a prosocial identity through becoming a better person, this reflects how this was an important and common strategy to many inmates. When I write less about the morally grounded struggles of resistance in groups, this reflects the fact that this was a not very common strategy.

5.2 SURVIVING PRISON: RESPONSES TO CHRONIC CRISIS

One important factor to consider when analysing trauma, crisis and coping, is that most theory on these themes has been developed in the West and with a strong reliance on a biomedical model. Consequently, we risk missing important culture-specific psychological and social responses, if we are not aware of the risk (and perhaps even if we are aware, we may still be blinded by some level of ethnocentricity). Therefore we risk making general and universalistic assumptions about human beings' responses to chronic crisis and trauma (Matsumoto 2008, Scheper-Hughes 2008).

As we have seen in Chapter 4, we can speak of a situation of chronic crisis in the prisons, but we cannot speak of the trauma of imprisonment really ending, even if prisoners, in particular those with long-term sentences, may find themselves in different phases of the crisis continuum without being able to reach a stage of being past the crisis. According to Gilliland and James – like many Western scholars – crisis is typically time limited, but the traumatic crisis may entail an emotional rollercoaster for long periods of time:

However, what occurs during the immediate aftermath of the crisis event determines whether or not the crisis will become a disease reservoir that will be transformed into a chronic and long-term state. Although the original crisis event may be submerged below awareness and the individual may believe the problem has been resolved, appearance of new stressors may bring the individual to the crisis state again. This emotional rollercoaster may occur frequently and for extended periods of time, ranging from months to years. (Gilliland and James 1997, p 5-6)

They continue, writing of how a trans-crisis is different from a ‘normal’ crisis, lumping together maladaptions or defective coping mechanisms with responses to long-term distress:

The key differentiating element of a transcisis state is that whether it is due to trauma, personality traits, substance abuse, psychosis or chronic environmental stressors, it is residual and recurrent and always present to some degree. Although individuals in transcisis state are generally capable of functioning at some minimal level, they are always at risk; and any single, small, added stressor may tip the balance and send them into crisis. (Gilliland and James 1997, p 6-7)

Crisis can be or become chronic, depending on personality traits, the psychological composition (history of trauma, personal history, personal beliefs etc.) of the individual at the time of the trauma, the kind of trauma induced and the social and physical environment surrounding the individual (Gilliland and James 1997, Bowes 2015, Cullberg 2007). Even if traumatic crisis is painful and harmful and holds the risk of becoming chronic in one way or another, it is also an opportunity for re-evaluating one’s life and priorities and even to grow as a human being in terms of the individual feeling stronger than before upon successful coping, or in terms of the individual becoming more compassionate and showing higher levels of solidarity towards others (Cullberg 2007, Gilliland and James 1997, Hyldegård Larsen 1990). Even if I would describe the crisis of imprisonment as chronic for many inmates, the point by Gilliland and James of new stressors, which however small they may seem to the outsider can trigger a new surge of emotional instability, is a valid point in connection with imprisonment, as are the points of individuality as determinants of how the crisis is dealt with.

Prisoners will encounter new problems during their sentence, and regardless of how long they are in prison, they will be targets of ‘attacks’ to their already vulnerable situation of chronic crisis. Such ‘attacks’ may be the loss or fear of losing of a loved one, intense worries about children and/or wife on the outside, or concerns for the future. It may also be a prison afflicted by conflicts with fellow inmates, staff and so forth. Some emotions may be manageable for some time, only to resurface painfully later. Prisoners would express how they would experience symptoms of crisis in the shape of anxiety, stress and depression, which would then change to a temporary sense of being able to manage the pain, and then the process would start again. The emotional struggle to manage distress can be described as intensely fragile.

Chronic stress is associated not only with the experience of psychological stress in the shape over feeling overwhelmed and anxious, but prolonged stress has also been shown to lead to depression, memory loss and other effects on the brain’s functioning. Not only may the brain be damaged, but immune, metabolic and cardiovascular systems may be adversely affected (Mah et al 2016, Baum 1990). In this way, the link

between acceptance and death expressed by prisoners described on the following pages may hold some truth. Some prisoners may suffer from PTSD. Javidi and and Yadollahie define PTSD as follows:

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), PTSD is an anxiety disorder. In the International Classification of Diseases, Injuries, and Causes of Death (ICD-10, 1992), it is classified as a neurotic stress-related and somatoform disorder. PTSD may develop if a person encounters an unexpected extreme traumatic stressor. Important traumatic events which usually cause PTSD include war, violent personal assault (e.g, sexual assault, and physical attack), being taken hostage or kidnapped, confinement as a prisoner of war, torture, terrorist attack, or severe car accidents. (Javidi et al 2012, p 1)

Even if the quote above only mentions PTSD in political prisoners, Murphy and others have documented it amongst other kinds of prisoners (Murphy 2004). In fact, some studies report significantly higher rates of PTSD in prisoners than the general population (Goff et al 2007). The PTSD diagnosis is used across the world by psychologists and psychiatrists. Scheper-Hughes nevertheless offers a critique of the dominant Western model of psychological trauma, more specifically of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. She draws attention to Western psychology as portraying a paradigm of human frailty:

The PTSD model is based on a conception of human nature and human life as fundamentally vulnerable, frail, and humans endowed with few and faulty defence mechanisms. (Scheper-Hughes 2008, p 37)

Sheper-Hughes is critical of the PTSD and Western psychology of trauma and wishes to draw attention to the many and inventive ways in which people cope with conditions of chronic crisis, trauma and vulnerability that instead brings out features of strength and resilience in the face of adversity. She argues that *'feelings of vulnerability and woundedness are dangerous for individuals, for nations and for the world at large'* (Scheper-Hughes 2008, p 37). And she proposes examples from South America, Africa and Asia to document how human beings are capable surviving with their *wits and wit intact* by ascribing meaning to vulnerability and trauma, by being 'stoic' in the face of chronic crisis or by drawing upon humour to survive (Scheper-Hughes 2008). She argues:

The PTSD model underestimates the human capacity not only to survive, but to thrive, during and following states of emergency, extreme adversity, and everyday as well as extraordinary violence. The constructions of humans as resilient and hardy, or fragile, passive and easily overwhelmed by events should not be viewed as an either/or opposition. Human nature is both resilient and frail. There are limits to human adaptiveness (...) as hungry, marginalised, oppressed and exploited people everywhere. But the medical-social-science-psychiatric pendulum has swung in recent years toward a model of human vulnerability and human frailty to the exclusion of the awesome ability of people – adults and children – to withstand, survive and live with horrible events. (Scheper-Hughes 2008, p 42)

This does not mean that there are not pervasive features and traits across cultures in responses to trauma and crisis. The way an individual will cope with the challenges posed is highly dependent on the kind of trauma inflicted, the individual's life story and current stage of the life trajectory, as well as the individual's social networks and family situation – and culture (Cullberg 1975, Rocheleau 2015). Even so, options for agency to cope with the challenges are limited. Vigh argues that we cannot assume a wide range of choices to respond, but rather writes of *possibilities* to act. The very limited options to act is an important point in connection with prisoners, because their possibilities are so restricted. At the same time, in my material I find, precisely as Scheper-Hughes suggests, both intense frailty and awesome ability to survive with wits and

wit intact in the face extreme odds (Scheper-Hughes 2008). In fact, almost every time I enter prison, I am amazed to see how many prisoners can joke, laugh or reflect upon life in a situation that is in many ways absurd. As one inmate says: *I am caged. My captors have kept me here against my will for 13 years.* Still, we could have hour long talks about life and love. Human ability for resilience and survival is indeed remarkable.

Kleinman and Kleinman note:

There is no single way to suffer; there is no timeless or spaceless universal shape to suffering. There are communities in which suffering is devalued and others in which it is endowed with the utmost significance. The meanings and modes of the experience of suffering have been shown by historians and anthropologists alike to be greatly diverse. Individuals do not suffer in the same way, any more than they live, talk about what is at stake, or respond to serious problems in the same ways. Pain is perceived and expressed differently, even in the same community. Extreme forms of suffering - survival from the Nazi death camps or the Cambodian catastrophe - are not the same as the "ordinary" experiences of poverty and illness. (Kleinman and Kleinman 1996, p. 2)

Suffering is described by Arthur Kleinman as a social experience that connects the moral, the political and the medical, including health and social policy. Not only culture, ethnicity and gender matter as to how human beings cope with adversity, but also spirituality, social and economic factors play an important role. Elsass and others argue for an understanding of local 'broken social worlds' which shape people's lives (Anderman 2002, Elsass 2001) Then, of course, individuality matters, including personal resilience and history of trauma (Kleinman and Kleinman 1996, Anderman 2002).

Cohen stresses the importance of seeing prisoners not just as a group, but as persons with *distinctive backgrounds and ideas* (Cohen and Taylor 1972, p 147). He warns against treating inmates *as a group who could be understood almost entirely in terms of their common experiences as members of an institution* (Cohen and Taylor 1972, p 147). He warns against the assumption of the pre-institutional self having less importance than the new institutional identity imposed: *In everyday evaluations of extreme situations we recognize very clearly that the same conditions will mean different things to different men and will therefore produce very different reactions* (Cohen and Taylor 1972, p 147-48). Like Gilland and James he goes on to stress the importance of individual biography, attitudes to life, family relationships, and he further argues that it is very hard to predict how individual inmates react to the extreme situation of being imprisoned. Goldenberg and Hollander-Goldfein point to '*protective factors – particularly "easy" engaging temperament, optimism, self-efficacy, intelligence, secure attachment, planning ability, and social support*' (Goldenberg and Hollander-Goldfein 2012, p 24) as important factors for the individual's ability to cope.

Research suggests that coping with imprisonment is difficult. Coping can be defined as '*constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person*' (Lazarus and Folkman 1984, p 141). Having alluded to the obvious pains of imprisonment and the challenges of being controlled, individuality removed etc., the life stories collected document that inmates do not lose their individuality, but they have to position and perhaps even reinvent themselves in the prison hierarchy. As Cohen and Taylor write: *He has to be given a life – a prison life – and somehow he must learn to live it* (Cohen and Taylor 1972, p 43). Human beings will try to make sense of the social life marked by risk, uncertainty and insecurity through reflection over their lives to gain some element of control (Vigh 2008, Beckman 2000).

Some inmates are simply not able to cope – in either positive, neutral or negative ways (Rocheleau 2015). The emotional pain can be so overwhelming that the individual's sense of self and identity is affected, and

that functioning normally is impossible. This would be the case for those who develop serious mental disturbances and for those who commit suicide (Liebling and Maruna 2005). Yet, sometimes surprisingly, many do survive extreme obstacles (Tertsakian 2008, Tertsakian 2014) even if not unscathed or undamaged (Liebling and Maruna 2005). An inmate explains:

I have to rediscover myself, or reinvent myself because of all the vulnerability that comes with being incarcerated. You see, being a prisoner and being at the mercy physically and emotionally of other people... you know, I would love to have my life back. I would love to establish a bit of control in my life where I would make my decisions.

The chronic crisis is a process with ups and down. The inmates in my study often went through an intense struggle to manage the ongoing crisis. Upon entry into prison they would feel particularly in crisis, as shown in the previous chapter, where the first days of imprisonment would for most be perceived as deeply traumatic. When the initial shock has passed, many inmates actively seek to find a solution to their problems:

It was not easy to accept (coming into prison) but I came to accept, because I found people living, and so I had to follow that saying that goes 'when in Rome do as the Romans do'. So as a man I knew why I was brought here, and I found people what do these people do? ... How do they survive? For me I cannot make it, and so I have to study now how those people are ... So, then I started interacting ... and slowly, I started gaining momentum and understanding of how these people are surviving.

According to Honneth, negative experiences or feelings of shame, indignation, guilt and anger following disrespect (i.e. lack of recognition) in any or all of the three spheres of recognition can form the foundation for a struggle for recognition. Importantly, negative experiences of shame and anger merely *can* form the foundation for a struggle, but not necessarily *will* do so. There are experiences of violations which do not translate into struggles for recognition, or translate into compensatory struggles. If a struggle is to take place, individuals must see their personal injuries and consequent feelings of shame as a result of public or structural injustices. The struggle for recognition is therefore morally grounded based on the feeling of injustice. In practice, this means social groups of various characteristics struggle to achieve recognition in society (Honneth 1995).

Honneth does not focus specifically on the consequences of breakdown of identity and the link to the struggle for recognition. However, and importantly in this context, according to Honneth, if recognition is not obtainable in a dominant culture in a given community/society, compensatory subcultures or acts of resistance may develop amongst the socially marginalized, as a negative reaction to the exclusion mechanisms of the dominant society (Willig 2007). The compensatory struggles will often rest on antisocial, extremist or *perverse forms of social communities, which create surrogate experiences of community, which will give individual subjects self-confidence and self-esteem.* (author's translation) (Willig 2007, p 110).

We shall now proceed to the analysis of the five categories I identified in my work.

5.2.1 Category One: Not coping at all

Much in line with many studies from Europe, some inmates do not cope at all, and they may even fail to see why they should (Liebling 1992, Jewkes 2005). Jewkes speaks of the indeterminate life sentence below, but I would argue that this be true for many Zambian inmates who fear that imprisonment may well lead to death regardless of the length of sentence.

The indeterminate life sentence may thus be experienced as a kind of bereavement for oneself; the loss involving lost worlds, lost futures and lost identities. When an interruption

to the life course occurs, expectations are put on hold, anticipated life course transitions are experientially altered (...) The self may not be changed, but lost. (Jewkes 2005, p 370-371)

This speaks directly to Honneth's argument of the injuries to or destruction of identity following disrespect and lack of recognition in the three spheres. The threats to physical integrity, the lack of justice and respect as well as the impossibility for some to ascribe significance or social value to themselves, means that the self indeed is lost – and in Honneth's terms this means severe injuries or even break down or destruction of identity.

Inmates express that acceptance of one's incarcerated status is key to survive – which is well in line with the proposition of crisis theory, where much weight is placed on acceptance as a foundation for moving forward and coping with traumatic crisis. For many the seemingly and for some the very real never-ending incarceration may result in a feeling of lack of agency. Prisoners explain that if one cannot accept the situation, the future will be seen to collapse, resulting in depression.

If the self is lost, it is arguably difficult to process chronic crisis or any crisis. Gilliland and James argue:

In the realm of crisis, not to choose is a choice, and this choice usually turns out to be negative and destructive. Choosing to do something at least contains the seeds of growth and allows the person the chance to set goals and formulate a plan to overcome the dilemma (Gilliland and James 1997, p 5)

One may argue that for some prisoners, accepting incarceration is not possible because the subjective experience of crisis is highly dependent on personality traits, personal history, relationships and the social environment. This will very specifically, according to prisoners, affect one's health and ability to survive. A disintegration of the individual occurs, where regress (and not progress) results in a sense of falling apart or an erosion of identity. Depression is – according to many prisoners – a way to physically die, because you lose appetite and the will to live: *If you don't accept your situation, you die*. Of course, not all prisoners will necessarily physically die due to lack of acceptance, but there are certainly inmates who just barely hold on to life, or who suffer immensely. An inmate puts his pain into words in this way:

How I feel sometimes, is that death is better than living. I come to that conclusion and think I am better off ending it all. Sometimes I feel like I am on fire, and there is like no one to put it off. I am crying, and no one can hear me, and the fire is burning. I am crying, and no one can hear me. I can sometimes think, but my plans will not work, so at that point I think dying is better because when you die everything ends there (...) Do you understand I am tired, and that is a fact, and I am tired? I (have) even reached the extent of thinking, that I would rather die (...) So I don't know where I am heading, and why I am here on earth anymore.

Findings from holocaust victims suggest that

"the will to live" seems to be a key component of survival. Those who did not have such a will to live, who were in such a state of emotional numbing and denial that they could barely put one foot in front of the other (the so-called musselmen), were the ones who succumbed and died. (Goldenberg and Hollander-Goldfein 2012, p 19)

I have seen several inmates who lost the will to live. I see them regularly in connection with my work for Ubumi, where we try to nurse them and other seriously ill patients back to life:

I enter the sick cell to see the patients and speak to them. I am there to learn about how they perceive the ongoing projects, and to hear their suggestions. I spot one elderly man, who is

huddled up in a corner, partially covered with a blanket. His small frame is delicate and thin, his skin papery. I go over to him, and I try to speak to him, gently and carefully, because he seems not quite present. His stiff body doesn't move. He does not utter a word, even when another prisoner translates. He just stares at me, his eyes dark and swimming, somehow uncomprehending and so full of pain. One of the Ubumi caregivers tell me he is clinically depressed. Reluctantly, I move away, having confirmed that he is part of our programme, so at least we are trying to help him. I am a little shaken. I usually easily establish rapport with patients, but this old man cannot connect or does not want to connect. (field notes)

Even if prisoners speak of 'accepting' the situation to survive, it is not in a way that entails an acceptance of being in prison forever. Twice a year, on Independence Day and on Africa Freedom Day, the President will pardon a number of inmates. It may be inmates who are deemed terminally ill, or who are released due to good behaviour or some other reason, which is difficult to know. Getting out on a pardon seemed to me a bit like winning the lottery. Perhaps because imprisonment is so painful, staff and inmates would regularly promote and nurture sometimes completely unrealistic expectations of early release by presidential pardon. In effect, many inmates would circulate between 'happy' hopefulness and then to deep despair, when they were once again disappointed. I have encountered several prisoners who would express how they firmly believed that now it was their turn or chance. Most prisoners spend enormous amounts of energy to hold on to a sense of hope – and in this way, a sense of a meaningful future. This struggle for hope would add onto the ongoing emotional rollercoaster of coping with the chronicity of crisis.

5.2.2 Category Two: Morally grounded struggles for recognition

As documented in the previous chapter many inmates suffer severe injuries to their sense of self during imprisonment. Many prisoners interviewed recognised fully the social injustices following imprisonment, particularly in connection with the physical environment in terms of food, overcrowding and hygiene. It is in the context of lack of recognition and the threats to identity that Honneth's concept of the *struggle* for recognition becomes important, as all individuals will always strive to obtain recognition. Honneth argues that social struggles are not always and only about material interests, but that there is also a connection between a sense of moral violation and struggles for recognition. The struggle for recognition is therefore more than the material struggle for resources, which is fundamentally about self-preservation, but struggles for recognition is very much about obtaining or retaining a sense of integrity (Honneth 1995).

As Goffman argues, prisoners tend to adapt to the circumstances and restrictions of imprisonment, rather than resist actively. Yet evidence of the so-called morally grounded struggles for recognition does occur. An inmate explains:

Even if we are prisoners, we are also human beings who need to be treated well and with respect.

Another inmate expresses it in this way:

To my perspective, respect is more important to any human being in life, because if someone doesn't give you respect (...) it doesn't make sense.

Liebling writes of important values of 'respect', 'staff-prisoner relationships', 'humanity', 'fairness', 'staff professionalism', 'organisation and consistency', 'policing and security', 'personal development' and 'well-

*being', which reflect aspects of prison life that vary significantly, and that matter most to prisoners.*³⁵ Liebling's research very much support my findings of what matters to prisoners in the Zambian prisons. Humanity, respect and fairness are very much at stake when for example prisoners choose to resist the conditions imposed on them.

On a few occasions, inmates in the condemned section or in the general population of Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison would resist actively in order to obtain better conditions. Here we see how the motivation for entering into a struggle is violations at the group level, which moves into a struggle based on collective will. An example would be the condemned section, which over the years had become congested to an extreme extent. In 2013, the prisoners in the condemned section decided on a sit-down strike where they refused to enter their cells at night. They demanded to be either executed (no prisoners have been executed since the late 1990's) or that the condemned section was de-congested:

All of us from the death row decided we were now tired, and the president is not doing anything ... So, we said, enough is enough, we have refused to go in (to the cells) today, until our situation is addressed. Let the president come. We want him to execute us ... it is better we are executed and get a chance to rest from this suffering. ... Probably, we thought he would have mercy on us.

The goal was instrumental – they would fight for improved conditions, but it was also an attempt to achieve recognition of their rights, and using Honneth we can identify that their struggle also had a morally motivated element:

As a group we are tired, because in the condemned section there are some people in there that have been in here for a long time. We have seen 3 different regimes of president that have found and left us in here. (...) We are tired and we are upset. It is too much for us going on in this place, all because of a lack of justice.

It was a risky demonstration against prison regulations, but they wanted justice in the shape of improved conditions – or alternatively at least some of them claimed they would rather be executed. Their plea was in fact taken seriously, and various initiatives were taken to decongest. However, the section filled up quickly again and two years later, the overcrowding was at an even higher level. Following a spectacular escape by three condemned prisoners later in the same year, there was a harsh crackdown on the death row inmates, also because some tried to take a staff member hostage. The perception in Zambia Correctional Service is that the prisoners took advantage of the benefits awarded to them, and for a long while the situation in the section became worse than ever. The inmates were now unable to fend successfully for their rights, and they were punished to the same degree, whether they were leaders, followers or in a sense by-standers unable to refuse the demands of stronger prisoners.

Since this crackdown and until the time of writing (2016), the situation has been calm and the inmates quiet, even following the pardoning of life sentences or lesser sentences for all inmates in the condemned section

³⁵ Alison Liebling, Presentation at the 19th Council of Europe Conference of the Directors of Prison and Probation Services: Prison quality, moral performance and outcomes. Helsinki, 17-18 June 2014

in 2015.³⁶ Even if inmates do at times successfully struggle for their rights, the suppressive prison environment entails a fragile liaison between submission and advocacy for rights. According to Honneth, morally motivated struggles require a sense of security (Honneth 1995), and this would explain why there are so few struggles. With the demonstration, the inmates felt they had nothing to lose and in this way discarded the necessity of safety. Yet after the harsh crackdown they learnt that they essentially had very little safety, and I propose that this is one of the important reasons why the situation has been quiet.

Another way in which we can spot group attempts to create a sense of recognition of rights is the way in which inmates create their own parallel justice systems. This cannot be considered as a struggle against the system, and therefore a struggle for recognition in general society, but can still be considered a struggle for rights in a semi-collective way. In each cell, there are the cell captains who, as described in Chapter 4, have important functions in terms of management and discipline. In fact, far from all disputes are taken to staff. Instead, there are inmates appointed as 'policemen', 'lawyers' and a 'judges' in each cell, and inspired by court room proceedings they act out trials with the aim of securing a sense of justice and fairness. According to Honneth, if individuals are to be able to maintain a sense of integrity and full identity, they are to be treated equally under the law, where each person is treated with respect. Arguably, even if prisoners' own system is faulty, it remains functional, and prisoners did generally support it. Here we see morally grounded struggles for rights, respect and in this sense recognition.

5.2.3 Category Three: Individual struggles for recognition

The individual struggles are different in the way that it is only one person struggling to retain or achieve a sense of his or her positive identity. Inmates could try to resist stigma and obtain recognition through a strategy to show the authorities that they had changed and had become better men.

A) Constructing a pro-social identity inside prison: Becoming a better person and the link to Christianity

As shown in Chapter 4, the presence of Christian preachers in the shape of inmates or from outside churches or Faith Based Organizations is highly visible. Christianity permeates much of the prison routines and Christianity is also a major part of the prisoner reform agenda perpetuated by the prison system. Individual struggles for recognition differ from the morally grounded struggles for recognition because according to Honneth's theory, these struggles are only possible to achieve in groups fighting for their rights. In search of a sense of hope and guidance, many prisoners turn to Christianity. Bulling writes:

Many of the studies of human response to crisis neglect the role religion can play in the coping process. Coping is a process which occurs at a time of stress and involves a search for significance. People will use whatever tools they have to cope with situations and religion is often a more available tool. (Bulling 2008, p 27)

To counter the sense of isolation, prisoners refer to the Bible: 'You shall never walk alone – God is with you every step of the way'. A prison chaplain explains how he uses Christianity to encourage prisoners.

I think some of them have accepted the way things are. You know, prison is not the end of the world. We always tell them prison is not the end of the world. You are just passing by. One day you are coming out. You are not going to die in prison. You know, we always encourage them. You know, prisoners need, they need encouragement. They need to be

³⁶ Then, in 2015, the new president Lungu commuted all condemned prisoners' sentences to life in prison with the exception of those who had appealed their sentence. This was – according to civil society observers - part of a larger political discussion on abolition of the death penalty, and not directly linked to the plea of the condemned inmates.

assured that something is going to happen. We pray with them, they should focus their attention to God who knows everything, including the future of every human being.

The inmates listen to the chaplains' messages. An inmate explains how he drew on Christianity to cope with the loss of his wife:

Informant: It was painful, very painful. ... Even when I heard the message, that, no, my wife has got married again, it could affect my, my mind... but, ah, due to the word of God I could comfort myself.

Interviewer: What is it about that word of God that could comfort you?

Informant: Oh, like what Jeremiah says ... 'I will hold you by my hand, and show you where to go, I'll never leave you'. It really encourages me a lot, because I could ... realize that He was the only witness at the time of the offence, and God himself and his spirit is the only one who has followed me on the inside here in prison.

Not only do prisoners find comfort and relief in God, but believing in God assures them that there is a purpose to their lives and that things happen for a reason. For many religion is a source of relief and hope.

(The bible is) spiritual food, the bible is what is helping me the most to endure. Had it not been this I think suicide was going to be an option. Most of the time when I feel low or out, I run to the bible go through the readings Psalms these are the books that encourage me the most. They give me strength to carry on. ... I have the one I like most to read is Psalms 23. It gives me a lot of inspiration it says 'Even if I walk through the valley of the dark, I shall fear no evil'.

Inmates do not only draw on the Bible as a source of comfort, but also as a source of change. Some prisoners believe that prison teaches a life lesson:

For me I have gotten to a point where I tell myself that I thank God for bringing me to prison because I have learnt. Not that I am happy with what happened and how I ended up in prison but I am thankful because I have passed through the school of life and I tell you once you survive this school of life then you will be a better person out there. There is one thing I can tell you what did not make sense to me outside has begun to make sense for me in here. The situations that I have contained here I would not have possibly managed to contain out there, there is a growth in self-control because of the stringent measures I have had to put for me to survive. That has made me a better person and so in all what I would say is that we could never expect a better life in prison. Why? Because it is a school of life.

To avoid depression and perhaps death (physically, socially or psychologically), inmates search for meaning. Goldenberg and Hollander-Goldfein labels the same as a feature of resilience in individuals' post-prolonged trauma. There can even be an element of self-deception and denial in the 'positive illusions', which is arguably what the inmate in the above draws upon. Ascribing meaning to suffering *helps make intolerable situations more tolerable* (Goldenberg and Hollander-Goldfein 2012, p 22). Even so, the coping process may indeed have transformational effects, such as self-knowledge, personal growth and skill acquisition (Goldenberg and Hollander-Goldfein 2012).

Certainly, not all prisoners would view imprisonment in such positive terms, but Christianity nevertheless plays a central role in the prison experience and in terms of coping with incarceration. Bulling writes:

Crisis can occur at different stages of severity and if one assumes that spiritual elements are central to other aspects of life, then it can be assumed that many crisis are in part spiritual crisis. Crisis in life are generally pivotal periods and destabilize the common ways of dealing with problems and call for new solutions. Stressful times in life require the individual to choose between different paths which lead in different directions. Religion or spirituality often provides guidance about the route the individual should take. (Bulling 2008, p 2)

Adam is an example of a prisoner who looks to God to find strength to cope and clearly draws on religion to construct a new identity and to survive prison. Adam writes to me in a letter:

Each day I struggle, emotional battle, to conquer all my pains and sorrows, building on them a new being. (Letter 2011) He continues in a later interview: I want to be seen as a better person than others. You have to build character. You have to be real, face up to the situation.

I followed Adam's development over 2½ years, but when I met him he had already been in the maximum security prison for more than ten years. Adam does not want to be at the mercy of the strong, be it officers and powerful inmates. Instead he tells me that he tries to as much as possible to keep to himself and avoid relationships to troublemakers. For him faith would support his goal of avoiding negative influences and staying out of trouble.

You have to have courage. I look for identity in God. God has to be seen in me. God gives me strength. He cannot forsake me. I have to endure, persevere and be there for other people. Life is not fair, but I will not succumb. I have to be obedient to the word of God. I mustn't think about 'why are things like this? Or I want to live a normal life', No, I must not feel, but have faith in God. Maybe with time, there will be appreciation, if you try hard enough.

When I met Adam a year later, he had lost weight, and behind his quiet smile, there was profound sadness. Even if he tried to hold on to his convictions, the deep loneliness and the pain of social abandonment was evident. Yet, another two years down the line he was still skinny, but he was still holding on to his reflections on life and love, and told me he used the harsh lessons of imprisonment to grow as a human being:

Prison is only about how you look at it. I ask myself two questions: What is love and what is life? You see, people see love as a feeling, but it's more than a feeling. Love yourself, yes, but it matters more if it is expressed to other people, especially the weak and vulnerable. Love is giving the best of you. You can understand yourself by showing others love. Then love grows. Love best grows in pain, and the level of love is tested through pain. Through love, you see what others don't see. Ubumi's³⁷ work is a way to see. Then the question of what is life. I ask what do you want to achieve? It is complex. You have to find the purpose of your life, but essentially life itself is living for others.

Again, as Scheper-Hughes identifies in her studies, people in chronic crisis find strength in ascribing meaning to it. Many inmates spend much time on reflecting on life and the purpose of it. Like Adam in the above, many speak at great length of love, family and the purpose of their lives. Another inmate reflects on how prison changed his perspective of life:

I think to be a happy person is to understand that what is not important is not your (own) life, but what your life does to others. I had gone in the wrong directions, actually even this problem (being

³⁷ This inmate was for a while involved with the NGO Ubumi's work for the seriously ill

in prison) I would have not been in this problem, if I hadn't got close to what was happening for personal benefits. In short, yes people go to school, people go to universities but this (prison) is the best university. I don't think that there is any university that offers a degree in humility, self-retrospection and goal setting for self-actualization.

Christianity in prison serves many purposes but prisoners often refer to Christianity as a motivation for performing kind acts and for becoming a better person. Some inmates would actively aim to make a difference for others. One of the ways to do so is to engage in voluntary work inside prisons. A very clear example of inmates making a difference for others would be the Ubumi project, where inmate volunteers take care of the seriously ill by performing nursing services, washing, cleaning and cooking.³⁸ This is risky work, as the volunteer inmates live under the same unhygienic and unhealthy circumstances as the patients. When asked about their involvement, they would state that it was a way to atone for their former sins, or just because they wanted to serve God and their fellow human beings. For others who were recovered patients, it was a way to pay back the kindness and care shown to them when they had been ill. The volunteers hoped they would be rewarded by God later in life. This can also be interpreted as a quest for recognition and meaningfulness in a place that imposes a sense of meaninglessness of one's own life.

One of the inmate caregivers explains: *I work this job with one heart because it is voluntary job through my heart to help my fellow prisoners. This is my duty (...)*. The inmate speaks here of *helping* others and putting his *heart* in the work voluntarily and for no direct benefit. I would argue that this is an act of kindness where vulnerabilities of others are recognized and met with concern and help. Several inmates quoted parts of Matthew from the Bible:

The Sheep and the Goats

(...)

*Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. **For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.**'(Author's own emphasis)*

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'³⁹

The inmates in this project perform these acts of kindness hoping also that they may be blessed by helping others, or that others may help them if they end up in a similar situation. I would argue that even if there could be a self-interested element of hoping someone may assist them if they become vulnerable, the kindness shown in extreme situations indicate much more than self-interest. An inmate explained in an interview how he nursed a fellow inmate until his death. This patient was very ill, and he was unable to clean himself or eat by himself. When the inmate interviewed for this research fed, washed and cleaned the patient

³⁸ <http://www.ubumi.dk/adults>

³⁹ The Bible, International Version, Matthew 25: 31-40, <http://biblehub.com/context/matthew/25-34.htm>

and his soiled clothes and blankets, there were real risks of catching disease. I asked what motivated him to help, considering his own vulnerability and his own struggle for survival in the prison:

You know human beings are born with compassion. Human beings, even if we're enemies, if I see you deteriorating, I will feel compassion and compelled to help you.

This inmate argues that human beings are fundamentally compassionate to others – much in line with Phillips and Taylor's argument of kindness being fundamental to human nature. The stories of kindness underline human beings' capacity for kindness and care for others even in the most desperate of circumstances, and somehow speaks of the hope for meaning and purpose to our lives:

(Kindness is) not a temptation to sacrifice ourselves, but to include ourselves with others. Not a temptation to renounce or ignore the aggressive parts of ourselves, but to see kindness as being in solidarity with human need and with the very paradoxical sense of powerlessness and power that human need induces. (Phillips and Taylor 2010, p 117)

As we have already seen, inmates' identity will often be questioned in the prison environment, and faith becomes a way to construct a (new) sense of self. Kerley and Copes argue:

Religious converts routinely construct "a pro-social identity" that can account for why their prior actions are not reflections of their true selves. (Kerley and Copes 2008, p 2)

Importantly, Christianity also serves a purpose for prisoners who wish to show they have changed and become better human beings, and in this way, obtain social recognition. Many prisoners hope for a presidential pardon, and showing themselves as devout Christians can be a way to obtain the necessary recognition to be released. Through faith they can show how they are living according to the word of the Bible, and therefore they can show they have gained a different moral status in opposition to the label of criminal and morally deviant. Several prisoners explained how they would now stay free of crime because they were now living according to the word of God. In this way, both on the inside and on the outside of prison, faith plays a major role in the struggle for identity. I experienced what Shadd Maruna described, especially when I interacted with the so-called born-again:

Interviewees displayed an exaggerated sense of control over the future and an inflated almost missionary sense of purpose in life. They recast their criminal past not as the shameful failings that they are but instead as the necessary prelude to some newfound calling (...) I describe this process of wilful cognitive distortion as "making good". To make good is to find reason and purpose in the bleakest of life histories. (Maruna 2001, p 9-10)

Prisoners would sometimes describe a strategy of being a so-called 'good boy'. A good boy stays out of trouble, tries to be good and shows complete submissiveness. This seemed to be very difficult at times, and several interviewees expressed how the lack of trust from prison staff was a difficult burden to bear. They were trying hard to be 'good', but expressed how they felt all prisoners were treated the same regardless of the crime committed, or their good behaviour, and that staff were verbally abusive. It is worth taking note of the term a 'good boy'. The term 'boy' indicates an infantilising of the inmates. Being a 'good boy' is used by/for adult men, which is interesting. The inmate calls himself 'well behaved', which is also something adults would typically say of children. Additionally, they would refer to the widely prevalent discourse of prisoner reform which has a strong focus on 'change' and 'reform'.

I will try my best to show them I am well behaved. This is for them to see that I have reformed.

The inmate must cope with conflicting demands of a prison institution where inmates through the discourse of reform and change (for the better) are asked to take on responsibility for their lives – but at the same time are largely hindered in doing so by the regimented and highly restrictive prison environment (Jewkes in Crewe and Bennet 2012). One experience from my fieldwork in January 2011 illustrates the earlier mentioned lack of trust and the consequences in terms of infantilisation: I was interviewing a long term prisoner, who calls himself ‘a good boy’, in a room alone. The interview was going well, and my interviewee was clearly enjoying being interviewed. Suddenly a prison officer barges in and loudly scolds my informant. The informant gets up, and with his body language shows complete submission. He does not argue with the officer in spite of numerous insults. He leaves, wanting to stay out of trouble. The officer tells me that he knows *what prisoners are like, and they cannot be left alone with a woman*. I objected by saying I felt completely safe, and that he need not worry about me.

In the end, I managed to convince the staff member to contact the officer in charge, and the interview was then allowed to continue. The next 15 minutes of the interview was spent talking about how the lack of trust was traumatising for the informant, because he tried so hard to be ‘a good boy’, who can be trusted. He felt that he was treated in a way that betrayed his real identity. Achieving recognition as a man with inherent dignity and social rights becomes difficult, even if this may be this inmate’s best option of achieving and maintaining a sense of identity. Again, borrowing from Vigh’s work on chronic crisis, the inmate has only *limited possibilities* to act.

B) Holding onto pre-prison pro-social identity – acts of resistance

Many of the inmates interviewed were struggling to keep a sense of dignity: One inmate also explains to me that there is a ‘*struggle for identity*’ in prison. The struggle is about obtaining recognition of different roles. Prisoners who have or develop certain skills can gain recognition as teachers, librarians, cooks or other ‘professional’ identities. Having strong family ties and access to food and other materials from the outside also ‘buys’ you respect or recognition in the prison environment. My data indicates that it seems to be mainly those with some education, some social network on the outside or other resources, who had this option available. One inmate described how he wanted to ‘*still be that son his family loved*’. He wanted to keep his ‘*integrity*’ and ‘*self-respect*’, so his family could be proud of him.

Findings from torture survivor research, which has implications not only for torture survivors but to all individuals who have suffered trauma and loss, has shown that:

The reconstruction of a life after trauma may be aided by invoking memories of lost loved ones, by calling on the values and positive messages that were imparted to them, and by remembering their own strength, courage and self-efficacy. (Hollander-Goldfein et al. 2012, p 7)

Human beings having experienced trauma will often evoke memories and values from the past to maintain a sense of identity. One inmate describes resistance to the stigma a ‘prisoner’ imposed on him, when he holds on to his sense of identity by drawing on his past: *Well, I refuse to think I was not a good person before I came in here*. An inmate with computer skills would regularly resist the negative image imposed on him, and he took great pleasure in demonstrating how he was more competent than prison staff. He writes in a letter that escaped prison censorship:

Then there was also the first of a number of sojourns to Prisons Headquarters, and there to sort out some of their IT problems, which for some reason had baffled their so-called in-house IT expert. I wish you were there to see the big smirk on my face as we walked out of HQ,

having successfully attended to their 'problem'. I am permitted by the Prisons Act to wear my civvies, but I preferred going there in my prison overalls.

However hard he would resist the stigma of 'prisoner' placed upon him, he would also regularly despair – again part of the cyclical chronicity of crisis in which prisoners have to constantly struggle against being absorbed by depression and despair. A common theme in this inmate's story of imprisonment was control and lack of it. His way to reconnect with himself would be to isolate himself and remind himself of the person he wanted to be. Again, in a letter he writes:

I feel lost in a labyrinth, which I myself had fashioned, and it scares me, because I feel in a sense that I have lost control. ... I feel lost right now and I will attempt this very weekend to reconnect with myself and the resolutions and principles that I chiselled on my heart during the most lonely and desolate times of my prison life.

Again, the chronicity of crisis impairs the possibilities of continuously holding on to a stable sense of identity. Regardless of the resistance applied, the continuous assaults in the shape of lack of recognition will mean a continuous struggle and resistance to the negative image imposed by the virtue of imprisonment.

C) Masculinity and stress management

Masculinity comes under stress in an environment where the man's traditional role of the provider is taken away. Yet, during these fierce attacks on masculine identity, holding on to a sense of the masculinity is part of coping with imprisonment. Jewkes calls masculinity a 'coping strategy par excellence'. Jewkes echoes Goffman when she speaks of a front characterised by excessive manliness, and a back stage, private identity which is 'non-macho'. This hyper-masculine front is linked to self-protection through avoiding becoming one of the 'weak' by preying on them, or by having a front of bravado and brutality which discourages others from being violent to the hyper-masculine individual. This is not to say that arbitrary violence is a protective measure. On the contrary, it has to be controlled (Jewkes 2005).

Even if inmates in Zambian prisons routinely describe having to put up a strong front and that they cannot show vulnerability because it will be used against them, prisoners also draw on masculine identity in different ways. Here masculinity (and not hyper-masculinity) is a way to cope in the way that arguably does not reflect the front stage / back stage conceptualisation. Instead, masculinity becomes a way to endure pain and stress. A juvenile describes how he had to 'grow up' and become a man to cope with imprisonment. In the face of all the hardships, he felt that he had to hold on to a sense of stoicism and simply 'be strong':

Informant: (...) In here, your only strength is being a man, and that is what you use.

Interviewer: It's being a man? I would like to really know what you mean, when you say, I have to be a man.

Informant: It is being strong hearted, even when you come across a challenge, you go through something that gets you thinking can something so hard honestly happen to me? And this only comes to happen to me with all the people outside I am the only one that comes to stay in a place such as this? Locked up in a wire and then the other side of your heart tells you, well, when water spills it's just that, and there is nothing you can do about it. So just that spirit, when it takes over you, you then start to forget the problems you are faced with, stop thinking a lot and because in the end you can suffer from depression when stuff has already happened, and you can't do anything about it. So, you just have to be strong hearted and accept your fate.

Interviewer: The strong heartedness you talk about did you always have it from the time you were brought here or you were different then? Tell me what it was like when you got here?

Informant: When I was brought here, I didn't have a strong heart. I just used to cry, I have grown up a little bit since I came in.

So, to survive imprisonment, one has to 'grow up' and become a 'man'. Vulnerability must be suppressed to be able to survive. It is of course a front, but it is more than that, it is a way of managing stress. An example we have seen in Chapter 4 is how forced intimacy is one of several stress factors. Below, an inmate explains how frustrating it is to be constantly surrounded by others with their own agendas:

Sometimes you fail to sleep, you cannot think too well, you end up with your thoughts stuck. Your mind feels like it is stuck, and it is like I don't know how to explain it. Maybe, it is a bit like the time I took alcohol sometime back while I was still outside, there you feel like you have a hangover. You don't sleep well, and you are being disturbed all the time and so for you to cope and get used to that situation it takes someone that is hard to allow all those things. It requires a heart that can ignore, do you understand, you ignore a lot of things.

He explains how he must tolerate constant stressors of interruptions of other inmates, and he expresses that he has to 'ignore' the constant stressors. One is never alone, the overcrowding places major demands on already psychologically stressed individuals. Imprisonment, then, is also about managing feelings of being disturbed continuously, being annoyed and being with people whom you did not choose yourself. On many occasions I witnessed how many inmates were able to control themselves in the face of provocations and frustrations. A young man of 18 years explains how he draws on a developing masculine identity:

Informant: I have learnt a lot of things in here... (...) Say, one is upset, just keep your cool and there will be no cause for a big fall out. When someone is getting upset and you are just quiet there will be no fight in a situation like that.

Interviewer: Having high tolerance levels?

*Yes, tolerance and respecting yourself. With time, you will learn what kind of person you're dealing with. (...) I **have become a man**, and I think even if I came across a problem on the outside, I am sure it won't be a challenge for me. Because I think this (imprisonment) is the biggest problem there is. (author's emphasis)*

Sibley and van Hoven's findings of inmates in an American prison echo mine:

(...) Inmates have to relate to other prisoners, to correctional officers (COs) and they have to adapt to material spaces of the prison and to the daily routines. They have to learn to make space for themselves. Getting through the day involves not only following orders, but also making some decisions about where to be at particular times – to secure some limited autonomy, to avoid dangerous liaisons, or associate with others whose friendship may make the experience of prison easier to bear. (Sibley and van Hoven 2009, p 201)

Inmates must negotiate space on an everyday basis: the few leisure activities (listening to the radio, reading books), food, sleeping arrangements, even if controlled by cell captains, the everyday negotiation of sleeping position takes its toll and invades any sense of 'private time'. Using Goffman's concepts of 'front stage' and 'back stage', the inmate is forced to show a front in his engagement with others and he has little opportunity

to choose to retreat 'back stage' and restore his sense of self. The pressure of having to control oneself in a highly stressful environment becomes even more challenging when there are almost no options for retreat.

Even so, however hard the strain, many do indeed pull through conditions they would not have thought they could survive. The masculine stoicism is not unrelated to black humour. Scheper-Hughes documents in her work on disadvantaged and vulnerable populations that this can be a way to distance oneself from pain and to avoid succumbing to it. A well-known saying used by inmates and staff in reference to the extreme overcrowding was: '*If the cell door can close, there is room for one more*'. This was indeed black humour in face of the sleeping conditions under which inmates can barely sleep at night due to overcrowding.

Masculinity and various ways of managing stress becomes a resource to mobilise to survive. Drawing upon masculinity makes it possible to accept one's fate and, as previously mentioned, acceptance is key to survival. Being a man in the hyper-masculine sense is in no way associated with 'being a man' in this understanding. It is more a matter of being a sensible adult who carries his weight with dignity and strength, and who does not succumb to the pains of imprisonment. The challenge to masculinity is explored further in Chapter 7.

In the individual struggles for recognition, we see that the motivation is instrumental, just like the collective struggles. The individual struggle also includes an element of assertion of power, but to a large extent they are morally motivated. The inmates wish to be esteemed, recognised and appreciated for the values and qualities they demonstrate and live by.

5.2.4 Category Four: Compensatory struggles for recognition

If someone finds him or herself in a situation of society-wide denigration in the shape of shame or resentment, turning to compensatory sub-cultures offers a possibility of gaining some form of recognition. Zurn sums up Honneth's argument:

Under conditions of society-wide denigration (...) positive esteem from others within one's group may be the best one can hope for. While such in-group solidaristic esteem may compensate somewhat, members of denigrated groups still will not have full and equal opportunities to develop healthy self-esteem that others in the wider society do. (Zurn 2015, p 42-43)

I propose that apart from morally grounded struggles, we also see evidence suggesting compensatory struggles for alternative forms of recognition as one of the few available possibilities for achieving a sense of recognition. Honneth mentions these compensatory struggles but makes no attempt to analyse them in-depth (Willig 2007), yet I find that this is an important feature of imprisonment. Studies have shown that inmate subcultures may include values, norms, behaviours and roles which are distinctive to the prison (although some of the values and behaviours can be found on the outside). There are several different groups in prisons with very differing values and norms, so we cannot speak of a uniform prison subculture (Sykes 1958, Irwin and Cressey 1962).

Nevertheless, some inmate subcultures value behaviours that are not necessarily valued by law-abiding citizens on the outside. Subcultures are characterised by a distinctive language and inmate code, which cannot readily be understood by outsiders. Here, having access to various commodities, violence, control, being a 'real man', i.e. not showing sensitivity, emotion or weakness, is valued. Inmates who for instance

have committed murder can be admired as tough, and inmates who manage to entice or force other weaker inmates to sex are grudgingly admired for their ability to dominate the weaker individual (Sykes 1958).⁴⁰

So, at night these criminals talk about their crimes, like they are some kind of super stars, and everyone admires them. They learn tips and tricks. I don't like it. They are murderers and robbers, and they just brag about it.

The compensatory struggle for recognition, therefore, rests on a different foundation than a moral struggle for recognition. The oppositional values of the inmate subculture can award the strongest inmates with a sense of recognition, even if this recognition further alienates them from conventional society (Willig 2007, Egelund Ryberg and Thyregod 2004). The struggle for morally grounded recognition can be replaced by a struggle for more or less any kind of recognition to enhance the individual's sense of masculinity and identity. As Cohen and Taylor put it: *The self is realized against the institution, rather than within it* (Cohen and Taylor 1972 p. 139). The strongest inmates 'win' recognition through preying on the weak, and the weak must resort to the (even) few(er) options available to survive psychologically, socially and physically.

One inmate describes this process:

One thing that affects me is the way prisoners degrade themselves so much, meaning the behaviour changes when in prison, compared to the way they used to be on the outside. They become brutal.

Prisoners feel objectified in the prison, they feel treated as less than human, and this objectification breeds fear and violence (Sowle 1994-1995). As mentioned under the section on mental health in the previous chapter, psychopathy is a strong predictor for violence, and so are serious mental health problems (Rocheleau 2015). Nevertheless, my interviews indicate that inmates who had not previously been violent became violent as a means for survival, which is also in line with Rocheleau's 2015 study in Long Island where violence was linked to so-called negative prison coping strategies. Violence in prison is – even if often impulsive – not random or mindless, but refers to specific conflicts which had often built up over time (Rocheleau 2015).

This quote tells us something about how the prison experience affects the individual. Even if the prisoner quoted here finds it '*degrading*', there is a reason some inmates become brutal. I propose that it is to survive imprisonment, fight for the few privileges, for food, water and other necessities. For instance, in the section for the prisoners condemned to death, there were only three taps with running water for a few hours each day in 2013. This water had to be shared by 370 prisoners, and they only received one cup each. This of course makes water a scarce commodity, and becoming brutal is a way to physically survive. It is however not only to physically survive, as this prisoner explains:

Informant: This is the place in which you repent in prison but they don't want to repent. You know it is very funny as I find that life in prison can change someone to then become harsh. Maybe I came into this place for a crime I did not commit and was accused forcibly if I am not careful I can become someone whom you cannot like if you met me outside. Others in here change, but others don't, they carry on being a bad person and so...

Interviewer: So, some people become worse by coming into prison. Why do they become worse?

⁴⁰ <http://law.jrank.org/pages/1796/Prisons-Prisoners-Inmate-subcultures-informal-organizations.html>;

Informant: The pain of prison, the hardship of prison because they are failing to endure the pain.

So, failing to endure the pain can make you harsh or brutal, which in psychological terms would mean that the inmates resorting to violence would lack 'positive coping strategies'. Inmates resorting to brutality are not able to draw on positive conflict resolution skills, which in the American context has been found to be linked to lack of contact with loved ones, lack of ability to elicit emotional support (for instance through religion), and gang membership. Research from the US has also documented that violence prior to incarceration is not necessarily related to prison violence, and this supports the informant's claims that brutality is a reflection of failing to endure prison pain. Without being able to quantify it, my data supports other findings from the West (Rocheleau 2015, Jewkes 2005) that those who resort to violence are often those abandoned by their families, and/or were described to have few constructive conflict resolution skills apart from threats of violence or actual violence.

Prisoners speak of brutality not only as physical violence, but also as disrespect for others in a broader sense. These individuals and groups are motivated by receiving some recognition – even if it is based on perverse or negative behaviour. They get some affirmation of self, and it may be the only form available or perceived as available to them in the prison environment. As we saw in the previous chapter, imprisonment poses injury or a threat to identity, and becoming brutal becomes a way to survive. A prisoner summed it up: *This place can make you either more sensitive to other people's pain or less sensitive*. For some inmates then, they have to become less sensitive.

In Chapter 7 we explore an additional form of compensatory struggle for recognition, which is the struggle for recognition through an re-interpretation of gender and sexuality.

5.2.5 Category Five: No struggles for recognition – just holding on

Adam, one of my key informants tried to explain to me how everyone needed what he called 'appreciation':

Every person wants to be appreciated. But in prison you don't get appreciated. Don't look for appreciation, you won't get it.

He would speak of lack of appreciation even when one did good things, such as helping others, teaching or in other ways contributing to other's welfare. Possibly, partly in response to this situation, many prisoners practiced emotional withdrawal with differing expressions. These strategies did not entail any active struggle for recognition, but it was certainly a way to survive chronic crisis in an environment with extremely few opportunities. For many prisoners, the strategies of survival entailed instrumentalism: '*stay out of trouble*' and avoid any confrontations (as much as possible). Fantasies, actively pursuing ways to pass time by 'keeping busy' and 'not thinking' were also strategies used to survive psychologically and socially.

D) Instrumentalism

Scheper-Hughes writes that not all aspects of human resilience are '*edifying*' (Scheper-Hughes 2008, p 47). Indeed, trickery, cunning and manipulation are a feature of imprisonment, as they are in many other areas especially under conditions where human beings attempt to survive chronic crisis, poverty or adversity. Loyalties may be shallow, and 'friendships' may be based on mutual benefit rather than mutual sympathy. Taking advantage of situations in opportunistic and improvised ways is also a central feature of surviving poverty as well as surviving imprisonment (Scheper-Hughes 2008).

Prisoners would regularly tell me stories of how others had taken advantage of them in various ways to gain something. An example would be a prisoner 1 who 'stole' my address from prisoner 2, and who then

pretended that prisoner 2 had been transferred to another prison, and that he would now following prisoner 2's wish be my pen pal instead. Prisoner 1 had even included a letter written by himself pretending to be prisoner 2, where he 'handed me over' to himself. I suspected this was indeed the case (not too difficult, the two letters were clearly written by the same person) and asked someone to identify whether my 'pen pal' was still in the same prison. He was, and he was exceedingly upset by the theft because it also meant prisoner 1 had gone through his few private belongings. This was a serious matter between the two, also because pen pals are seen as potential income. In this way, it is not an uncommon occurrence to see prisoners attempting to get (often short term) rewards through trickery or in other ways.

Crewe describes a type of inmate who would accept a public role of compliance as a frontstage persona. However, the apparent reform and contrition was only acted out and performed in recognition of the power the prison system had over them. He describes a somewhat deceptive type of prisoner, and categorises them as *players* (Crewe 2009, p 207). These inmates will try to adapt to become the image of what they think the system wants them to be. For instance, an inmate would work very hard whilst observed by the officers but then slack off the minute the officer turned his back. Most prisoners in the Zambian prisons must draw on instrumentalism or some level of deception to survive, but there are only few for whom this will be their main strategy.

I met only one prisoner whom I would almost call a master of deception. He was exceptionally smart, well-educated and worked exceedingly hard. He did not slack off in terms of working, as Crewe's category of players would, but he most certainly manipulated the system to his benefit. His undeniable talents for management and administration placed him in central spots in the prison administration, where he had access to all sorts of information. His strategy meant that he rose the ranks of the prison hierarchy and was able to access all sorts of information which he could use for his benefit – and against those he may wish to harm. He resisted their oppression of him by manipulating them into trusting him, and to the point where he knew too much, and would be able to harm high level officers. He would manipulate officers against each other, and he was a magnificent liar. At the same time, he had a well-developed sense of sarcastic humour, and he would ridicule less educated staff members to their faces, without them realising it. Only rarely, did he get into real trouble, and when he did, he was able to extract himself. This does certainly not mean that he did not feel the intense pain of imprisonment, but he did successfully make the most of his situation.

E) Stress management through fantasy enhancement and by 'not thinking and keeping busy'

Parallel un-lived lives in terms of the actual lived life in prison and the life that could have been lived on the outside, constitute a source of both hope and frustration. Scholars argue that all human beings have dreams and plans for their future which may or may not come true (Phillips 2012). These can provide hope that the dreams come true at some point. Those whose wives had not deserted them (many were divorced due to incarceration) described how they would become better husbands upon release. Others would describe wanting to get a real job, and make a positive difference in society.

Yet the same dreams could also entail major frustrations when these hopes would not be realizable in any near future. Those who were close to release and the ex-prisoners we interviewed who had recently been released generally suffered the pain of the difficulty of realizing those dreams, and some were disillusioned because of shattered hopes. The difficulties were often related to extreme poverty under which plans of using their skills became impossible. Those who are still in prison have not yet faced these challenges, and here the hopes of a better future may help them through the sentence. Most prisoners harbour dreams and fantasies of a better life:

I want to go to America and leave this place. I have suffered a lot ... why would I want to stay I am going to leave. It makes me happy to think I will ... start a new life. The new life is to stop what I was doing before, like say, maybe I was drinking beer and smoking marijuana, I ... will stop doing all that and start a new life.

He goes on to describe in detail how he would follow instructions of his employer and how he would go to church. Another prisoner goes even further in his fantasies of how he dreams of restoring his name and honour following the political persecution of his family many years ago:

I would like to build something a building, ok I know it sounds nuts right now, what is this prisoner talking about. But I tell you, what is at the back of my mind is something else. I want to build something in honour of him (his father), and I always think about the inauguration of that building how I would have people coming in people I have not seen in a long time.

Another prisoner would return to his childhood and youth with his family, relishing the memories of innocent and happy times. During the interviews with him and the written correspondence, he would return to stories of his childhood repeatedly, hanging on to them to keep a sense of identity and integrity: *I want to be that same boy that my family used to love and the man they brought me up to be.* In this way, some inmates evoke memories and fantasies from the past to cope with imprisonment and to hold on to a sense of identity.

Most inmates described holding on to hope and developing fantasies of a better life to survive the current environment. In this way, fantasies serve the purpose of managing the stress inmates are placed under (French 1979). Yet these un-lived lives, even if they provide some relief from the pains of imprisonment, also carry the risk of being a source of pain. Phillips writes of all human beings experiencing parallel un-lived lives:

There is always what will turn out to be the life we led, and the life that accompanied it, the parallel life (or lives) that never actually happened, that we lived in our minds, the wished-for life (or lives): the risks untaken and the opportunities avoided or unprovided. We refer to them as our un-lived lives because somewhere we believed they were open to us; but for some reason – and we might spend a great deal of our lives trying to find and give the reason – they were not possible. And what was not possible all too easily becomes the story of our lives (...) we are always haunted by the myth of our potential. (...) Our lives become an elegy to needs unmet, to roads not taken. The myth of our potential can make our lives a perpetual falling-short, a continual and continuing loss, a sustained and sometimes sustaining rage (Phillips 2012, p xii-xiii)

Prisoners are of course no different from other human beings in that they have dreams for their future. When imprisoned, these dreams take on double meaning. They may be both a relief to the chronic stress of imprisonment, but they may also add to the stress. For the same reason, some inmates would rather 'not think' and 'keep busy'.

Cohen and Taylor write about how many prisoners are forced live for the present in order to avoid speculation and desperation over the current circumstances (Cohen and Taylor 1972). An inmate describes:

That is why I am saying that to be strong in prison means you don't dwell too much on the fact that you are convicted to death and so tomorrow I will die. Then you say I don't know when I will be out, what you need is to rid yourself of those thoughts and just be strong and believe that one day you will be out.

Prisoners speak about routines of everyday life to help pass time. One thing is the structure imposed by imprisonment, but many prisoners themselves aim to structure their days as much as possible to 'keep busy'. The options are highly limited, but prisoners use inventive ways of passing time. They sign up in great numbers to any kind of education and skills building, they read, they listen to the radio, they exercise, or they use their professional background to teach each other various topics. An inmate describes how he tries to pass time.

You will find I just listen to music the whole day and drown myself to try and forget about everything. We try to do some of the things that we did when we were outside, but it's not the same, but they keep you busy. If you don't get busy you will find yourself dwelling on the negative things and thinking a lot, which is not good for you, so being busy will keep you from thinking.

Reading is a popular pastime in prison. Prisoners will always ask outsiders/visitors for reading material and books are in high demand. The prison library is popular, even if many of the books are old and worn to the point of falling apart. Bibles are popular reading material, as are newspapers and football magazines which will be devoured again and again. An inmate explains how he reads and writes to get time to pass:

The sentence itself being in prison sometimes I get really annoyed you wake up in the morning and see the same people and wake up and go to the chamber in the morning and doing the same thing. After you bathe you just come back and sit, and you see, if here we don't have a lot of books. I like to read a lot and write, but there are those that don't know how to read and write. They normally ask could you write for me a letter: I have got this address to send a letter to Europe. Quite alright, I will agree to writing for you and that will take up some of my time. We call it 'donsa' meaning pulling time, that time I am spending on writing your letter, being occupied by that activities is a way to make time go past.

Another way to pass time is doing 'nice things'. This is called *pondolola*. If a woman visits prison, shaking her hand is *pondolola*, and one ex-prisoner explained how memories of shaking a woman's hand would ease the everyday pain. Other prisoners would ask how the hand felt and how he felt shaking it, and they would spend hours relishing the thoughts of women. An ex-prisoner recalled how in one of the remand prisons he shared a wall with female prisoners. The men would be on one side of the wall and the women on the other. They would never see each other, but every evening they would knock on the wall and communicate in simple ways. The men would do this together as a group and enjoy the interaction.

Others retreat into the world of television, including childhood television shows, as a stress relief and a way to avoid thinking too much:

Informant: Usually I just watch movies, I love my cartoons. I have got Puss in Boots now. I have compiled many files I have about 25 gigabytes of cartoon and nothing else. I would like to get Sesame Street on DVD one day.

Interviewer: Sesame Street... so what do the cartoons do for you?

Informant: Cartoons, I think they take me back, ok they take away the stress, because the last thing you want to watch when you go into the cell at night after a hard day it is something that builds up in your tension. I think cartoons also bring out the child in me, the little child who is now born.

Another way to cope with incarceration is sexual release. As seen in Chapter 7, inmates respond differently to incarceration when it comes to sexuality. Many loose libido, others take an interest in same sex activity, and others resort to masturbation for relieving stress, even if masturbation is difficult to do practically, because of the intense overcrowding and lack of privacy. It is often done in the showers:

So, it is like a quickie, you are having a quickie with yourself, and after that you start singing to yourself just to make everything look normal. ... when you leave the bathroom, and you know that you have been masturbating, you are never able to look the next guy in the eye. You get this guilty feeling, but for me masturbation has worked wonders. ... In a place like this ... it is a means of survival.

5.3 SOCIAL NETWORKS – CONTACT TO THE OUTSIDE

In the above we have seen how inmates mobilise differing and overlapping strategies to survive imprisonment. In this struggle, some have more options and possibilities than others. Depending on the social circles - chosen or available - and on education and personal resources different roles are taken or assigned based on the physical, social and psychological resources of the individual. The strategies identified in my data include constructing a new and better identity as a professional and/or a better person. Others withdraw into their own world of fantasies, while some try to constantly keep busy to avoid thinking too much and consequently avoid sinking (deeper) into depression. Still others draw on hyper masculinity and so-called brutality to survive. And others again draw upon a different kind of masculinity, the identity of being a man who is 'strong' and able to endure pain. Finally, many turn to religion for a sense of hope and support from higher powers.

My data show that one specific element matters especially in terms of being able to survive the Zambian prisons without sinking into depression or turning brutal. This is contact with family. As shown in the previous chapter, the common abandonment by family is exceedingly painful. Yet for those who continue to have some kind of (almost any kind of) contact to the family, it is a very strong incentive to survive and 'change' their lives during imprisonment. Goldenberg and Hollander-Goldfein also identify social networks as an essential part of surviving adversity (Goldenberg and Hollander-Goldfein 2012). An inmate explains:

If I had to come out I have asked them several times, please speak from your heart and don't tell me to please me, no. I want you to tell me what is in your heart. I have asked them if I was given a chance to come out I have nothing I have lost everything. I have nothing to my name no underwear or clothes. If I were to come out in this state with nothing to offer are you going to keep me? They have said blood is thicker than water ... (and) if we should not want to take care of you who will then. If we left you to be alone and then you die who will end up suffering? It is us, you are born with us, and there is nothing we can do to change that and so we will look after you when the time comes.

Research from the West has shown that inmates who see their children are far more likely not to engage in violence, and that this contact lessens the pain of imprisonment. Inmates are comforted by family members, and they can retain a sense of hope of not being completely alone in prison or abandoned upon release.

Contact with the outside world in general helps. Pen pals from the West are a source of income and a source of emotional support, even if they are just as much seen as a source of income. An inmate explains:

What comforts me very much ... pen pals. ... Those people through those letters comfort me. They remind me God is there. He cares and he died for our sins, this earthly suffering is not

the end of everything. ... One of the people I write to told me these words and I will never forget what he said to me ... Yes, you are on death row, and we are out here seeming to move freely, like we will never die can be executed today or tomorrow I will be involved in an accident. ... At the end of the day would you prefer to suffer when you die or would you prefer to suffer now? When I looked at what he said and considered what he was telling me I thought that is good. (...)

We have those that when you explain the situation of what you are going through they will probably send money through the priest, we have a father that comes here. They will send saying let him use this money or maybe they will send the money to my daughter. For me I personally prefer that that money is sent to my daughter. It is better for me go hungry as compared to finding out that my daughter cannot go to school.

Having contact to family, and to some extent to pen pals, carries respect. An inmate explains: 'When you get visited, you get respect. You are seen as someone who is on good terms with people on the outside'. Contact to especially family and loved ones carries with it a respect of the inmate as an individual, with a separate identity from the prison imposed stigma. It also entails something as basic as love which as Honneth claims is fundamental for successful identity formation. We can hardly ever speak of successful identity formation in a Zambian prison environment, but perhaps we can speak of less injury to identity when inmates have the chance of social support and love. Love from family is certainly a way to ameliorate the chronic crisis of imprisonment. A frequent response to the question of 'what gets you through the pain?' would be holding on to a sense of love from the family.

Vigh writes about how individuals in chronic crisis in a sense have limited possibility of coping successfully. They may have the capacity to act upon their crisis – but they may simply not have possibility to do so – or at least they will have significantly reduced options. Translated into the world of prisons, inmates have limited options for coping and surviving the pains and deprivations of imprisonment. They cope in a variety of ways, but if they are supported by family and loved ones, their chances of coping successfully seem significantly increased.

5.4 CONCLUSION

Even if Goffman, Sykes, Cohen and others speak of prisoners having their individuality removed and their sense of identity threatened, it is not the case that all prisoners lose their individuality or are only characterised by what prison has done to them. Prisoners will draw upon personal resources to cope. Prisoners exist in a situation of chronic crisis, where enormous demands are made on them to survive. Even if they do have the capacity to act to improve their situation, they have limited options to do so. In this chapter, I have identified five main ways prisoners will attempt to survive imprisonment. These of course overlap, but are presented in five separate categories for analytical purposes.

The first category concerns those who simply cannot cope. The threat to their identities means that their self is lost, injured, and they struggle to survive both psychologically, socially and physically. Inmates explain that if you do not accept your situation, you will die.

The second category are the morally grounded struggles for recognition, where individuals see themselves as part of a group that is structurally violated, and take collective action. Most prisoners recognise the injustices of imprisonment, and are mortified at both the inadequacies of the justice system and the gross conditions under which they live. Nevertheless, these struggles are rare. Even if inmates do at times successfully struggle actively for their rights, the controlled and suppressive prison environment makes it

difficult to succeed. I exemplified this with the demonstration by inmates who refused to enter their cells at night to draw attention to the terrible conditions under which they lived.

The third category are those who those who engage in individual struggles for recognition. In prison, as one prisoner describes, there is a *struggle for identity* and prisoners work actively towards advancing in the prison system in one way or another, gaining for instance status as a 'blue' or 'red' band (see chapter 4). Prisoners would sometimes describe a strategy of being a so-called '*good boy*', staying out of trouble, trying to be good and completely submissive. Often, they would refer to the widely prevalent discourse of prisoner reform, which has a strong focus on prisoner 'change' and 'reform'. Inmates typically draw upon Christianity as a resource and inspiration. At other times the individual struggles for identity would take the shape of opposing the negative image and stigma imposed imprisonment. Here, inmates would struggle to hold on to a sense of identity from before imprisonment, and in this way, mobilise resistance to the suppressive prison environment and retain a sense of themselves.

The fourth category refers to those who choose a different path, which is the alternative compensatory struggle for recognition. Compensatory subcultures or acts of resistance may develop among the socially marginalized as a reaction to the exclusion mechanisms of the dominant society. These compensatory acts will be associated with bragging about past and future crimes, and with violence and abuse of others in order to gain recognition as dominant. This way of struggling for recognition is viewed as negative in the sense these behaviours will further alienate them from conventional society, and of course because it entails various forms of abuse of others. Still, it is a way to obtain recognition even linked to violence and abuse.

Finally, the fifth category is about those who struggle for survival in a different way. This is not to say that these inmates will not also use some of the other coping strategies. Yet, looking at these strategies, they do not come across as a struggle for recognition. Rather, they are strongly linked to Vigh's concept of chronicity of crisis. Here we speak of emotional withdrawal into a world of fantasies or a constant attempt to keep busy in the otherwise quite idle prison life. In order to endure, inmates also draw on masculine identities as 'men', who are strong and able to endure pain.

In this struggle, some have more options and possibilities than others. Depending on family support, social circles (chosen or available), and education, roles are taken or assigned. In other words, the physical, social and psychological resources of the individual matter in terms of how they attempt to survive imprisonment.

This also means that there are prisoners with very few options for surviving imprisonment. Some – the so-called weak – become involved in sexual relationships in exchange for food, other necessities or sometimes luxuries, and protection. We shall explore this group and the ones taking advantage of them in the following chapters.

6 SEX IN PRISONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Studying sex in prisons entails venturing into an area of taboo and secrecy. In Chapter 7, I outline some of the issues pertaining to studying sexuality in prisons, but here we review literature on sex in prisons. The review begins with an exposition of issues pertaining to definitions of sex in prisons. Hereafter, we turn our attention to prison sex research in the European and American context, where most literature on the topic has been produced. Finally, we review the literature produced on sex in Sub-Saharan African prisons, and I provide a short overview of HIV/AIDS in prisons.

6.2 STUDYING AND DEFINING SEXUAL ACTIVITIES IN PRISON

Among the challenges of investigating prison sexuality is the historical approach to sex in prison as being one of deviance, including homosexuality as a psychiatric diagnosis, and that sex in prison would ultimately be one of victimisation of the weaker part; the assumption here being that sex in prisons would most likely be rape in one way or another. This approach may still affect some of the research conducted today, due also to the strong negative media images of sex in prison (Eigenberg and Baro 2003).

Researching prison sex is a challenge for several reasons, but one pertinent issue is the definition of sexual activities in prisons – or lack of clear definitions. Rape or sexual violence is essentially a concept found in the legal framework, where courts would be interested in determining whether a sexual act was punishable by law. The legal frameworks or approaches to rape have often informed researchers (Freedman 2013), mainly because the research was supposed to feed into policy and prevention of rape in prison. Yet researchers have set out to measure ‘rape’, but without a clear definition of what the concept means to the informants nor in the subsequent publications. Others have defined the concept, but the definition has varied between authors and publications (Carlson 2009).

I would argue that this approach carries the risk of hampering the understanding of the complexity of prison sex. Most research on sex in prison has relied on quantitative methodologies, and they have rarely been informed by qualitative research. At other times, researchers have used terms such as ‘consensual’/voluntary or forced/‘rape’ in surveys without giving informants the option of identifying sexual acts or relationships which may be more of a combination. Despite a recognition of the difficulty of categorizing sex in prisons as either consensual or forced, the quantitative studies have not addressed this in the research design.⁴¹ This approach seems to ignore the complicated nature of sexual relations – both inside and outside of prison, but in the context of the prison, this would pose particular challenges.

Sex is not an event that occurs in isolation from the social and physical context. Sexual activities in the closed prison environment will be influenced by the prison context and conditions, and will play into power structures, hierarchies and social relationships – and of course be influenced by individuals’ coping strategies.

We therefore must employ an understanding of sex in prison as being much more complex, and at the very least on a continuum from voluntary to forced – and that force may take on different forms. To understand more of the social and interpersonal dynamics of prison sex, we need to address the fact that even if sex is ‘agreed’ between two parties, that does not necessarily make it voluntary. Sex may appear consensual, but

⁴¹ An example of this: Saum 1995

may in fact be coerced. An example of this complexity may be the impoverished inmate who chooses to engage in sex to gain access to food, and who initially feels that this is coerced but with time becomes used to it. Some may call this particular form of sexual relation prostitution or sex work, and depending on the approach to prostitution/sex work, one could call it either voluntary/consensual/forced/coerced (Davidson 1998).

Awareness of the complexity of sexual relations and practices could furnish important knowledge of the psychological, social and physical effects of imprisonment and coping strategies of prisoners – and on how to prevent HIV transmission and other sexually transmitted diseases. Sex is the result of a complex interplay of factors, including deprivation of heterosexual relationships, deprivation of food and other material possessions. Among other things, sex in the prison setting is institutional currency:

The neophyte convict enters an environment that has few similarities to the outside world. Its' practices, norms and codes are more demanding, whereas the opportunity regaining or reconstructing one's identity, dignity and self-respect are few. Inmates possess scant resources with which to bargain and negotiate their way through a sentence. Prison authorities usually control any money put on deposit for an inmate, and cigarettes, drugs, personal favours, protection, information and sex function as institutional currency that can be critical to a convict's survival. Sex as an institutional currency occupied a singular position of importance in the larger inmate economy and status hierarchy. (...) Indeed the 'man' who can attract, convince, or coerce another inmate gains higher status and avoids similar treatment by other men. (Keys 2002, p 271)

Yet, importantly, Christopher Krebs argues that contracting HIV is more of a process than an event:

With the exception of rape, the risky events that lead to transmission (of HIV) in the prison setting, namely unprotected sex, IDU (Injecting Drug Use) and tattooing are essentially behaviours chosen by the participants, and many things affect the decision to indulge in such risky events. It is the pre-prison characteristics, behaviours, and experiences of an inmate, and the current or in-prison, characteristics, behaviours, and experiences of an inmate that work together to determine whether these risky events will be practised by a given inmate. Contracting HIV is more of a process than an event, and understanding this process substantively and theoretically will assist in the effort to make risky events less common and/or less dangerous. (Krebs 2002, p 22)

So, rather than focusing on determining what exactly happens in the 'sexual event', and determining whether it is rape or voluntary, it is important to examine the process which renders inmates vulnerable to contracting HIV.

6.3 RESEARCH ON SEXUALITY IN PRISONS

Early scholarship on prison culture did infrequently touch upon sex in prisons. Fishman in the 1930s was the first to write about sex in prisons, using a theoretical lens which later became known as the deprivation model. The basic argument was that (some) men - in situations deprived of women - will not be able to control their sexual urges and will therefore engage in same-sex behaviour. Further, Clemmer argued that heterosexual men can be changed into homosexuals by prison culture. Much of the theory of the time and in the following decades reflected the perception of homosexuality as being morally condemnable, deviant and a psychiatric condition. The otherwise highly esteemed prison scholarship by Sykes, 'The Society of Captives' (1958), also depicted sex in prisons as deviant and as a consequence of deprivation of heterosexual

relationships, and he describes how 'wolves' prey on their weak prey, the 'punks'. Sykes and Clemmer also argued (without empirical evidence) that heterosexuals could be transformed into homosexuals (Sykes 1958, 2007, Clemmer 1940).

In the 1970s the importation model argued that values and behaviours from outside society are used by prisoners to construct a specific prison subculture. Thus, previous aggressive sexual behaviour or homosexual latency from the outside was imported, and then acted out in prison. The research from this time proceeded on the assumption that prison sex was an instrument for victimisation (Barth 2012).

Research in the 1980s and until the mid-1990s, particularly in the US, focused on sexual violence and its consequences, but few new theoretical ideas emerged (Lockwood 1980). In the mid-1990s an increased focus on prison rape emerged following significant publicity on the topic. In 2003, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) was enacted, which took the standpoint of 'zero tolerance' of rape in US prisons. In the time up to the PREA and until today, focus on collecting empirical data has been very strong. As a result, a significant amount of quantitative research has been published with a focus on categorising different forms of sex, different sexual roles, categories of 'predators' and 'victims' (Hensley and Tewksbury 2002, Hensley et al 2000, Carlson 2009, Saum 1995). In Europe, there has been much less research focus on sex in prisons, and the research that has been conducted shows low levels of prison sexual violence (Barth 2012).

Asserting actual prevalence of any kind of prison sex, including rape, has proven difficult. Under- and over-reporting and research methodological dilemmas have been stated as causes of unreliable data. One US national study documented 4.5% of American inmates reporting sexual violence one or more times during their incarceration (including staff misconduct) (Barth 2012, Beck and Harrison 2007). Other more localised studies have found prevalence rates of sexual encounters of between 1.3% up to 65% between the 1980s up to the present time (Barth 2012, Bureau of Statistics Special Report 2007, Hensley and Tewksbury 2002, Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson 1996, Saum et al. 1995, Fleisher and Krienert 2009). Data from Germany has shown even lower rates of sexual violence (Barth 2012).

Fleisher and Krienert, based on literature reviews and their own large study, conclude convincingly that prison rape in the US is rare, despite the significant focus it has received in the public realm and in policy making. Instead of a commonality of rape, *tales* of rape teach about proper behaviour within the prison community:

Prisonization⁴² draws on prison cultural information from verbal messages about sexual behaviour and sexual violence. Cultural information conveys simple but critical lessons about prison sex and social life. Learn how to behave and learn quickly. Don't get too comfortable with people, they could be deceptive and cunning and want to exploit you. Avoid debt and theft; they won't be tolerated. Protect yourself physically and mentally. Stay strong. Handle your own battles. Be confident and decisive. Finally, sexual temptation rises with time, if you try it you might enjoy it. (Fleisher and Krienert 2009, p 49)

The myth (the tale, the story) of prison rape permeates the public, research and the inmate stories of incarceration (Eigenberg and Baro 2003). Prison rape has '*a metaphoric value functioning to filter inmates' interpretations of prison life*' (Fleisher and Krienert 2009, p 25).

⁴² Prisonisation refers to the process of which an inmate becomes familiar with the 'inmate code' (prison subculture) and his/her adaption to it

Fleisher and Krienert challenge much of the established theory by arguing that all research – from the 1930s, when the prison sex was first addressed in Fishman’s ‘sex in prison’ (1934), to the classical work by Sykes (1958), and up until the time of writing (2009) – has not

acknowledged human sexual flexibility. In all-female and all-male prisons the absence of heterosexual partners may establish cultural conditions that allow the expression of homosexual sex but the proximal causal factor is cultural malleability. The history of homosexuality of thousands of years demonstrates the normalcy of a hetero- to homosexual continuum. Prison variations on a socio-sexual continuum range from abstinence, to homosexual sex where one or both parties are not culturally seen as homosexuals, to female surrogates (“queens”) who can provide “symbolic” heterosexual sex. (Fleisher and Krienert 2009, p 25-26)

I contend that the emphasis generally has not been on the term *malleability* of sexuality. But as early as in 1979, Laurene French wrote of sexuality in prison as being of an ‘adaptive nature’, suggesting at least a somewhat similar train of thought (French 1979). David Keys writes of gender in prison as a performance, where the biological sex and the socially constructed gender are not the same. Even if he does not write directly about the malleability of sexuality, he does write about the fluidity and social construction of gender roles and how prison can alter gender and sexual roles (Keys 2002). Brenda Smith also calls for a more complex approach to understanding sexuality in prisons than deprivation and importation theory (Smith 2006). Much in line with Fleisher and Krienert’s call for cultural examinations of sex and sexuality in prisons, Gibson and Hensley call for a social constructionist approach to understanding prison sex in their 2013 article (Gibson and Hensley 2013). They argue that not much theory has been applied to prison sex and why it occurs and that earlier scholarly approaches to sexuality in prisons could not sufficiently explain why and how sexuality is expressed in the prison environment.

Gibson and Hensley argue that a change in sexuality and sexual orientation may occur in prisons, and that *within this unique subculture exists the possibility for alternative sexualities constructed from social values completely different from those in regular society* (Gibson and Hensley 2013, p 356) They attempt in their study to *illustrate the shifting fluid concept of sexuality* (Gibson and Hensley 2013, p 356). There is no documentation in their article on how the prison subculture is so ‘*completely different*’ when it comes to sexuality, apart from the obvious fact that prisons typically are made up of all male or all female populations. Their argument that researchers should incorporate a *free and changing sexuality into their understanding of sexuality in prison populations* could be challenged in the sense that the concept of ‘free’ would entail something quite different from the reality of prison life. Prison is characterised by exactly the opposite of freedom – and arguing that sexuality can be free under those conditions may seem like a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, their call for a social constructionist analysis of prison sex does appear highly relevant, since research up until today is still struggling to find comprehensive explanations that shed light on the complexity of expression, interpretation, meaning and practices of sex and sexuality in prison.

6.4 SOME EMPIRICAL FINDINGS ON THE CAUSES AND DYNAMICS OF SEX IN PRISONS

The psychiatrists Warren and Jackson document different forms of sexuality in American prisons with the aim of understanding sexual victimization and predation amongst and between incarcerated men and women, and between staff and inmates (Warren and Jackson 2013). The researchers performed highly structured qualitative interviews, but relied mainly on quantitative surveys of personality traits and personality disorders (including psychopathy), depression, fear and anger, childhood experiences, violence, and conflict tactics as risk markers for either predation or victimization.

The existing research in rape in prison tends to ignore the larger body of research pertaining to rape in the community, and through this omission, implies that rape in prison is fundamentally different from the rape individuals experience in the community. (Warren and Jackson 2013, p 33)

Warren and Jackson document a wide range of sexual activity in prison. Importantly, they document that an asexual lifestyle is possible in prison. Approximately half of the study population adopted a relatively asexual lifestyle and did not enter into sexual relationships. This is supported by other studies where for instance 45% of informants in a German prison sexuality study reported a loss in libido upon incarceration (Barth 2012). These individuals typically did not have as traumatic a childhood background, were less likely to have been incarcerated as juveniles, and had performed less violent crime prior to incarceration compared to those who were involved in various forms of sex.

The sex varied in form and intent and was found to be based upon different types of relationships between inmates, with visitors and others, and with members of prison staff. Some of the sex was coerced, some was not. Some involved relationships between same-gendered inmates, others illicit relationships with members of prison staff. The intent of the sex was also found to vary, at times reflecting a predatory imposition of a degrading experience upon another, at other times a bartered (transactional) exchange of goods and interpersonal commodities, and at other times the consensual exchange of sexual gratification either as a means of immediate pleasure or as an avenue for future control. (Warren and Jackson 2013, p 214-15)

Warren and Jackson argue that sexuality in prison is not markedly different from sex that takes place outside of prison, but instead is made unique by being prohibited and because sexual relationships are primarily same-sex sexual encounters. Sexuality is complex and, as on the outside of prison, it can be difficult to ascertain whether a sexual encounter or relationship is indeed consensual or coerced. Yet the three definitions used in the study on American prison were 'entrapment', 'intimidation' and/ or 'physical force', even if only the latter form would be investigated and catalogued as 'real rape' by prison authorities (Warren and Jackson 2013).

They found a significant correlation between (any) sexual activity on one side and violence, affective states of aggression, impulsivity and violent thoughts, personality disorders, difficulty in forming relationships in the past outside of prison, involvement in domestic violence and/or a background in juvenile crime on the other side. This indicates turbulent interpersonal relationships that are violent, sexual and aggressive (Warren and Jackson 2013). Other studies have documented a link between stress of overcrowding and increased violence, including sexual violence (Steiner and Woolredge 2009).

Eigenberg, according to Warren and Jackson, argues that all bartered (transactional) sex is coercive because of the person seeking some kind of reimbursement. They quote Ristroph who argues that

the sex is sought or agreed to under ambiguous circumstances, sex that may constitute prostitution of 'sexual extortion', or just a conflicted quest for a measure of safety on an inherent dangerous environment. (Warren and Jackson 2013, p 54)

Thomas Barth cautions against comparing United States of America and European prisons concerning prison sex, simply because of vast differences found between the prison systems in their approach to sexuality, and its regulation, punishment and social climate (Barth 2012). There is very little research on sex in African prisons (Gear and Ngubeni 2002, Ewoame 2011, Egelund 2014) and it cannot be presumed that the traits

seen elsewhere, such as in the USA, can be transferred to a Sub-Saharan African prison environment. However, this is not to say that some results may not provide a relevant point of reference, and may to a certain extent inform studies of sexuality in African prisons.

6.5 RESEARCH ON SEX IN AFRICAN PRISONS

Epprecht and Niehaus convincingly argue that prison sex and sex found in other all male settings, such as among mine workers, cannot be meaningfully compared. This is because of sex in prisons (in this case in South Africa) has strong linkages to gang structures, which is not seen in the example of miners. Further, the specificity of the prison environment, where people are placed under extreme conditions and with next to no access to the outside world, weakens attempts at comparison (Niehaus 2002, Epprecht 2004, Epprecht 2008). This study, in agreement especially to the latter argument, will not draw much upon the very few studies from other all male settings where male-to-male sex may take place. Interestingly, though, it seems that lessons from the mining community, where many men would frequent female sex workers, were transferred to prison gangs. This was in the 1910s where sex worker communities near mines suffered from serious venereal diseases, making it a risky business to visit sex workers. Instead, a famous gang leader of the Ninevites ordered the practice of boy-wives (Steinberg 2004).

There is little research on sex in prisons in Sub-Saharan Africa and apart from a few studies from South Africa, some of it is not of particularly high standard in terms of scholarly quality (the studies being at MA thesis level, and non-scholarly study reports of international organisations). The empirical data on which the South African research is based on is relatively small; Gear and her co-authors based their research on 35 prisoners interviewed in the period 2006-08 and Niehaus based his conclusions on interviews with 11 former inmates in the 1990s. Achmat speaks only of his own initiation into prison sexuality (Achmat 1993). Epprecht bases his otherwise insightful chapter on prison sexuality on existing sources and not on his own data.

Epprecht quotes a former inmate. The inmate describes his relationship to his 'husband' much in the same manner as John, in the next chapter, where the inmate with time learnt to appreciate the good things, such as the material gains, and how imprisonment became 'easy' and he with time learnt to enjoy 'love, play and hold him nicely'. Epprecht concludes that sex in prison is more negotiated and desired than violently imposed:

This is not to romanticize 'love' behind bars. Nor is it to overstate the importance of affectionate and relatively egalitarian relationships as a counter-cultural to the dominant ethos in prison. However, the mere existence of non-wyfie⁴³ sexual relationships between inmates who did not identify as homosexual or bisexual is powerful testimony to men's need and ability to create intimacy regardless of other factors. This cautions against both assuming the worst about prison sexuality and essentializing the role of violence and power in masculine sexuality. (Epprecht 2004, p 102)

Sasha Gear is the researcher who has produced the most on sexuality in prisons in Africa in the 2000s, and she has published several articles on masculinity, sexual violence, sexuality, homophobia in South Africa (Gear and Ngubeni 2002, Gear 2009, Gear and K Ngubeni 2003, Gear 2007, Gear 2005, Gear 2010). There are similarities to the Zambian prisons in terms of the conditions of imprisonment and the severe poverty. However, there seems to be one important difference between Zambia and South Africa in terms of sexual activity. Even if it is often 'jailbirds' (inmates who are so-called 'hardened criminals' and repeatedly sent to prison for more than one offence) who are involved in sexual activity, this activity appears to be unrelated to

⁴³ Wyfie means 'wife', as in the receiving partner in the relationship/sexual event

gang structures in the Zambian prisons. By contrast, sex in prisons in South Africa seems intrinsically linked to gang practices and hierarchies (Gear 2005, Gear 2010, Gear S and Lindegaard 2014).

Niehaus describes how *'the identities forged in the prison setting are a far cry from modern gay personhood'* (Niehaus 2002, p 87) in that sexuality in South African prisons is exercised through violence and fear. It is also worth noting that some gangs, in particular the gang 28's, are reputed to practice male to male sexuality on the *outside* of prison, meaning that sexuality may already play a role in gang power dynamics and rituals (Gear 2005, Egelund and Thyregod 2004). 28's often deny this as vicious gossip intended to discredit them (Steinberg 2004).

Gear documents how a blurring occurs between homosexuality and male rape, where discourses on gender and sexuality makes the violence of male rape invisible, whilst at the same time maintaining a highly homophobic environment in the prison. Men are *'turned into women'*, where *'women'* are expected to take on a receptive role in the sexual act and are to act as women in the social environment of the prison and take on *'female duties'*. Gear writes:

A boundary between the heterosexual and homosexual, key to the hegemonic gendered sex relations, is thereby momentarily pushed, again with an act of trickery, so as to rearrange heterosexuality for the prison context. (Gear 2005, p 201)

Gear argues that sexual violence is denied and made invisible through the process of turning men into women required to perform sexual services in *'marriage'*. Gear highlights the damage suffered by inmates due to the shame and silent suffering associated with being turned into a woman. Homosexuality is often viewed as morally condemnable inside and outside of the South Africa's prisons, and when the male-on-male rape happens the persons involved – whether it is the raped or the rapist - is met with the same disgust and hatred, as a voluntary homosexual encounter would met with. In this way, homophobia enhances the suffering of the victim, because the victim is blamed. While Gear does hint at new interpretations of sexuality and that sex at times may be pleasurable for both parties, she maintains a stance of sex in prisons being mainly that of violence, rape and abuse (Gear 2007). In Steinberg's portrait of a gang member's history and Poolsmoor prison in South Africa, he speaks mainly of prostitution-like relationships and quotes inmates for reporting that rape is rare (Steinberg 2004).

Niehaus argues that

male-male sex in prisons and mines should not be confused with modern gay identities... Male-male sex plays a creative role in prisons, where men constructed social relationships of domination and subordination, within and between prison gangs. (Niehaus 2002, p 107)

And further,

male wives are not a purely negative countertype. By performing the role of women, male wives provide something of a muted and incipient critique of the conventional masculine roles. (Niehaus 2002, p 107)

Outside South Africa, research on prison sexuality is scarce. In her MA thesis on same-sex sexual activities in Ghanaian prisons, Hannah Ewoame in her capacity as prisons officer and MA student was able to interview six inmates who had been punished for having sex with fellow inmates in prison. She also interviewed a number of inmates not involved in sexual activities with other inmates in prison. Ewoame documents how poverty, lack of food and sexual desire are driving factors of why some inmates engage in sex. As in other

African countries, the inmates often form sexual relationships where one is considered 'the man'/'the husband' and the other is considered the 'woman'/'the wife' (Ewoame 2011).

The relationship is typically reciprocal. The husband is 'rich' and able to provide for the wife in terms of food, soap and other necessities, and the wife in turn provides sexual services (anal sex) and does domestic chores, but is poor and unable to otherwise attain the material goods. The husbands do it to satisfy sexual drive, achieve sexual pleasure and to 'feel like a man' through control over the sexual partner. Imprisonment poses a major challenge to the inmate's identity as a man, and if an inmate has the resources to become a 'husband', he obtains a renewed sense of manhood (Ibid).

The few 'women' interviewed for this PhD in turn did not claim sexual satisfaction, apart from one, but instead reported food and material benefits as the motivating factor, and sometimes protection from other aggressive inmates was also a factor. The extreme poverty means that for many 'wives', the alternative would have been disease (due to lack of food) or death. The 'marriage' mimics the heterosexual marriage on the outside of prison. Ewoame, like Singh and Jolofani and DeGabriele, noted the 'needy nature' of the so-called women who often suffered immense poverty (Singh 2007, Jolofani and DeGabriele 1999). Niehaus also suggest that young men, who are most desired as the receiving partner in the sexual relationship, often took the initiative themselves to find a sexual partner in the hope that this would provide them with money, protection or food (Niehaus 2002).

Ewoame reports that 'men' are characterised by masculine body posture, voice and physical strength. They have to display control and being in charge. Walking upright, 'being thick', being tall and physically able to defend himself and his wife in a fight matters in terms of being understood by others as men. The 'women' or 'wives' on the other hand are seen as feminine – by body posture (not upright), behaviour (non-threatening, performing female domestic duties), and to some extent physique (often small, soft-spoken, perhaps big bottom, often young). It is important in connection with this to assert that Ewoame's study was based on interviews with six informants. These findings are similar to what Jolofani and DeGabriele found in their study of Malawian prisons, and what Niehaus discovered in his work in South African prisons (Niehaus 2002). The defining characteristic of the 'woman', however, is whether the inmate has been penetrated in the sexual act. If this is done, then the inmate is perceived a woman, and this status can only change if the inmate is able to perform as a 'man' in the relationship (i.e. be the active partner) (Jolofani and deGabriele 1999, Ewoame 2011)

Ewoame goes as far as to claim that *only* inmates who are 'men' in the sexual relationship can be perceived as men in the prison community. The 'women' are seen to be women, but even the inmates who do not engage in sexual relationships cannot make claims to manhood, because imprisonment by virtue takes away your manhood and masculine identity (Ewoame 2011).

Ewoame describes death as being a central theme for the men engaging in sex. Having received a prison sentence is for many perceived as a death sentence (even if it is a terminable sentence), and even if the inmates who engage in sexual activity are aware the risk of HIV, many have a sense of already being dead. Protecting oneself against HIV may seem superfluous in that context, and engaging in sex with fellow men, even if it breaks taboos and entails stigma, is possible because they already perceive themselves to be dead. Even if Ewoame claims that inmates say they refuse using condoms, she also reported that inmates had been using polythene to protect themselves against HIV, suggesting that the picture may be more varied than that – and also suggesting that some are interested in protecting their lives, whether or not they perceive themselves to be already dead or not.

6.6 STUDIES ON HIV IN PRISONS IN AFRICA, WITH A SPECIFIC FOCUS ON ZAMBIA

Sexual relations between men in prisons occur all over the world, and Zambia is not an exception. Prisoners are identified as a key population with regard to HIV transmission, and sex in prisons appears relatively common even if it is difficult to ascertain how common (UNODC, UNAIDS and World Bank 2008, Onyemocho 2014, Joshua and Ogboi 2008, Ewoame 2011, Reid S et al. 2012, Simooya 2010). Figures from Zambia show that 1.2% indicated that they personally had been raped whilst in prison, and 1.6% said they had agreed to have sex in prison. 24.1% of respondents estimated that 'many are involved' and 47% reported 'some are involved' in sex. Remarkably, more than half of the respondents (prisoners) claimed they had witnessed rape in prison (Simooya 2010).

In Nigeria, one study found that approximately 16% in one prison were involved in sexual activity and in another prison in Nigeria (same study), 25% were involved. Anecdotal estimates by inmates in Malawi prisons suggested a prevalence of 10-60% of inmates being involved in sexual activity (Jolofani and deGabriele 1999). In South African prisons, prevalence of sex in some prisons has reached as high as 65% (Onyemocho 2014). Underreporting or over-reporting is likely, due to the delicate nature of topic, and it is very difficult to ascertain how common sex in fact is. In Zambian prisons, Simooya documented a high association of 46% between sex in prison and HIV infection (Simooya 2010).

The aim of this PhD is not to ascertain prevalence, but rather to understand the dynamics contributing to the spread of HIV in prisons. Yet it makes sense to give some contextualization in terms of prevalence of sexual relationships, even if it is not possible to measure prevalence exactly. According to UNAIDS, prisoners are one of the most vulnerable yet overlooked risk groups in terms of HIV infection (UNAIDS, UNODC and World Bank 2008). HIV prevalence in Zambian prisons was estimated at 27 % in 1999 and again in 2010, whereas the general population prevalence had dropped from 19% in 1999 to 12.4% in 2012 (Simooya et al 2001, Simooya, and Sanjobo 2001, UNAIDS 2008, Simooya et al 2010).

According to Simooya's 2010 study, which is the only study which claims national prevalence rates (representativity), in Mukobeko Maximum and Medium Prison and in Lusaka Central Prison specifically, the prevalence was recorded to be 40% in 2010. The inmate population at the time was approximately 1,800 in Mukobeko Maximum and 1,400 in Lusaka Central. In 2015, the population in Mukobeko Maximum prison had risen to well above 2,000 individuals. A large quantitative study conducted in 2010-2011, but only published in 2015, showed a significantly different prevalence rate in Lusaka and in four prisons in Kabwe Prison complex (where Mukobeko Maximum is also located) compared to the Simooya's 2010 study. The vast majority of prisoners in the two respective prisons were tested for the 2015 publication, and the average HIV prevalence was found to be 22.9% (Maggard et al 2015). This is still about twice the national average. In 2014, the estimated HIV prevalence rate of the general population was 12.4% (Zambia National AIDS Council 2014). I will not attempt to explore why there is such a difference between the studies conducted in the same year, as they both claim to follow the necessary quantitative procedures for data collection. I will note, however, that the Maggard study tested almost all prisoners in Lusaka.

Much data on HIV in prison relies on estimates, and even if it is well known that prison populations globally have higher HIV infection rates, it largely remains unclear to what extent prisoners acquire the infection prior or during incarceration. However, in 2013 an interesting study was published. Between November 2010 and April 2011, a total of 2,514 participants were screened for HIV and TB during entry, mass (i.e. the whole prison population), and exit in Lusaka Central Prison. Out of the total numbers, 2,323 had complete screening data and was therefore included in the data analysis. The aim was to ascertain the level of HIV and TB infection prior to incarceration, during incarceration and upon exit, to find out the extent to which prisoners

had contracted the diseases inside prison. The study documented quantitatively that many prisoners do contract both TB and HIV inside prison. In terms of HIV, 20.5% tested positive prior to incarceration while the mass prison population showed a prevalence rate of 27.4%. Upon exit 34.3% tested positive. The last figure is to be regarded with caution due to methodological challenges (only very few inmates were tested), but shows an association between HIV and imprisonment and indicates possible HIV transmission within prison (Henostroza 2013).

A new and not yet released HIV/AIDS study by Centre for Infectious Disease Research of Zambia (CIDRZ) of Lusaka Central however shows almost HIV zero-conversions of inmates on the inside, meaning that only very few indeed get infected inside Lusaka Central. For a variety of reasons, including the make up of the inmate population, these findings can likely not be translated to for instance Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison.⁴⁴

HIV and AIDS are not the only health problems in prisons. HIV exacerbates other diseases. Tuberculosis and Hepatitis C are also very common, and often there are patients who suffer from co-infection. HIV infection is the most important risk factor for tuberculosis. The tuberculosis infection rate is 18 times higher in the Zambian prisons compared to the outside community. 6.4% of inmates are infected (Maggard et al 2015). The prison environment particularly due to overcrowding and lack of hygiene creates a fertile breeding ground for the spread of infectious diseases. Infectious diseases from inside prison are brought outside to the community via prisoners leaving the prison, staff and visitors. In many communities outside prisons, the levels of infectious diseases, such as tuberculosis, are higher than in the rest of society. High mobility between prisons and the communities mean that prison health problems become community health issues (Jürgens R et al 2011).

Around the world, injecting drug use is thought to be the main cause of the spread of HIV due to the use of unclean injection equipment. By contrast, in Sub-Saharan Africa injecting drug use is less common and the main source of HIV infection remains unprotected sexual activity. Tattooing and body piercing also constitute risk factors, but significantly less so (Simoooya 2010, Jürgens et al 2011). Injecting drug use is low, the main drugs being marijuana, which in itself constitutes no risk, even if some would argue that the use of drugs (and alcohol) would impair rational judgment, and thus may contribute to inmates making unsafe decisions in terms of sexual risk behaviour (Singh 2007).

Prisoners often have higher rates of HIV and AIDS awareness compared to outside society. This, however, does not mean that important myths, misconceptions and misinformation are not a major problem. Generally, prisoners need more information to protect themselves (and the outside society) from infection and to reduce fear, stigma and discrimination (whilst keeping in mind that information alone rarely changes behaviour) (Akeke 2007, Onyemocho A et al 2014, Simoooya 2014). In conclusion, many prisoners have contracted the HIV virus prior to entering prison, but transmission also occurs within the prison via tattooing and men who have sex with men (MSM), the latter being the highest risk factor (Simoooya et al 2010, Kamocha 2005, UNAIDS, UNODC and World Bank 2008, Simoooya et al 2001).⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Conversations with CIDRZ researchers

⁴⁵ The category has been criticized for undermining the self-labelling of lesbian, gay and other sexual minorities, and to scientific labelling and reproduction of heterosexist notions (Young et al 2005). Even if I recognize this as a valid critique, I deem MSM a useful category in the context specifically of prisons, where sexual activity is often unrelated to (prior) sexual identity, because it attempts to avoid enforcement of sexual identity politics.

6.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has highlighted how researching prison sex is a challenge for several reasons. One pertinent issue has been problems with defining sexual activities in prisons. Definitions have differed or been lacking in both quantitative and qualitative studies where definitions have typically been crude and simplistic; even if there is some recognition of the difficulty of categorizing sex in prisons as either/or consensual or forced, this has not been addressed in research designs.

Therefore, the complicated nature of sexual relations seems to have been ignored. Sex is not an event that occurs in isolation from its social and physical context. Sexual activities in the closed prison environment will be influenced by the prison context and conditions, and will play into power structures, hierarchies and social relationships, not to mention the individual's coping strategies in an environment of restricted options. Sex is the result of a complex interplay of factors, including deprivation of heterosexual relationships, and deprivation of food and other material possessions. Among other things, sex in the prison setting is institutional currency.

I would argue that simplifying definitions of sex as being either 'voluntary' or 'forced' (rape) carries the risk of seriously hampering understanding of the complexity of prison sex. We must employ an understanding of sex in prison as being at the very least on a continuum from voluntary to forced – and employ an understanding of force which may take on very different forms. To understand more of the social and interpersonal dynamics of prison sex, we need to address the fact that even if sex is 'agreed' between two parties, this does not necessarily make it voluntary.

The awareness of the complexity of sexual relations and practices could provide important knowledge of the psychological, social and physical effects of imprisonment and coping strategies of prisoners – and how to prevent HIV transmission and other sexually transmitted diseases. Contracting HIV is more a process than an event, and it is important to understand what affects the choices made by inmates which place them at risk of contracting HIV inside prison.

This chapter also highlights how studying human sexuality is complex. Sexuality may be flexible and malleable as Fleisher and Krienert argue, but it is not endlessly so; sex will always take place within certain social and societal contexts where the sex will be perceived and responded to in certain ways both by those engaging in sex and those who know about it. One must also be very careful about confusing prison sex with modern gay identities, even if inmates are deemed 'homosexual' by others, when they enter male-male sexual relationships. It is also important to be aware of the risk of essentialising masculine sexuality as one of power and violence – especially in the prison environment where it so often is assumed that most sex is violent sexual assault, even if this is factually incorrect. This, however, does not mean the sex cannot be coerced and forced in other and effective ways. It is also important to highlight that many men in fact lose libido in prison.

African prisons are vastly understudied, and academic studies of sex in prisons are rare and generally based on little data. However, existing studies conclude that in the South African context, sex in prisons is often linked to gang structures and power structures, but also that they can be transactional. Findings from for instance Ghana and Malawi suggest a strong link between poverty and deprivation on one side, and sexual relationships on the other. The typical sexual relationship documented in the few existing studies shows that sex in prison is mostly transactional, which is also the case in Zambia. Further, studies have established that HIV is a considerable problem in prisons in Africa, and that HIV transmission occurs in prisons.

In the following chapter, we venture into the Zambian case, and explore how sex in the Zambian prisons is perceived in general society and inside prisons, and how prisoners cope with sexuality. Further, we explore

the reasons inmates express for entering into sexual relationships and the practical organisation of sexual encounters and relationships. Finally, we explore the gendered dimensions of the sexual relationship.

7 MASCULINITY, SEX AND SURVIVAL IN ZAMBIAN PRISONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Even if most prisoners are aware of the health risks associated with unprotected sex in prisons, some still enter into sexual relationships. This chapter explores how sex plays into the struggle for surviving prisons psychologically, socially and physically. Some findings echo the findings on sex in prison in other African countries (Chapter 6).

The chapter begins with a short framework for studying sexuality, masculinity and minority sexualities to establish a foundation for the following analysis of sex in Zambian prisons. Next, the public perceptions and attitudes in general society of sex between men are outlined, as prisoners must position themselves to these in one way or another. Then I continue with an account of how sex is understood inside prison. Following this, we explore the ways inmates cope with sexuality inside prison, the process of entering into a sexual relationship, and how sexual encounters are practically organised. Finally, we explore the gendered dimensions of the sexual relationship, where men are turned into 'women' by being the receiving partner in the sexual act, and the active partner has an opportunity to regain a sense of masculinity.

Based on the request of many prisoners who fear outsiders assume that all prisoners or even the majority are sexually active in prisons, it is important to assert that most prisoners in the Zambian prisons do in fact not engage in sexual relationships.

7.2 SEXUALITY AND MASCULINITY

When one enters the field of sexuality, a first question to pose, is how to study this field at all? Epprecht argues that sexuality is often private, hidden, mysterious, encrusted in prejudice, attitudes to sex are often moralistic, and then perhaps simply difficult to understand – even at the personal level. When sexuality is public, it is often in stereotypical forms. How then can we make sense of sexuality in general if we find it hard to understand our own sexuality fully? How then to study same-sex relations in African countries where evidence of homosexuality is often destroyed, where homosexuality is taboo and its existence is denied? In a field so contested, how does one adhere to professional integrity which can stand the test of critical or hostile opinions (Epprecht 2004)? One answer is found in queer theory, where Epprecht argues for a way to analyse sexuality and gender:

We need, in other words, to constantly contextualize and historicise as precisely as we can what words like 'sex', 'man', 'woman' and even 'is' or 'has' meant to the people who used them. Subtle power dynamics can be revealed at work in the assumptions about the meaning of words and silences around sexuality and gender. (Epprecht 2004, p 13)

Studying sexuality, particularly minority sexualities must be contextualised by taking power dynamics into account. Power dynamics relating to sexuality are many. They relate to questions of race, ethnicity, class, history, the state, gender and politics and more. Global forces play a role in terms of the constructions of sexuality and masculinity locally, and can therefore only be understood within a larger global frame, and in a historical context. Colonialism and its aftermath matter, as well as religion, markets, state and media (Epprecht 2004).

Sexuality and sexual behaviour is intimately linked with morality to the extent that perceived deviance is incorporated into international and national law, and is something about which most people will form more

or less informed opinions. Sex is of course a biological, procreative drive - but it is more than that. Human beings have sex for more than procreative purposes. Philosophers and psychologists have debated the sexual impulse for hundreds of years, seeing it on a spectrum from being a danger to harmonious civilised life to nothing particularly offensive (Soble ed. 2002).

Today it is widely agreed within sexuality research that the heterosexuality-homosexuality dichotomy is not a useful categorization. Instead, sexuality should be understood as a continuum of behaviours and feelings that are determined by a wide range of influences. These include genetic disposition, culture, family socialization, geographic space, physical proximity, gender imbalance, life cycle, age, consumption of alcohol or other drugs, and innumerable idiosyncratic features. The small percentage of the population at either extreme of their innate sense of sexual preference is probably constant across the world and has been throughout history. The percentage of people who act in accordance with more ambiguous feelings in their choice of sexual partners, however, varies enormously over time and across cultures. Sexuality, in other words, is not merely a natural or instinctive phenomenon (Eprecht 2004, p 11).

In the above Eprecht points to global forces and many other themes which are relevant to shaping gender and sexuality. Within the limitations of this PhD, it is not possible to analyse all these themes in depth. Instead, I will attempt to give a brief overview of the societal context in which masculinity and sexuality is acted out in the Zambian context.

Masculinity and sexuality are largely social constructions. Bourdieu claims there is no set of universal definitions of masculinity and femininity, yet there are some pervasive features which continue to persist.

Crudely depicted, femininity is associated with passivity, the private sphere and subordination to men, and masculinity is associated with authority, dominance and the public sphere (Bourdieu 2001). Notions of masculinity are also associated with male virility, control and sexual performance (crudely expressed as control over women, also in sexual relations). Sexual potency is associated with social potency and value (Silberschmidt 2001).

Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity was first outlined in his 1995 work 'Masculinities' (Connell 1995), and has since been nuanced further (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' emphasizes that the 'dominant' version of values and attributes ascribed to masculinity is closely linked to the specific context in which they are exercised. This means that there is not one masculinity, but plural masculinities with differing expressions and values. The individual will be a multi-layered and divided subject, and masculinity is not an all-encompassing concept for understanding men's identities or actions. Individuals may draw on different gender strategies in different situations and contexts. Connell and Messerschmidt sum up the original meaning of Connell's concept hegemonic masculinity:

Hegemonic masculinity was understood as the pattern of practices that allowed men's dominance over women to continue. Hegemonic masculinity was distinguished from other masculinities, especially subordinated masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity was not assumed to be normal in the statistical sense, only a minority of men might enact it. But it was certainly normative. It embodies the currently most honoured way of being a man, it required other men to position themselves in relation to it. (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p 832)

In 2005, Connell with Messerschmidt aimed to broaden this understanding of masculinity by including the agency of subordinated groups:

We suggest, therefore, that our understanding of hegemonic masculinity needs to incorporate a more holistic understanding of gender hierarchy, recognising the agency of

subordinated groups as much as the power of dominant groups and the mutual conditioning of gender dynamics and social dynamics. (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p 848)

Connell and Messerschmidt criticize how hegemonic masculinity is sometimes associated with negative characteristics only, such as men being unemotional, non-nurturing or aggressive. Hegemonic masculinity can quickly become a 'type' of masculinity, which is understood as resistant to change, domineering and sexist. Naturally, because hegemonic masculinity is often associated with men's collective dominance over women, it is an easy trap to fall into. However, it is important to emphasize that even if hegemonic masculinity is often used as an explanation for both criminal, violent and suppressive behaviour, hegemonic masculinity is mostly associated with 'positive' actions, such as providing for the family, sustaining a sexual relationship or being a father (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005).

Masculinities are not historically given, but negotiated and reinterpreted over time, in different contexts and in everyday life. Femininity and masculinity are relational, and masculinity is contested and conflictual. Older forms of masculinities may be replaced by newer ones. Connell and Messerschmidt continue:

Thus, hegemonic masculinities can be constructed that do not correspond closely to the lives of any actual men. Yet these models do, in various ways, express ideals, fantasies and desires. They provide models of relations with women and solutions to problems of gender relations. Furthermore, they articulate loosely with the practical constitution of masculinities as ways of living in everyday local circumstances. (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, p 838)

There is not a strictly defined 'Zambian', 'African' or 'European' masculinity, and masculinity is harboured and interpreted, shaped and constructed differently in different local settings, groups and by individuals. Silberschmidt argues how social context matters:

Sexuality is not a 'biological given', but is socially and culturally constructed and in a constant state of flux. Moreover, in order to understand sexuality and sexual behaviour in general and male sexual behaviour in particular, especially in an HIV/AIDS context, there is a need to focus not only on the incidence of particular attitudes and practices, but on the social and cultural context in which sexuality is shaped and constituted. Research attention should be directed not merely to the calculation of sexual frequencies, but to the relations of power and social inequality within which behaviour takes place. (...) socio-economic change in rural and urban East-Africa has increasingly disempowered men. This has resulted in men's lack of social value and self-esteem. With unemployment and men being incapable of fulfilling social roles and expectations, male identity and self-esteem have become increasingly linked to sexuality and sexual manifestations. (Silberschmidt in Arnfred 2004, p 233-234)

In the Zambian context, Simpson argues that some common characteristics emerge from the men he interviewed for his ethnographic study on HIV and masculinity in Zambia. Irrespective of ethnic identity and religious affiliation, an ideology of 'what a real man is' became evident. The men would either attempt to live up to this ideological and naturalised construction and others would challenge it, but it created a space in which they had to navigate (Simpson 2009).

Most Zambian men are expected to be breadwinners and providers for their families (Simpson 2009, Taylor 2006). They should be head of the household and in control of women. Even if nowadays due to urbanisation and unemployment, men have great difficulty living up to that role, the ideology persists. Another central feature of 'a real man' is potency in the sexual conquest. According to Simpson, sexuality for many is a space to create and restore masculinity – this included a strong emphasis on sexual technique and performance.

Masculinity had to be continuously claimed in both public and private spheres. Great insecurity and fragility was attached to masculine identity – both within the individual but also in male peer groups. So, even if masculinity is power, it is also fragile, and men continuously have to strive to reinforce it (Simpson 2009, Silberschmidt in Arnfred 2004, Connel 1995, Connel and Messerschmidt 2005).

In HIV prevention work, there has been a focus on education under the assumption that the bio-medical model can be used to empower individuals to make informed and rational decisions. But a major challenge facing this approach is that sexual practise is characterised by something entirely different. Passion, irrationality and irresistibility are difficult perhaps to reconcile with a bio-medical ‘rational’ approach to safe sex and sexual risk. When men make choices as to how to express and experience their sexuality, there are other risks at stake than only the risk of HIV. The risk of failing to act as a ‘real man’ for many will affect how they act out their performance of sexuality (Simpson 2009).

7.2.1 Masculine identity under threat in prison

Even if the male prison may be hyper-masculine in its structure and practices, and simply by virtue of being all male, imprisonment nevertheless poses a threat to masculinity. The prison culture breathes masculine toughness and insensitivity, and it impugns softness, caring and femininity. Men do *hard time*, not *soft time*. (Sabo et al 2001, p 7). A double-bind process begins right at the police cells. Around the world an important prisoner code centres on ‘being tough’, ‘being a man’, ‘being strong’ and ‘doing your time’ on the one side (Sykes 1972 Liebling 2004, Liebling and Maruna 2005, Jewkes 2005). But on the other side, the tough prison environment does the exact opposite to the confined – it puts masculine identity under stress, as we have seen in Chapter 4. And as seen in Chapter 5, performing masculinity in prison can also be a way to survive imprisonment. Yet at the same time, it can be painful to attempt to live up to the hyper-masculine prison code. In the following quote an 18-year-old prisoner explains how he feels when a good friend of his leaves after visiting him in prison:

Informant: It's not a good feeling, imagine here is a person who you used to hang out with, and now I just find myself seeing him come and when he pleases he can go, it's very hard to see.

Interviewer: What do you think is so hard about that, tell me how it feels?

Informant: I just feel bad, it hurts and because I am a man, I am not supposed to cry. A man has no tears.

Interviewer: Is that so? Who told you this?

Informant: That is what is expected of a man, to be strong and not cry.

Interviewer: A man has no tears?

Informant: A man has to have a strong heart.

Interviewer: Tell me about what a strong heart is all about, because we all have the same hearts with four chambers and same ventricles? How is a man's heart different?

Informant: We are not born in the same way as women. It's as if we are born with a demon that is hard hearted, and you will find that women are better off, and you can just say that God is the only one that may know the secret.

Interviewer: So, when you say being strong hearted what do you mean, can you explain it to me as I am a woman, and would like to understand how you perceive this?

Informant: I will give you an example I came here a long time ago, and you will find a lot of people have died from the time, I have been here. There are times that you will see the dead bodies being carried on a mattress, as they go past you. (...) As often as it happens you will never find anyone crying, because a friend has died. No, life goes on as usual, and people will even go about their normal routines, like eat nshima as if nothing happened. It's taken lightly, and life goes on but in the female section when one of them dies, you will hear them cry. Us men are just strong.

In the above, this prisoner shows how crying is taboo, and how male prisoners respond differently to deaths of fellow inmates compared to women. This younger prisoner feels that deaths 'are taken lightly' and men 'are just strong'. Nevertheless, the interview excerpt shows how the expectation of 'being strong' and 'being men' is 'hard' for him, as he finds no outlet for his pain. Visits from the outside are very important to the inmates, but they do not only serve as support but also as painful reminders of their own incarcerated status. They are not able to help their family members financially, or support them in other ways. They are at risk of perceiving themselves as a burden:

Our tradition stipulates that as a man I am supposed to be providing for (my family). I am a man and I am not supposed to be kept by a sister ('being kept' refers to being provided for)... that hurts me a lot (...) and that is difficult for me to take.

The guilt mentioned in Section 4.3.10 also comes out in connection with the threat to the identity of being a man:

I blame myself for those things (his sisters becoming HIV positive, because they had to make 'bad choices'), as I seem to believe that if I was there, this could not have happened. Two of my sisters died from HIV/AIDS, so if I was there providing for them, helping them in one way or another, they could maybe have survived. Now, I was not there (...) In our tradition we believe that a man is the one who is supposed to take care of the family. We are heads of our families and that is the way we understand being a man in our traditions. Now, look at what is happening. I am here (in prison) and they are the ones who are taking care of me. So in one way or another, I can blame myself.

In this way, prisoners express great distress and guilt of losing the possibility of providing for and taking care of their families, compounded by having to watch their families suffer because of their absence, whilst at the same time being a burden to them. One inmate was convinced he had killed his daughter and wife due to the stress of his incarceration. He explained how the child had visited him for the first time in prison, and within days, she had passed away, having lost appetite. Shortly after, the wife also succumbed due to hypertension and depression. Several inmates described how they questioned the purpose of their lives, of not being of 'any use' as a provider for their families. This experience of being socially denigrated, shamed or humiliated is very painful. Erving Goffman also speaks of what happens when one is robbed of a sense of belonging: *Without something to belong to, we have no stable self.* (Goffman 1961, p 280)

A last and well known pain of imprisonment relating to masculinity is lack of women and the lack of opportunity to engage in heterosexual relationships (D'Alessio 2012, Cohen and Taylor 1972). One inmate explains:

Of course, we miss and we are talking about women sometimes. You know women are important just as the women feel men are important also. There are certain areas also where a man should come in and where women should come in. It is not like no man is an island.

The lack of heterosexual relationships is a very painful part of imprisonment. Not only because the inmates are deprived of conjugal visits (sex), but also the lack of ability to interact with women is painful. At times, the men enter the female sections of prisons to perform duties, and at times, women from the female sections enter the male sections to partake in courses. Such visits are rare, but even on those occasions, men and women are forbidden to speak to each other. Sykes speaks of inmates being *figuratively castrated*, and speaks of the pain of not being allowed sexual intercourse, and expresses concerns of psychological problems in terms of insecurity of their masculinity, because *his status of male – is called into question* (Sykes 1958, p 71). Sykes sums it up:

In addition to these problems that stem from sexual frustration per se, the deprivation of heterosexual relationships carries with it another threat to the prisoner's image of himself – more diffuse perhaps, and more difficult to state precisely and yet no less disturbing. The inmate is shut off from the world of women, which by polarity gives the male world much of its meaning. Like most men, the inmate must search for his identity not simply within himself but also in the picture of himself he finds reflected in others; and since a significant half of his audience is denied him, the inmate's self-image is in danger of becoming half complete, fractured, a monochrome without the hues of reality. (Sykes 1958, p 72)

7.3 ATTITUDES TO SEX IN PRISONS IN GENERAL SOCIETY AND INSIDE PRISONS

Epprecht documents that men had sex with men before Europeans entered the African continent, and that claims of homosexuality being imported by Europeans are false. He documents for instance how various words in various African languages refers to same sex practices, which seems to have no connection to European presence. Even if these words exist as 'African' – they still evoke shame, anger and denial by many Africans today. These attitudes have been amplified in recent years, for instance by President Mugabe of Zimbabwe in 1995 declaring gays and lesbians being 'as worse than pigs and dogs', an 'abomination' and 'rotteness'. In Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Namibia leading church officials and presidents have publicly attacked homosexuals and depicted them as an external threat, imported by Westerners. In Namibia, the president in the late 1990s declared homosexuals one of the two top enemies of the national government. The most outspoken homophobes use biblical and family-values arguments – interestingly close to the homophobic right wing arguments of the Western conservatives. Notably, the homophobic attitudes may at least in part have come from the West (Epprecht 2004, Epprecht 2008).

To many Africans, homosexuality is not easily reconciled with the image of the masculine African man, as homosexuality is widely considered a Western import and 'Un-African' (Epprecht 2004, Epprecht 2008, Kangaude 2014). In the 1980s HIV was considered a 'gay plague', and many Zambians, like many people around the world, argued that it was of no threat to them, since they were not homosexual. Anthony Simpson quotes one of his informants: *It's you Europeans, who are homosexuals. We African men like our women* (Simpson 2009, p 4). The general public, public administrators and politicians in many countries mostly condemn, tone down or outright deny sex between men in prison, generally from a religious or 'cultural' standpoint (Epprecht 2008, Chenier 2007, Moster and Jeglic, 2009).

The official denial of sex between men (and women, but not so relevant in terms of HIV risk) is seen in the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework 2014-16, where the government estimates that the otherwise well

known risk group 'men who have sex with men' (be they prisoners, or homosexual, bisexual etc.) only constitute 0.1% of the Zambian population (Zambia National AIDS Council 2014). In prisons sex, whether voluntary or forced, is looked upon as deviant behaviour, unnatural and, correctly, as risk behaviour in terms of HIV infection and other sexually transmitted diseases amongst most Africans (Hensley et al. 2000, UNAIDS, UNODC and World Bank 2008).

In Zambia, sex in prisons is highly controversial, and government is reluctant to share too much information publicly, even if Correctional Service is aware of the situation in prisons, and do allow NGO HIV prevention activities to go on. For instance, in 2013 Lusaka Times reported that *the Zambian Prisons Service has never come across incidences of sodomy in prisons, contrary to claims made by former convict Sishekano Lubinda that the vice is rampant, especially at the condemned section in Mukobeko Maximum Prison.*⁴⁶ Later the same year, the Commissioner of Prisons did not deny sex activities in prisons, but argued that because people were now highly aware of HIV/AIDS, the prevalence of sexual risk behaviour had significantly dropped.⁴⁷ Despite a prison HIV and AIDS policy (Ministry of Home Affairs and Zambia Prisons Service 2009) dictating the same prevention options for prisoners as for general society, condoms are not distributed. The argument here is that as so-called homosexuality is illegal, and condoms would promote same-sex activity in prisons.⁴⁸

The stigma of homosexuality in general society is extended to those who have sex with men in prison. The prisoners condemning sex in prison would regularly refer to Christianity as a justification. *The body is a temple of God* or simply that the Bible states homosexuality is *wrong*. High levels of homophobia exist in the prisons despite sexual relationships being relatively common, and consequently sex in prison is hidden and kept secret (Human Rights Watch 2010, Simooya and anjobo 2001, Gear 2007). This taboo is also documented in that prisoners would unanimously deny the need for condom distribution in prisons (Human Rights Watch 2010, Simooya and Sanjobo 2001), arguing it would only promote 'sodomy' and 'homosexual'⁴⁹ activity. Two ex-prisoners explained that a group was formed to fight '*the empire of sodomy*'. This entailed serious problems for them, and they explained how they were both almost killed by 'sodomists'. This happened in two different prisons.

Often, the general prison community would consider sex in prison as a form of homosexuality. Yet my data does not indicate that those who engaged in sex themselves would see their practices as an expression of a homosexual identity as such. Rather, it was consistently explained as a way to relieve sexual pressure and sometimes as a way to feel powerful. An inmate attempts to explain what it is like to be deprived of sex.

One of the things you are deprived of in here is one: Freedom, two: Sex. Freedom and sex and what you want to do freely, that is freedom, right? You cannot have sex you are deprived of that and imagine God created you with that feeling in you, and you have the desire to sleep with a woman.

Narrations on why inmates would enter into sexual relationships would centre on the sexual urge being uncontrollable. As an ex-prisoner, who had been involved in sex, explained: *We end up doing that (sex) just because we can't control ourselves.* This perception would be shared by prisoners claiming not to be involved.

⁴⁶ LusakaTimes.com, July 21, 2013: 'Zambia Prisons Service refutes claims that homosexuality is rampant in prisons'.

⁴⁷ LusakaTimes.com: 'Zambia Prisons Service Bans distribution of condoms to prisoners, it encourages homosexuality', August 14, 2013.

⁴⁸ LusakaTimes.com: 'Zambia Prisons Service Bans distribution of condoms to prisoners, it encourages homosexuality', August 14, 2013

⁴⁹ Man-to-man sex is often referred to as 'homosexuality' or 'sodomy' in the context of the prison.

Another response by inmates, to the questions along the line of 'why do you think some inmates enter into sexual relationships', would be very similar to this quote:

(...) but of course I have heard them saying that sodomy is good, (better) than sleeping with a woman or something like that in a normal way. Why, I ask them? They say there is more friction than that of a woman. So, I say what do you mean? They say a woman is looser and it is better and sweeter with the man, and you enjoy sex more.

Even if many inmates may find sex between men generally repulsive, my data suggests that even if many consider the 'women' weak and/or greedy, many would still feel empathy towards them by recognizing that they are typically forced to engage in sex because of poverty:

So, some are taken advantage of. When one has food and (the other) one is suffering, the one without (food) will end up selling their bodies to get food. It is because of the life that they are being subjected to. I tell you, Anne, you will sympathise with them.

A few of the senior/older inmates told the research team of how they would try to speak to those who were 'sodomised' to convince them to get out of it (or perhaps just show their moral superiority). This seems to be done in an attempt to convince them that they are in the wrong and morally condemnable. We did not encounter stories of success in their endeavours. They would explain that those who engage in sex as 'women', once they become 'part of the system, they cannot leave without severe consequences. This entails losing the achieved privileges and a potential risk of punishment by the powerful amongst those who engage in sex:

They will say to you, Mudala (Big Man) I have no one to help me, so leave me alone. Whatever I do is my business and for me to survive here, I need to do this.

The 'men' in the sexual relationship would be viewed with much less sympathy, and described with words like the *sodomy wolf pack* or similar phrases to emphasise of the abusive nature of their actions. The narrative of men who on the inside engage in sexual activities, who then upon release are converted to 'homosexuality' or who now want anal sex with women, is widely prevalent in the prisons:

You know there is one guy, that was in here for 15 years, and he served his sentence, was released, and while he was out there he got into a relationship, and he failed to be with a woman in the normal manner. He started to want to be with the woman in the same manner that he is accustomed to here in prison. That is because he mind is set like that, and he has lost it, and is just accustomed to the craziness of this place.

I propose that this narrative served a purpose of deterring inmates from becoming 'homosexuals', as well as reinforcing the stigma of those who engaged in sexual activities, as they were deemed permanently damaged in terms of both sexuality and morality. The narrative did have some effect on an ex-prisoner who had been involved in sex in prison: He expressed great relief that he upon release was able to be with his wife *in the normal way*.

7.4 COPING WITH SEXUALITY IN PRISONS

Gresham Sykes, in his work on the 'pains of imprisonment', mentions the deprivation of heterosexual relationships as one of the significant pains caused by incarceration (Sykes 1958). Men react and cope differently with sexuality in the all-male prison. Some refrain from any kind of sexual expression, others masturbate and still others enter into various forms of sexual relationships with other men. As with the more

general coping strategies outlined in Chapter 5, inmates will typically draw on more than one strategy over time. I explore this in a bit more detail below.

Losing or suppressing libido

Even if many inmates experience frustrating sexual pressure, there are also those who report no sexual feelings at all. Even if many would perhaps deny having sexual feelings because of the private nature of the matter and the taboo of sexuality in prison, as mentioned in the previous chapter, studies from the West indicate that many indeed lose their sexual libido because of imprisonment. Barth's 2012 quantitative (but due to low response rate not representative) study from German prisons suggests that some 45% of inmates lose sexual libido during incarceration (Barth 2012). Many men interviewed for this study did indeed say that *I don't think about it (sex). It's not on my mind.*

There are also those who struggle consciously not to have sexual feelings. Some explained how they would try to avoid sexual feelings altogether by suppressing sexual thoughts through diverting attention to something else. As shown in Chapter 5, 'keeping busy' through working in workshops, attending school or just any activity, including searching for food, will help prisoners get through their sentence, and the same strategy will also prevent them from thinking too much about sex.

Trying to control sexual feelings, wet dreams and masturbation

Sexual feelings have to be controlled, and due to the significant overcrowding and the harsh social control between inmates, it also has to be hidden. Therefore masturbation has to be done in privacy, which is difficult to find. Nevertheless, several inmates did explain that they would sometimes be able to find a few uninterrupted minutes to themselves in the showers. In Chapter 5, I documented how masturbation can provide a sense of stress relief, and that it can be part of a strategy to survive the stressors of imprisonment.

Even if many inmates try to control their sexual feelings, their bodies may betray them at night. Wet dreams hold a great risk of violence, if the person sleeping next to the person having the wet dream is not of an understanding nature:

Ok the thing is this every person has feelings, and I get to a point where I wish I had a woman. I have masturbated before, but I have given myself a limit on how often, I am going to do it. I have decided to do it only once a month, and that is to avoid wet dreams. I hate wet dreams. I just hate them, because while you are sleeping you are dreaming that you are with this woman, and you are getting it on, and the next thing you just wake up, and she is not there. When you wake up and you are all messed up, and you have to explain to the other guy that you were just dreaming. There have been incidences where this one guy is having a wet dream, and in the process, he starts hitting the other guy, and the other one wakes up catches him and charges him with sodomy and so he has been beaten. So, for me I have resorted to masturbation to avoid that.

Male-to-male sexual relationships

Finally, there are those who engage in sexual relationships. Notwithstanding the desire to think otherwise (among the general public and many prisoners), some incarcerated individuals continue to have an interest in sexual expression (Smith 2006). Men do have sex with men, inside and outside prisons – with important similarities and differences in terms of motivations and sexual expression (Epprecht 2004, Epprecht 2008). In the all-male prison environment, the sex has distinct dimensions and sex is not necessarily an expression of sexual identity or sexual drive for both partners in the sexual encounter. An inmate explains:

The other problem in prison is sodomy which is as a result of lacking food, soap and young boys are usually the victims of agreed sex, because it is for survival needs. HIV is also because of congestion every night. HIV is spreading fast as a result. It is usually a secret between people having sex with each other.

The typical form of sexual relationship is transactional, where the one who is the receiving partner receives food or other necessities as payment. The inmates call it entering into 'marriages'. There is a 'husband' and a 'wife'. As is the case outside of prison, the husband is the man and the provider, and the active partner in the sexual act. As the provider, he has to take care of his 'wife'. The construction of gendered identities are strikingly similar to those on the outside in general society.

7.5 THE PROCESS OF ENTERING SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS — PRISON PAIN AND PRISON SEXUAL RELEASE

As documented in Chapter 6, contracting HIV is more a process than an event, and this is particularly true in the prison environment. New prisoners in particular are targets for more experienced inmates who have spent longer in prison and are more able to navigate prison subculture. The vast majority of my informants emphasized that it was often cell captains, cooks or others with access to resources who took the lead in terms of sexual relationships. This is of course not to say that every cell captain or similar is engaged in sexual activities, but it was a clear pattern in the interviews that it would be those with access to power and resources who would be the active partner in the sexual act, because they can 'pay' for the sexual services provided. This is not strikingly dissimilar from outside society, where various material transactions in connection with sexual relationships are far from uncommon (Hunter 2002).

The new and inexperienced inmates risk falling prey to 'trickery', where more senior inmates (with access to resources) provide them with privileges and gifts, but do not necessarily let them know that the gifts come at a price of providing sexual favours. Inmates would explain: *the women are the weaker ones, the ones who cannot fend for themselves*. An inmate explains how he was approached for sex:

Informant: Yes, they approached me at times. Maybe I have gone for a bath and without knowing I will find something on my bed. Like sugar, cooking oil, stamps such things. At the beginning, I had no idea what was going on and I didn't know. I would ask where did these things come from? I would be told, oh it's from that friend you chat with. He is the one who left these things here and when I ask if I should return them he says no please go ahead and use them they are yours. The next minute someone asks me, you have been eating my things, you need to pay back.

In the above quote, we see that this inmate had not yet learned the golden rule '*nothing is for free in prison*', and he learned it the hard way, when he was not able to pay off a debt in which he suddenly found himself after accepting 'gifts'. At other times inmates are drugged to get them to surrender to sex. I only obtained evidence of this in the section for those condemned to death, but it may happen in other sections as well: a cocktail of benzodiazepine, marijuana or whatever else is available is used. The drugs are added to food or tea, and the victim is tricked into taking it.

You know there are those tablets for psychiatric patients, those small tablets. Those people used to take those tablets. I have a small flask, they open that flask and in the evening they went to my cell and took about six or seven tablets and they put in my tea.

Another inmate described how he had been reported to the prison authorities for engaging in sex, when he in fact had not (yet) done so. He had been locked up in the penal block for punishment, sitting in knee-high

water for days. This false reporting was done to 'soften him up' to make him surrender to having sex with one of the powerful inmates who wanted him as his 'wife'. Again, this particular form of pressure, may be restricted to the section for the condemned.

Even if we find examples of the above quite extreme measures to get selected inmates to surrender, prisoners generally explain that the methods used are somewhat more subtle – even if they too reflect a fundamentally uneven power relationship. The fundamental motivation for the inmate acting as the 'woman' is access to food and other necessities. An ex-prisoner – I call him John, who was sentenced to 10 years in prison – explains a typical story of how inmates end up in a sexual relationship, performing the role of a woman. John is hungry, he worries intensely about his family on the outside and he is troubled by the sleeping conditions. He contemplates whether death is a better option. John explains how he felt at the time, and how entering a sexual relationship became an option for him:

John: I thought it (being imprisoned) was the end of my life. I believed it was death. The way I looked at it, I started to think that death at that point would be a better option. That is how I looked at it, and upon being convicted I did not think for a moment that I would be able to finish my sentence. Because that is why I believed it was death. I wondered who was going to take care of my children. As I thought about that, it got harder for me. I had no one to come and visit me, and so I would ask myself how far I can take this. So many times I thought about death. Each and every time I entertained the thought of committing suicide (...) The feeling of death for me was inside. (...) So now, while inside I learnt there are people amongst us that have a lot of privileges. They have good food and nothing that they lack and the people have food stuffs like chicken, beef, fish and are very comfortable. Their lives are not too different to people on the outside.

Interviewer: And how was that for you? You were looking at these people who had food. What went through you head as you saw this?

John: That is what I found difficult because when got there I formed a friendship with one of the inmates in there. (...) This person was involved in sodomy, and he was being used by those people that had access to good food. (...) You see that friend of mine had no relatives, but had good food all the time.

Interviewer: Did you know that this person was being used as a woman?

John: You see this person had briefed me, and it was like the person... they were indulging (in sex) (There was someone) who had told him that he had a friend that needed someone to sleep with. So, he came up to me and told me that, look, here you are suffering, and you don't have soap, you eat food without cooking oil. In prison, this is the way we survive, and it was not very easy for me to understand, what was going on or later on accept. But then after a while my friend (the man who wanted to have sex with him) started to give me food.

Interviewer: And so this friend keeps on giving you food?

John: Yes. Yes, he was giving me food, after I was told that there is a person that would like to do this and that with you. (...) That decision was not easy, and it was very difficult for me, until I reach a point where I thought ok maybe let me allow this man to sleep with me, because this hunger is too much. You see, he had started with giving me food and then stopped. (...) I failed to contain the suffering. Prison pushes you against the wall, which forces you to do something.

In this quote we see how the experience of imprisonment – including the physical conditions, lack of food, worries about the family, social isolation – causes a feeling of death. In Chapter 4, I document the pains of imprisonment, which leads many inmates to feel that imprisonment is death. It is death on several levels. Literal death due to the poor conditions of imprisonment in terms of food and disease and so forth. It is also social death in terms of losing family and the role of provider, and death of the person's sense of self, because of the threat to the individual's identity and sense of masculinity. John is representative of the inmates who feel that imprisonment is death. For some, this feeling is at the heart of the decision to enter a sexual relationship. Much like Ewoame (see Section 6.5), I propose a connection between the experience of imprisonment being death and involvement in sexual relationships. Another inmate explains the connection between lack of hope, death and sex:

Many of them have no hope to say they will come out, and for them to relieve their sexual desires, what they had to do was to give an impression to the other man (...) (that) we are never going out, and we are going to die from here.

Concerns about the psychological, social and physical effects of agreeing to be 'sodomised' are pushed aside for the sake of survival – at least in the short term. Entering sexual relationships, for those constructed as women, seems mainly a reflection of the limited options they have. Those who make the decision of becoming the receiving partner in the sexual event and thus a 'woman, wife or girlfriend' make this choice out of a range of difficult or impossible choices, yet it is often an active strategy of survival. Again, as I argue based on Vigh in Chapter 5, those in chronic crisis indeed have limited possibilities to act. An inmate talks about why he thinks some become 'women':

I think most of the people involved in these acts are not themselves, truly educated I think and then most of them have been neglected by their parents. Most of them I think are going through a period of rejection such that you know if they, seeing the kind of attention they get when they swap sexes, that acts as maybe a compensating mechanism from the rejection that is outside. People are not treating them in a certain way. They have everybody wanting to have a piece of them, some will even have fights over them. So, that sort of builds their ego and you know how prison is it tears you up and it makes you feel like a nothing. When you feel like you are nothing the last people you want to lose are your family and their support. People that you love and care for but if they turn their backs on you I think that is then what happens to these people. They tend to feel rejected and just try to get by.

Yet in the longer term, engaging in sex puts your life in literal danger due to HIV infection in conditions of less than optimal health care (Lindegaard and Gear 2014). Sex may give access to certain privileges, such as protection, food or other necessities. In this way, it can be a necessary strategy devised by some to ensure at least short-term survival. Concerns about the psychological, social and physical effects of agreeing to be 'sodomised' are pushed aside for the sake of survival – at least in the short term. John explains how he had to push aside any concerns:

Mostly when you are going through problems most of the time you do not regret, because you are so desperate for a way to end your problems. Like in prison, you just concentrate on the fact that your life has to improve, and you have no time to reflect on what is going on. It is only now, that I have left prison, is when I have regrets.

For John, it was a struggle to agree to enter a sexual relationship. John describes the first act in detail to me. He tells me it was the worst day of his life, because of the fear, the pain of submitting yourself to abuse (allowing the abuse) and the physical pain:

John: On that first day, I felt bad and was in a lot of pain, and I thought I will never do it again. It was that friend of mine that convinced me saying, that you see, it will all stop, and you will get used to it (...). So, I asked him how it works. He assured me, that there is no problem, and that is when he took me. That day was a Sunday, because you know on Sunday that is when the prison is very quiet and people sit in one place (church). The other places in the prison will have no people. So, he explained that this is where you have someone have sex in the anus with you, and when you allow that, you will not suffer. (...) The Kapitawas are normally the ones that do these things.(...) I was told in advance that I will be called on Sunday under the pretext, that you will be cleaning up for us. But now my worry, OK, I wondered how they were doing it, and I was scared as I did not know it was done. To my surprise when I got there, I was told can you take off your (pants), I resisted a bit and then he pulled me and asked me to bend over and from there, that is when I got really scared. It is at that point, that I have been most scared in my life, and if anyone asked me the worst day of my life that was it. Because they took Vaseline and applied around my anus, and yet I suffered a lot of pain as he tried to penetrate, and so it was tough. (...)

Interviewer: (...) Can you tell me a little more as to why it was the worst day of your life?

John: Because I was forced into doing something that was not natural. Yes, I have said that I had agreed to the act and was not forced, but in as much as I agreed it was enhanced by my circumstances. Why I found it to be the worst day was, one, the anus is meant to pass stool, and now it seems as if that is what is being used to conduct sexual acts. Again, sex is designed to be between a man and woman, and that I still think about it even now that I have been released. (...) What stays with me is the first day, because for one it was very painful, and secondly the way he applied the Vaseline. This whole thing was put in my anus.

Becoming a woman comes with privileges and sacrifices. In the quote, we see how it is difficult to John to come to terms with the physical pain, the idea of man-to-man sex which he sees as ‘unnatural’. John nevertheless speaks of his ‘suffering’ coming to an end after he agreed to sex. Right after the first sexual encounter, John was permitted to change his sleeping position in the cell to a much more comfortable one, and his ‘suffering’ in terms of food and sleeping position ceased. For the resource poor inmates, entering into sexual relationships is thus a way to cope with the harshness of imprisonment, even if it entails a new form of harshness, which we will explore further in Section 7.7 and 7.8.

7.6 THE ORGANISATION OF SEXUAL ACTIVITIES IN PRISON: WHO, WHEN, WHERE AND HOW

Sex is illegal, controversial and if discovered, it entails severe punishments in terms of violence or having extra time added to the existing prison sentence. The lack of heterosexual relationships and resources, in particular food, emphasize patterns of power. As mentioned, the vast majority of sexual relationships are transactional in nature, and even if the inmates in this study call them ‘voluntary’ – in the sense that one is not necessarily beaten to compliance – they are still based on one or more powerful inmates who are able to trick, manipulate or take advantage of certain inmates. Based on my research, the practice of sex often being linked to gang structures as in South Africa and in the United States does not seem to be the case in Zambia. Yet even if there may be no relation to gang structures, there is an ethnic and geographical dimension: ‘men’ do not have sex with ‘women’ from the same ethnic tribe or same geographical home area. In this way, there are indeed certain groupings, but they are not gang related.

According to Simooya's 2010 study, inmates generally have only a few sexual partners at a time, and generally stick to just one. The inmates in this study generally support these conclusions. The general picture formed from the many interviews conducted is that the majority of those entering into sexual relationships are vulnerable in various ways. According to many informants, it is mainly the jailbirds, the unmarried, or those who lack social networks (family and friends), who engage in sex. Often jailbirds are found in high ranking positions, where they with their prison experience may be selected as leaders. At the other end of the spectrum are the so-called weak, who may also be jailbirds, but do not have the skills, resources or power to rise through the ranks. An inmate explains:

You know what it is there are these people that have been in and out of prison, and these are the ones that are mostly involved in sodomy. So even if they are out, and then they come in they will do it, starting from remand to wherever they are convicted, say for instance to here (Mukobeko Medium Security Prison). They start from remand actually from as far as the (police) cells all the way through remand to the point of conviction. All these places they pass through, they will be doing that now here. Why? It is more common, it is because people are meant to stay long. You can imagine people are staying 27 years in prison, someone spending 23, 33 years in prison.

Some high-ranking prisoners explained how it was not only the powerful who approached the young and poor. Sometimes, it is vice versa:

You see like, at one point I was approached by a young person inside here. He said to me: Ba Mudala, you have over stayed in here, don't you want me to help you, so that you can help me. What sort of help do you want me to give to you, and he then said to me, that I just want you to be buying me lotion, sugar and give me food like nshima and rice. (I said) what help are you offering me in exchange for those things? He then said I will allow you to sodomise me.

The mutually reciprocal relationship of 'kissing' or satisfying each other by hand, seemed to be hidden and rare, and it was not possible as part of this study to identify any person involved in this kind of relationship. Nor was it possible to identify relationships based on mutual affection only, and the vast majority of inmates interviewed rejected the idea. Only one inmate mentioned having been approached by 'a friend' – a fellow inmate – who had suggested a mutual sexual relationship, but he said he rejected the offer. Based on the interviews conducted, the mutual sexual relationships appear rare as compared to the more general picture of anal and transactional sex. Some spoke non-specifically of inmates who would form sexually reciprocal relationships, or would use other methods to achieve ejaculation than anal intercourse:

Informant: Some of them like kissing each other, imagine kissing your fellow man, kissing each other, until they ejaculate and they feel better. Then there are other groups that prefer through the mouth and not through the anus and they say that through the mouth it is quicker than through the anus.

Interviewer: Quick is good, because they will not be found?

Informant: Yes, they will not be found, and no one will know what has just happened. As soon as he has released, he will just clean himself up quickly and get on with it. This is what happens inside there, and there are groups of people, those that are being sodomised, some that are just kissing each other, and then there are some who are doing it through the mouth.

Practically, sex takes place in various places, usually the toilets and/or the small cells in the condemned section, where a blanket for privacy covers the cell door. In the general prison population, sex may also take place in the dormitory cells during the day. It will often take place on Sunday mornings when the clear majority of inmates are at the chapel. A prisoner with privilege and power can ask another inmate (sexual partner) to stay back under pretence of cleaning the cell for instance. A third prisoner will act as guard, warning them if anyone approaches.

7.6.1 Sexual minorities in Zambian prisons

In Zambia, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender/transsexuals, intersexuals and queer persons have been at severe risk of arrest, torture, imprisonment and public humiliation. LGBTI rights movements are very weak in Zambia, and open non-heterosexual sexual expression is dangerous, even if Zambia is not one of the countries where violence is at the highest. There are people who 'have been arrested for same sex activity in the Zambian prisons, though there are not many (even if one may argue that even one is too many).

The research team only managed to collect anecdotal information on these persons. The data suggests that as they enter into the prison environment, they receive extra sexual attention, and based on this there is reason to believe that they may be victims of sexual abuse in various forms. I asked an inmate how those sentenced to prison for 'homosexuality' (or rather sodomy to be exact) are treated:

Their treatment depends on whether they are men or women. The women are generally treated well and access extra food and so forth. I must have mentioned that the cooks are most of them members of the sodomite wolf pack. The men are generally treated with hostility as they are perceived as competition.

And yes it is true that the 'women' have to contend with sexual advances more than others. I recall an incident when a new prisoner was found wearing women's underwear. When word went round, he became the subject of much attention.

Clearly, there are some stereotypes at play in terms of how homosexuals have sex (in terms of the strict separation of 'men' and 'women'), but the quote nevertheless tells something about the perceptions which inmates sentenced for 'homosexuality' may face.

The research team did not manage to collect information on how or if staff attempt to protect homosexual individuals from abuse, due to the controversy surrounding the issue amongst staff. As a general rule, at least in Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison⁵⁰, if reported, staff will attempt to prevent serious abuse occurring, through for instance transferring people between cells or to counsel them to resolve the conflicts. Nevertheless, far from everything is reported, and I simply do not know how they would respond to inmate reports of that type. I am, however, aware of an intersex man who was isolated from other inmates at night to protect him from potential sexual abuse. During the day, he would work in a specific part of the prison, where for his protection he would be away from the general prison population.

7.7 CONSEQUENCES OF ENTERING INTO SEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

7.7.1 Stigma and violence

As mentioned, having wet dreams in the cells at night is risky. On occasion, the research team encountered reports of inmates accused of raping a fellow inmate – even if based on interviews with both 'victim' and

⁵⁰ There are big differences between the prisons.

'perpetrator', we would interpret it as a case of a wet dream. Like the inmate quoted in Section 7.4, in cases of a wet dream you are dependent on an understanding sleeping partner. This, however, is not guaranteed. One inmate explained how one man had 'messed up' another during the night. It sounded like the inmate had ejaculated (possibly) in his sleep and his sperm had then (due to congestion) ended up somewhere on another man's body, most likely on the buttocks or stomach depending on the sleeping position. It was explained as 'sodomy' and 'rape', and the inmate was punished harshly. The interpretation of wet dreams as rape, may explain the findings of 47% of inmates reporting having witnessed rape, as described in section 6.6. An inmate explains the punishment of another so-called rape:

That is what happens, but there in the condemned section, where this person woke up in the night and raped someone. He wakes up and pushes himself into this person, and he was beaten badly. They tied him with socks, bed sheets and things like that. Morning came and he was still being beaten.

Inmates would explain how inmates, who had been involved in sexual activities, sometimes had to be transferred to other prisons to protect their lives. Inmates who do not themselves engage in sex with men will most likely turn their backs on those who engage in sexual relationships – even friends – if they find out what is going on. The below quote illustrates a reaction by a juvenile upon learning that his friend had engaged in sex:

(...) I ask what is the matter? He tells me direct to my face saying (name) do you know what was happening to me? (...)Yes (there were) four that sodomised him, and I asked him what did you want from all of these four of them? I had to wonder (...) he would not be visited, but he would bring me cooking oil like two bottles, new bowls... and I started to have a feeling... he is up to no good. So I asked him, what did you get (...), and as I asked him, that he started to cry. I told him to his face you have spoilt yourself, and from this day onwards please do not come to me.

7.7.2 Health risks: Fear, violence and HIV

Being the so-called 'woman' in the sexual event seems to be connected with significant risk. There are conflicts of access to and/or ownership of the 'women' and it seems that 'women' are at risk of ill health connected to violence, ruptures of the anus muscles, infections, and not least HIV transmission. The latter of course goes for the so-called men as well.

Several inmates reported that they had witnessed inmates with enlarged/loose anuses, and some with severe infections in the anus. It was widely acknowledged that *sex kills* because of HIV infection. There is also a widespread conviction that sperm in the anus causes infection of the stomach and intestines. Even if it is factually not the sperm, but rather cuts and wounds which may become infected, there is little doubt that there is a significant health risk.

I have seen some of these boys dying because the anus opens up, because of the different number of men entering the boy and I have seen them dying. They shit careless just like that, and so I have seen those sometimes dying, because it is just open like that.

Access to health care when infected is very difficult because it entails admitting to the painful taboo of prison sex – and because it places the inmate at risk of exposure to prison officials and to their families. The below quote illustrates how the family may refuse to pay for an inmate's medical treatment, if he is sick because of sexual activity.

Yes, they (health workers) found sperms inside the intestines, and then some of them their anus was like a rotten bowl. There was one (...) he was advised to remove that, so he needed to approach his relatives to help him do that (finance the surgery). But none of these relatives agreed.

If 'women' become seriously ill, they will be shunned, and no one will take care of them, and they will rarely be taken to hospital or the prison clinic. A clinical officer reported that he was well aware of sexual activities in prisons, but he had never seen a case in the clinic related to this. Another clinical officer in a different prison reported seeing evidence of sex in prisons through for instance a high level of STDs, with certain symptoms prevalent only in persons who had engaged in anal sex (for example genital warts around the anus). Even if he saw the evidence, the inmates in question would not admit to having conducted risky sex in prison. Naturally, many inmates do contract the STDs before entering prisons, and one cannot assume that an STD diagnosed in prison is necessarily the result of prison sex.

In a Western context, studies have shown the effects of sexual violence in prisons, which include inmate depression, suicidal thoughts, anxiety, fear, guilt, shame and posttraumatic stress disorder (Morash et al 2010, Schnittker and Bacak 2015). I have little data to support this apart from the fact that one of the three inmates I knew to be involved was clearly very psychologically fragile.

Murder of 'girlfriends' is far from the general picture, but is pervasive in the narratives of prison sex described both by prisoners engaging in sex and those who do not: *There was once a man (...) he killed a boy because of sodomy. He killed, he hammered the boy.* After some investigation on the author's part, it turned out that the incident happened in 2000, and had not happened since. This does not mean that being involved in prison sex does not entail risk, but it does indicate that the narrative of prison sex is very strong in terms of the risk of brutal violence and death – quite possibly much stronger than in reality. This has some resonance with Fleisher and Krienert's study (Section 6.3) in which they argue that claims of high prevalence of violence, rape and sex in prisons was more a narrative than actual practice. In the Zambian prisons, murder in relation to prison sexual relationships may be very rare, while violence and threats of violence are more common. A 'woman' speaks about the threats he is given:

They (...) are saying they are going to kill me outside (prison). That is why I am saying, I will leave Zambia and go somewhere. They will tell me, when we meet you outside, you are dead.

7.8 THE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP AND CONSTRUCTIONS OF GENDER

In prison there is a

hierarchal process of inter-male dominance in which groups of elite males subjugate and dominate groups of lesser-status males' (...) Men's prisons constitute a key institutional site for the expression and reproduction of hegemonic masculinity. (Sabo 2001, p 5)

As discussed in section 4.3.10, imprisonment poses a threat to masculine identity. Prisoners have to find different ways to survive in a social environment which in many ways is characterised by hyper-masculine values and behaviours. Men may not show vulnerability, because it will be seen as weakness. At the same time, inmates' sense of identity as men, who provide for their families and are useful to society in general, is challenged.

Engaging in sex in Zambian prisons brings with it a reinterpretation of gender roles. My data does not indicate that men who have sex with men in Zambian prisons consider their sexual practices an expression of a 'homosexual' identity. Studies suggest the sexual identity politics of the West are found less in an African

context where many men are less likely to identify as homosexuals, even if some may still enter into sexual relationships with men, perhaps alongside relationships with women (Lorway 2007, Niehaus 2002). The practice of man-to-man sexual relationships, according to these studies, is not necessarily associated with a sexual identity as homosexual, but it is rather to be understood as a practice (Epprecht 2008, Epprecht 2004).

Even if scholars have documented this sexual flexibility elsewhere, my research rather suggests that Zambian prisoners who enter into sexual relationships – whether they themselves would identify as homosexual or not – are perceived as such by others, and this has severe negative consequences. They are severely stigmatised, also by the narrative of being ‘converted to homosexuality’, suggesting quite a different understanding on homosexuality than these studies claim. Niehaus’ claim (see Chapter 6.5) of the ‘muted and incipient’ critique of normative gender roles - if applied to the Zambian prison context - seems very difficult to document. Rather, it seems that the narratives around sex in prison use language that emphasise traditional masculine and feminine roles.

Some prison scholars make claims about prison subculture as being oppositional to general society, for instance when the subculture gives social recognition (even if sometimes reluctantly so) to a murderer in prison (Morash 2010). It would be tempting to interpret sexual relationships in Zambian prisons as oppositional to general society as well, because the practice is so strongly condemned, stigmatised and entails such great risks. I would, however, argue that the understanding of sex is rather a translation of gender roles from the outside, even if the physical practice of sex is oppositional to the values of general society. The male/female dichotomy is maintained by the constructions of ‘husbands’, the ‘wives’, ‘men and women’. In this way, male-to-male sex cannot be understood as oppositional, but rather as a reinterpretation of gender roles and sexuality in an environment without women. Sexuality in prison, I argue, is a reflection of the general society’s hetero-normativity.

An inmate observes the particularities of the relationship between a ‘man’ and a ‘woman’:

He proposes to that person and starts taking care of that person (...) and it is funny you find that a man is taking good care of another man like a woman. Buying him lotion and things like that, and even when they talk, it is like he is talking to a woman.

7.8.1 The construction of a ‘woman’

Through sex, prisoners position themselves in the prison context. Those, who perform the ‘active’ male sexual role, are perceived as ‘real men’ and thus masculine, and those penetrated are emasculated, and often turned into ‘wives’. Umwana – meaning child - is way of asserting ownership of a ‘woman’. This says something about the relationship. The ‘child’ (or also often called ‘wife’ or ‘girlfriends’) are to be taken care of. They are to be treated with care – in return for their sexual services.

In the below (Section 7.8.2), we see a ‘man’ speaking of sex as a way of helping each other, suggesting though not documenting a somewhat kinder interpretation of the relationship between the sexual partners than one of sexual abuse. In this way one could argue that he sees his sexual involvement not as sexual abuse, but as a reciprocal relationship where they simply help each other out. This may well serve the purpose of legitimising sex and sexual abuse, or justifying sexual activity in an environment where ‘women’ will have sex for survival and material purposes. Again, something which is not too different from relationships seen between many men and biological women outside of prison. Studies have shown that women can be active agents using their sexuality to achieve material and economic progress, which may otherwise be difficult or impossible to attain (Silberschmidt and Rasch 2001, Helle-Valle 2004, Haram 2004, Groes-Green 2013). The

below quote from an inmate hints at 'women' who may be in a subordinated position but may still be able to make demands:

The 'women' are treated with a lot of care and attention as one would a wife; they are to want for nothing, and make all sorts of demands from their lovers. The 'women' play their parts with a degree of conviction. (Letter 2012)

The receiving partner is constructed as a 'woman' in the social life of the prison beyond the sexual act. They perform 'female' duties, such as sweeping. A staff member explains which role the 'woman' in the relationship adopts:

(...) after some time in prison he has got no visitors and doesn't have access to any form of support. So, he turns himself as a woman in prison and I have encountered a lot of those and it is difficult to deal with but you will notice there is something that is different about this guy. He will adopt a feminine approach and you will discover that he is a guy who will not be involved in masculine activities. Say if it is labour he will not be employed in the garden, and these guys have a way of getting to the guards. And finding some suitable kind of work for that guy and you will find that maybe he works at the library or the laundry and so on... those little cozy prison jobs and not the rough jobs that will burn the guy in the hot sun and stuff like that.

John describes the process of becoming a woman as one where you have to perform an act: *You have to act like a woman, you have to pretend that you love the man, you are very restricted in every way.* Some 'women' in prison take steps to transform themselves as much as possible into women, including dressing differently, acting feminine, growing their hair, wearing make-up and bleaching their skin. Obviously, this will have consequences for their identity as men. John, an ex-prisoner, explains how 'women' have to act in certain ways:

And if you stop showing that man love, he will dump you and start to make your life difficult (...). You are forced to, ok, forced ...and pretending is ok. You see you get used to the system in prison. Okay, that system has been there, some people will tell you. Especially that friend of mine that I was telling you about. He told me you need to show these people that you love them otherwise you will suffer. So, at that point, you have to make sure that you do what he wants and you show love to this man, but in actual sense you are well aware, that I must not engage in such activities. But you do them just because it will keep you going, so that you can have a comfortable life.

This performance also shows how the roles of a loving relationship from outside is mirrored through the act of *showing love*. Prostitution research shows that many sex customers request an experience which mirrors the traditional girlfriend-boyfriend sex with its mutual affection (Lautrup 2005, Rambøll 2013). The same dynamics could well be at play here, where feelings of social isolation and loneliness together with sexual release ameliorate the pains of imprisonment.

I observed a 'woman' and wrote this in my field notes:

Today I saw an inmate, whom I now with my experience in prison, could identify as a 'woman'. He was small, in fact the height of a short woman. His hair was quite long and straightened, his skin bleached, he wore some kind of eye makeup, and his lips were full and redder than the average man. There was a softness, vulnerability and sensitivity about him. His movements were distinctly feminine, his laughter flirtatious in a girlish way, even when he

spoke to an officer. Yet he had something defiant about him, and he gave me the impression that he could easily be ignited into anger. In the interview, he explains how his life has been shaped by poverty and loneliness, and how he is a guy who is quiet and avoids trouble.

John explains that his first 'husband' took good care of him, even after he had been transferred to a different prison. The 'husband' would still send him soap and other things. John was less happy with the second husband, who did not treat him with as much care. Even if the sexual relationship was clearly based on an unequal power relationship and had significant elements of abuse, it is important not to automatically reduce sex in prison to merely an abusive and unequal relationship. In the interview, it was clear that John liked his first husband in some way, even if he was ambivalent about it. He had felt taken care of and even if it was difficult for him to act as a woman, he also did start enjoying sex with him:

For me at the beginning that person took me and put Vaseline on my anus and started to thrust into me, and so I felt pain on the first and second times, but later on I got used to it and felt the pleasures of having sex with someone else.

Here, the earlier mentioned human sexual flexibility and the falseness of hetero-homosexual dichotomy of sexual preference comes into play, when John 'gets used to' having sex in the role of a 'woman'. After a short time, John started to enjoy it, however painful it was initially. John (taking on the role as the woman) fantasised about 'doing the other guy'. He became curious to feel how it was to take on the role as the man. About a year and two husbands later, John is promoted to cell captain, a position of significant power in the hierarchy and access to privileges, including food. Now, John can take on the role of a man who is able to take care of a woman materially. He can now select a sex partner, a 'woman' for himself.

On the other hand, the second husband had not been a good one, and the relationship with him did not have any real warmth. Still, he was not in a position to leave because he needed the food and the comforts the relationship provided. Even if heterosexual relationships on the outside of prison may be characterised by unequal power relations, there are still important elements of female agency and power. But even if 'women' may have some influence in the prison environment, I would caution against too strong a parallel to biological women on the outside. I would argue that the sexual relationship in prisons has distinct dimensions to it which bring out more extreme elements of hegemonic masculinity.

7.8.2 The construction of a 'man'

The construction of the 'man' is solely based on his active (penetrative) role in the sexual act. As mentioned the typical explanation of why some inmates choose to enter into sexual relationships centres on the sexual urge being uncontrollable. This is the explanation offered both by inmates engaging in sex, and by those who do not. An inmate, who was not involved in sex, spoke of 'men' and 'women':

They (the 'women') will approach this one (a 'man') and say I don't have this (food, soap etc), and of course they know that he a lion, he is going to devour them. They go where they feel there is honey, and bees always go there.

The euphemisms of lions devouring women, and the bees and honey are sexualised and indicate a certain hyper-masculinity (Holberg 2001) which emerges from engaging as a 'man' in the sexual relationship. The 'man' receives a sense of recognition through sex, where he shows he is the dominant one, and this – in spite of the general homophobia – affirms his masculinity, because he is the active partner in the sexual act, and therefore he is not a woman. The 'men' the research team spoke to clearly expressed how they viewed the receiving partner in the sexual act as 'women'. Words such as 'she', 'girl' and 'wife' would flow naturally

during these interviews. In this way, some dominant prisoners manage to secure a sense of masculinity through being 'the man' in the sexual act.

I wrote the below field notes on one of my last field visits:

After having now interviewed prisoners, whom I from the outset knew were involved in sexual activities, I am beginning to see a pattern. The ones who take on the role as the male in the sexual act, are tall, physically strong and muscles buffed up. To me, they radiate hyper-masculinity with a 'take no shit' attitude combined with a sort jovial behaviour, where the power they hold is subtly reinforced. A few times, I have seen bursts of violent aggression, or the bruises resulting from it.

For those who enter into sexual relationships as the active partner or the 'man', sexual release is typically the reason stated:

You know we are human beings and we have feelings. Like what I have said I have been in prison for 17 years. This will be my 17th year. When you start thinking about sex most of the time your brain always wants to fulfil what you desire, and there are no women in here. So, if you are thinking about that every day in your brain, and there are no women. Then a fellow man comes to you offering you the opportunity to relieve yourself. Once you have tasted that, you will want it again. You see you now know that it is readily available, and you will just keep going there, saying that what can I give you today, so that you can help me out the same way you helped me.

Sex in prisons can in this way also be viewed as a way to relieve sexual pressure, which then is a way reduce the stress of incarceration – at least for some prisoners. The above quote is by an inmate who did not directly admit to being involved in sexual activities, but had been identified by others as a 'man' in the sexual relationship. He was high ranking in the prison environment and he had easy access to resources. It was clear from the interview that he moved in social circles with others involved in male-to-male sex.

At times, so-called 'women' can climb the hierarchy and become 'men' through for instance promotion to a higher rank in the prisoner hierarchy. An ex-prisoner – John - having previously performed the role of 'woman', was elevated to cell captain, a position of significant power and control. He is curious 'to feel what the other man felt', and now wishes to become a 'man' in the sexual relationship. He explains that he is no longer a 'victim', but instead 'powerful'. John now becomes able to look at some of his fellow inmates as women. He feels attraction to one 'woman' who is already in the 'system'. His experience of being powerful is emphasized when he describes his satisfaction with his choice of sexual partner: 'There was no problem, as I got to do what I wanted to do with her'. He explains how inflicting pain on others is 'part of the system':

You see these things happen in prison and I was in prison for quite a long time you see. Even if you felt the pain (of being penetrated) at the beginning you later on forget. Now you also just want to feel how the other one (the man) is feeling. You see, the pain is there but you forget, and yes, it is a selfish act because at the beginning you felt the pain, but you also want to inflict that same pain on the next person. But it is part of the system.

Sex is now for his benefit in a different way. John decides to become a 'man', he is no longer a 'victim', but instead 'powerful', as he explains to me. He is no longer the weak, the passive woman, at the mercy of men, but now instead he is a man. He may have lost his role as the provider of the family, as well as the role of the man in the sexual relationship with his wife on the outside, but he has created a new sense of masculine identity. I would argue that by performing the role of the man in the sexual act and by enacting the role of

the provider, he finds a renewed sense of masculinity. He draws on central elements from hegemonic masculinity, which are power, control over the 'woman', and the role of provider. Traditional gender perceptions are challenged and reinterpreted through male-to-male sexual relationships which would not be practiced by the vast majority of prisoners when they were on the 'outside'.

It is not a morally grounded struggle for recognition, but rather should be understood as a compensatory struggle, where individuals in contexts of disrespect and lack of recognition still aim to achieve recognition. I propose that the compensatory struggle is as a way to obtain some level of recognition as a man – something the experience of imprisonment has placed under severe threat.

We have also seen some evidence of care and support between sexual partners. This can be understood as a way to attempt to create some intimacy in a rough and insensitive environment. In an environment where human beings are placed under such extreme stress, transactional sex may be a way to attempt some level of intimacy, and sex then is not only an instrument of control and abuse. It can be seen as a way to maintain the imaginary of a caring, intimate (heterosexual) relationship. Sex then is many things. It is a struggle for basic survival, and it is a way to cope with sexuality. It is a way to survive socially and psychologically either by obtaining protection, a sense of intimacy and material comfort, or a way to struggle for a renewed sense of masculine identity of which one felt robbed by virtue of the experience of imprisonment. In this way, sex can be seen as a compensatory struggle for recognition of masculinity.

7.9 CONCLUSION

Scholars such as Cohen, Sykes, Goffman and Honneth speak of incarceration as posing a threat to identity. Masculine identity in particular is under threat. Building on this interpretation and on the basis on my empirical data, I propose a connection between the experience of imprisonment as death - as described by many prisoners - and engaging in sexual relationships. Inmates often refer to those who engage in sex as people who have 'lost hope'. It is death on several levels – a threat of literal death as well as threat of death of the individual's identity, including masculine identity.

There is not a strictly defined 'Zambian', 'African' or 'European' masculinity. It is harboured and interpreted, shaped and constructed differently in different local settings, in groups and by individuals. Yet scholars have shown that in a Zambian context, the ideology of masculinity of 'real men' is as head of the household and in control of women. Another central feature of 'a real man' is potency in the sexual conquest. Masculinity has to be continuously claimed in both public and private spheres. Great insecurity and fragility was, however, also attached to masculine identity – both for the individual as well as within male peer groups. So, even if masculinity is power, it is also fragile, and men continuously have to strive to reinforce it. In the prison setting, masculine identity is threatened because prisoners have no chance to live up to the expected masculine roles of the outside world. In male prisons, where men have no real contact to biological women, men's sense of masculine identity is severely challenged.

Studying sexuality and sexual risk behaviour is much more than studying sexual encounters in isolation. Rather, as scholars such as Epprecht argue, sexuality cannot be studied without considering the societal context. In Zambia, sex is socially constructed to take place between a man and a woman. However, in the absence of women, under extreme conditions and deprivation and in an environment where male identities come under threat, a way out is constructed: the young, inexperienced or weaker inmates are 'turned into' 'women' with the pain, privileges and consequences that follow. The active partner in the sexual act regains a sense of power associated with masculine identity through sex and through the role of provider. The imaginary of the heterosexual relationship is restored.

Through sex, prisoners position themselves in the prison context. Those who perform the 'active' male sexual role are perceived as 'real men' and thus masculine, and those who take on the 'passive' role are emasculated, and often turned into 'wives'. A reformulation and interpretation of gendered roles take place, where 'women' are created, who are to be available to 'men'. Traditional gender perceptions are challenged and reinterpreted through male-to-male sexual relationships, which the vast majority of prisoners would not have practiced when they were on the 'outside'.

Some prison scholars claim that some prison subcultures are oppositional to those of the general society, for instance by providing social recognition (even if sometimes reluctantly so) to a murderer in prison. It could be tempting to interpret male to male sexual relationships in Zambian prisons as oppositional to the general society as well. I would rather, however, argue that male to male sex is a translation of gender roles from the outside, even if the physical practice of sex is oppositional to the values of general society. The male/female dichotomy is maintained by the constructions of 'husbands', 'wives', 'men and women'. Therefore male-to-male sex cannot be understood as oppositional, but rather as a reinterpretation or translation of gender roles and sexuality in an environment without biological women. Even if stigmatised by society, staff and other prisoners, the imaginary heterosexual relationship is maintained. Sexuality in prison, I will argue, is a reflection of the general society's hetero-normativity.

The practice of sex between men in prison is not a morally grounded struggle for recognition, but is rather to be understood as a compensatory struggle, where individuals in contexts of disrespect and lack of recognition still aim to achieve recognition. The 'man' may have lost his role as the provider of the family and as the man in the sexual relationship with his wife on the outside, but he has created a new sense of masculine identity. By performing the role of a 'man' in the sexual relationship inside prison, he is once again recognised as a man – but then a man with a distinct hyper-masculinity based on being powerful and in control, but also a role in which he can perform the role of the provider who takes care of his wife.

Yet the masculinity which the active partner has within reach has the potential for harm. Even if the active partner constructs a sense of masculine identity, it is one that is produced by the damaging experience of imprisonment. Being involved in a sexual relationship(s) entails dangers of further exclusion, stigma and self-stigmatisation. In this way, it may be considered a harmful version of hyper-masculinity. The so-called weak are turned into women, with obvious consequences in terms of threats to basic features of masculine identity.

We have seen some evidence of care and support between sexual partners. This can be understood as a way to attempt to create some intimacy in a rough and insensitive environment. In an environment where human beings are placed under such extreme stress, transactional sex may be a way to attempt some level of intimacy, and sex then is not *only* an instrument of control and abuse. Transactional sex can be interpreted as a way to maintain the imaginary of a caring intimate (heterosexual) relationship. Sex then is many things. It is a struggle for basic survival, and it is a way to cope with stress and sexual drive. It is a way to survive socially and psychologically, achieved either by obtaining protection, a sense of intimacy and material comfort, or a way to struggle for a renewed sense of masculine identity of which one felt robbed by virtue of the experience of imprisonment.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY AND MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the dissertation was to answer the research question:

How do incarcerated men survive imprisonment psychologically and socially, and how do sexual relations play into this struggle for survival?

As stated in Chapter 1, my aim was to strengthen the knowledge base of the experience of imprisonment and of the coping strategies inmates employ in Zambian prisons, including sexual risk behaviour for HIV/AIDS. Equally, I wished to provide research based knowledge to aid the facilitation of increased political and public awareness and knowledge-based interventions for improved conditions and prevention of HIV/AIDS, and health in general. These areas are remarkably understudied, and holds the opportunity to shed light on very fundamental characteristics of how individuals are affected by extreme situations, specifically incarceration. This knowledge in turn may provide opportunity to explore and address/alleviate some of the prison pains.

The research question and its answers are important for a variety of reasons.

Prisoner experiences and coping strategies are remarkably under-researched, even compared with other areas of prison research in Sub-Saharan Africa. In other research, the focus has largely been on staff or institutional perspectives. Very few researchers have entered the prison for the sole purpose of understanding prisoners' perspectives. Numerous NGO's and human rights institutions enter prisons, and they provide important information. However, when they enter the prison, it is with an agenda of highlighting human rights abuse or drawing attention to the desperate conditions. It is not that I do not wish to draw attention to prison pain, abuse or the horrendous prison conditions. I certainly do, but my goal was to create a solid foundation for understanding *what matters* for prisoners, how they experience and cope with imprisonment, and what characterises prisoners' emotional and social lives. In this way, I hoped to provide not just information or facts on beatings or overcrowding, or statistics of sexual engagements or HIV, where the reader is left to imagine how this affects prisoners. Rather, I wished to provide a foundation for understanding what imprisonment does to people and how they continue to struggle against all odds for survival in the broadest sense of the word. I believe my contribution lies in 'nuancing and documenting prisoners' lives' through specifically an in-depth analysis of prisoner experiences and coping strategies, as well as understandings of sex in prison.

Harsh hierarchies of punishment, lack of food and materials, lack of justice, lack of access to heterosexual relationships and major health issues can result in severe stress, depression and anxiety – and possibly other mental disorders, such as paranoia. Prison is a place of deprivation, social abandonment, and dehumanisation. Conditions of ill-health, forced intimacy, injustice and lack of recognition, lack of social networks, stigma and social abandonment and ontological insecurity, together with routine, the endlessness of time, guilt and the loss of liberty may fundamentally affect the individual prisoner's sense of masculinity and identity. Translated to Honneth's terms, what is at stake is disrespect in the three spheres of love, law and solidarity, which again constitutes a severe threat to the identity of prisoners. Prisoners are placed in an institution where it can be very difficult to ascribe any positive significance to self.

My analysis also contributes to prisons research with the focus on the possibilities of morally motivated struggles for recognition. I believe my PhD shows the importance human recognition. In this dissertation, I have documented how prisoners – in Honneth’s terms – suffer ‘disrespect’ and how imprisonment severely limits the possibilities of individuals to ascribe positive significance to themselves. They exist in a context of chronic crisis where enormous demands are made on them to survive in physical, social and psychological terms. The effect of imprisonment is no doubt harmful. Yet prisoners are not only passive receivers but cope differently, depending for instance on individual personality, education, skills, background and social networks.

Commonly, prisoners exist in a situation of chronic crisis where enormous demands are made on them to survive. Even if they do have the capacity to act to improve their situation, they have limited options to do so. I identified five categories that describe how inmates respond and or aim to cope with imprisonment. These strategies overlap and prisoners may use all of them at different times, but they were presented in separate categories for analytical purposes. Central for the analysis is how social recognition plays a vital role in terms of how inmates struggle to maintain or construct a sense of identity. Some inmates are not able to ascribe any positive value to themselves, and succumb in the prison environment. Others struggle hard to construct or maintain morally-grounded pro-social identities, whereas others enter compensatory struggles for recognition. These inmates will attain social recognition, but in negative ways in that the recognition is often based on abuse or dominance over others. Of course, not everything comes down to recognition, and coping with imprisonment is also about getting by on an everyday basis where for instance instrumentalism becomes a central coping mechanism.

One type of compensatory struggle concerns how some men obtain recognition through sexual relationships. The sexual practices are - even if they place prisoners at risk of HIV - meaningful as a means of dealing with issues of deprivation, loneliness, lack of hope, sexual desire and, importantly, as part of power struggles over resources and for recognition. Through sex, (some) prisoners position themselves in the prison context. Those who perform the ‘active’ male sexual role are perceived as ‘real men’ and thus masculine, and those who take on the ‘passive’ role are emasculated, and often turned into ‘wives’. A reformulation and interpretation of gendered roles take place, where ‘women’ are created, who are to be available to ‘men’. Traditional gender perceptions are challenged and reinterpreted through male-to-male sexual relationships, which would not be practiced by the majority of prisoners when they were on the ‘outside’.

The ‘man’ may have lost his role as the provider of the family, as well as the role of the man in the sexual relationship with his wife on the outside, but he has created a new sense of masculine identity. By performing the role of a ‘man’ in the sexual relationship inside prison, he is once again recognised as a man – but then a man with a distinct hyper-masculinity based on being powerful and in control, but also a role where he can perform the role of provider who takes care of his wife. The man who is turned into ‘woman’ obtains food and other materials, as well as protection, but these come with a price of severe challenges to masculine identity. Even if stigmatised by society, staff and other prisoners, the imaginary of the heterosexual relationship is maintained. Sexuality in prison, I argue, reflects general society’s hetero-normativity.

Honneth’s concept of recognition links easily to human rights standards, because they essentially stipulate not only rights but also a recognition of the individual’s significance. In prisons, human rights standards are useful tools for improvements. But in my experience from working with prisons in various capacities, human rights standards may seem somewhat farfetched and difficult to achieve in practice in prisons, where the targets are somewhat unrealistic within current means. Prisons are inherently damaging, regardless of how they are designed, and regardless of whether they are placed in the West, in Africa or in

other parts of the world. Prisons in Africa for years to come will be marked by poverty, lack of resources and stigma. Even so, it is my hope that I have provided a basis for acting to improve prisons in a more informed and systematic way.

If prisoners experience imprisonment as inhumane, then I hope the reader will ask him or herself, how we can make prisons more humane and less damaging. It is my goal that we can start improving prisons with what we have, and what we know. Not to settle for too little in relation to human rights standards, but to act and to change things now. I see important resources in prisons. There are many staff members who manage to hold on to a sense of purpose and commitment, even under conditions that would arguably render most hopeless or cynical. There are prisoners who despite extreme adversity continue to struggle to contribute positively to their own and others' lives – and many do already. This bears witness to the potential of positive development. I have largely kept my NGO work out of the PhD, but Ubumi's work centres on supporting committed inmates and staff who work hard to improve health in the prisons. Here, we have seen that the potential for change is there, and with little support, it grows. In Section 8.3, I explore possibilities for action, and this section is also part of the Policy Brief in Appendix 1. But first, allow me to turn to perspectives for further research.

8.2 PERSPECTIVES FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This PhD has attempted to provide context to give the reader a sense of imprisonment in Zambia. I wished to give prisoners the opportunity to give voice to their situation. Yet my PhD in many ways can only be a starting point for further research into the experiences of imprisonment and the coping strategies employed by prisoners to survive the diversity of African prisons. I had many theoretical and empirical avenues I could have followed to explore further. At times, I felt that each of the three main themes (experiences, coping and sexuality) of the PhD each deserved a full PhD of their own. At the same time, I felt it was impossible to write about sex in prisons without providing a fair account of prison life in general, and of other strategies for survival. There are, however, several concepts/themes I could have explored much more, which I would encourage others to take forward.

One is the analysis of power. All through the thesis, power is present and explored through prisoner hierarchies, relationships between inmates, and between inmates and staff. In the struggle for recognition, power plays an important role. So, even if power relations between inmates are analysed, they are not the main focus of the thesis. I believe much is to be learnt from exploring power dimensions in more depth, including addressing the negative consequences of power. I would encourage not just theoretical deliberations, but in depth empirical analysis of hierarchies, agency and relationships. I would particularly encourage an exploration of power relations between inmates, as this has hardly been researched in the African context.

In this thesis, the relationship between staff and inmates is also under-explored. Staff, however, play an important role in terms of how prisoners experience imprisonment. We have learnt that small things matter enormously. In an environment with such deprivation, the kindness of an officer can save the day and can make life a little more bearable. Studies into the role of officers' conduct and how it affects prisoners would be extremely important.

This PhD has shown that prisoners draw on masculine identity and sometimes hyper-masculinity to survive prison. Here it would be exceedingly interesting if research were conducted on how inmates would respond to an opportunity to fulfil some of the positive features of masculine identity – and of the extent to which

this may make a positive impact on prisoner identity and conduct. I have a few preliminary suggestions. It has been documented in a Western context that contact to family, particularly children as well as conjugal visits, reduces stress and violence inside prison. Exploring how education, skills training and earning some income affects inmates in an African context will also allow us to learn more of how masculinity can play a constructive and important role for coping with imprisonment and presumably for life chances after imprisonment. Action research would be an interesting avenue to pursue.

I have explored faith (Christianity) in prisons as a source for coping with pain and for constructing a pro-social identity. The role of faith in prison is an important one that deserves much more attention in terms of the extent to which faith can aid a prisoner reform process, and of how it may not be helpful. I could observe faith as an important feature of imprisonment, but I would encourage an independent critical study of faith to identify the role of religion in reform processes. Studies have been done in the West which implied a positive role, but critics have suggested that it is not faith but instead the social belonging to a group that matters. As a Dane and not particularly religious (but also not anti-religious), I felt the presence – even if it was not directed at me – of religion in prison to be quite heavy. Many inmates claimed they had not been religious before entering prison. I sometimes wondered if there would be any space for exploring prisoner reform or an agenda for change without being religious. The role of faith in prisoner reform would be interesting to explore.

The point of Christianity or religion brings me to my next point, which is the ever-present narrative of prisoner change and prisoner reform. Officers and inmates alike would speak at length of how imprisonment was an opportunity or even sometimes a vehicle for change. Studies into the prisoner reform agenda would be interesting, especially if those studies linked to life chances after imprisonment. Reintegration after prison is an area which is hardly prioritised in research in Africa, if at all. Yet most prisoners do leave prison, and must find a way to live after incarceration. Not only are many damaged by the experience, but many are also rejected by the families and areas of origin. I interviewed a good number of ex-prisoners (15) and gained an understanding of the many challenges they face. This is an important area for further research.

Another area which I have neglected, is the role of witchcraft. In Zambia, witchcraft is often understood as black magic motivated by greed (Taylor 2006). Many prisoners believe that they were cursed and therefore wrongly imprisoned (mostly in the sense that they claim not to have committed the crime, yet they were found guilty). One extreme example of the power of witchcraft is one prisoner who had killed several women. He claimed that he was bewitched and therefore could hardly be made responsible for his actions. To my astonishment many did indeed believe him, and his death sentence was commuted to life in prison by the president. Commutation to life is often a first step to be pardoned for fixed sentences, so this man may in principle be found outside prison in some years from now.

Stories of how witchcraft can be used to kill, harm or affect judicial outcomes are commonplace. Prison Officers, too, may be accused of witchcraft, and in my view with problematic and biased outcomes, which are not necessarily in line with what one may consider modern day public sector management.

Another key area to explore is mental health and the connection with social climate. I would suggest an action research oriented approach. Importantly, a thorough baseline must be documented, but from then on it would be hugely beneficial to look towards evaluating concrete and specific interventions for improvement of the social climate and mental health. Of course, medical treatment and psycho-social support of serious mental disorders such as schizophrenia and other debilitating illnesses should be made available as well and evaluated consistently.

There is very little research similar to my study in Africa. This makes comparisons difficult and consequently provides a challenge to claims of representativeness. It is my hope that others will take up the challenge of exploring other African prisons and add to the complex picture of imprisonment in Africa. More knowledge is needed to understand the experience and effects of imprisonment as well as gender perceptions and sexual risk behaviour, and more research is also needed to address the latter issue sensitively.

8.3 PROPOSED ACTIONS TO ADDRESS THE COMPLEXITY OF ISSUES RELATING TO PRISON PAIN AND SEXUAL RISK BEHAVIOUR

The knowledge produced by this PhD should to be used to address the issues of prison pain and HIV in prisons. There has been a large gap between the political rhetoric and actual action on the ground to improve prison conditions, both in terms of the commitment shown by the Zambian government and by international organisations. Both levels have recognised prisoners as 'vulnerable', 'key-populations' or 'most-at-risk' in terms of health for more than ten years, yet fail to commit the necessary funds for health care and improving the general conditions of imprisonment.

Tackling HIV/AIDS in prisons requires that we draw upon well-known strategies to address HIV/AIDS. Public health interests must take preference over laws prohibiting 'deviant' sexualities. Condoms must be distributed and HIV education must sensitively but openly address the practice of male-to-male sex in a non-discriminatory way, whilst keeping an awareness of the unequal power relations that often arise between sexual partners. Based on this PhD, one cannot call for condom distribution in the hope of controlling HIV without paying attention to the fact that a clear majority of prisoners resist condom distribution. Further, even if condoms may solve some problems, they do not solve the problems connected to some of the motivations for entering sexual relationships. This would for instance be the stress of incarceration, poverty, lack of food and lack of avenues for positive social recognition. To be effective, any reform agenda or any type of HIV prevention activity must address the stress of incarceration.

Addressing the basics is a starting point. A major feature of imprisonment is the lack of food. This can be addressed, and not necessarily in very costly ways. Large scale vegetable projects and chicken (or other forms of protein) projects can succeed with commitment and strict monitoring. Many prisons have their own farmland or have direct access to farmland in the near vicinity of the prisons. Currently, products produced are often sold externally. Producing vegetables, eggs and chicken for prisoners has already been demonstrated successfully, and should be expanded to all prisons with access to land.

In terms of health and hygiene, there is still a long way to go. Government must find the necessary funding to ensure safe drinking water, or at the very least mobilise resources through partners. The same goes for sanitation. Again, if funds for large scale projects are not available, then focus must be directed at what can be done most effectively with few resources. Distributing a bottle of chlorine and a few bottles of detergent to each dormitory cell, as well as a few pairs of slippers for inmates to use when on the toilet, has proved remarkably effective in reducing diarrhoeal outbreaks in Mukobeko Maximum Security Prison.

Zambia Correctional Service has taken the challenge of health seriously and works hard to build the human resource capacity of the prisons to address health. There is some attention to mental health, but more needs to be done – also at policy level.

Social exclusion and stigma is an area that needs to be addressed actively. It is time to start treating prisoners as human beings with dignity, resources and potential, but also as human beings with vulnerabilities. Many prisoners have skills and commitment to contribute positively to creating change and improvements – for

themselves, for others and or for the functioning of prisons. Prisoners will have different capacities in terms of skills and personal resources and this needs to be thought into activities.

Importantly, in terms of alleviating both stress and stigma, it is essential to look at prison officer training. The curriculum is currently being revised – and the new curriculum will be centred on human rights. Here, I would encourage partners to engage *practically* with human rights. For example, in a Zambian context it is difficult to live up to all the human right standards, for instance the minimum standards for treatment of prisoners in terms of prevention of overcrowding. It is of course important to move in the direction of fulfilling the standards, but it is equally important to train officers to see possibilities for improvements in their everyday work.

Zambia Correctional Service has for a long time worked towards a human rights based approach to prison management. There has been important progress, but more needs to be done to change the prison social climate, and here staff as well as inmates play a vital role. Policies need to be followed by coordinated efforts to creating an organisational culture, which is centred on human rights and what matters to prisoners (respect, fairness, order, safety and good inmate-staff relationships). Participatory change processes where all levels of staff are involved, and processes where inmates and staff interact are vital to changing organisational culture. Top management as well as active involvement of middle management is important to effecting change. Any change process will entail reticence, but involving actors at all levels makes a positive difference over time. However, there will be elements resistant to change, and their employment should be terminated. Effective accountability structures, complaints systems and opening up of closed environments are also central to implementing a human rights based approach to prison management (Naylor et al 2014).

In this PhD, we have established that small things take on a major significance in prisoners' lives. 'Small things' can become very big things. It is important that prison officers are aware of this, and it is worthwhile to see how incarcerated human beings can be recognised and humanised through acts of kindness and respect. Paying attention to human rights carries with it the added benefit of making work easier, as Martin has established in his 2013 dissertation on appropriation of human rights in Ugandan prisons.

This PhD documents that prisoners can draw upon masculinity to endure imprisonment. By identifying avenues for drawing on positive features of masculinity, such as the role of father and provider, we may enable prisoners to hold on to that side of themselves. It has been documented that contact to family, in particular children as well as conjugal visits, are effective ways of reducing stress and violence in prison, and therefore ways to connect prisoners with family also needs to be explored in the Zambian context. This includes creating child-friendly visitation facilities. Further, investing in education and skills-building is another important avenue for incarcerated men to invest in their future as fathers and providers. Of course, a more efficient justice system, parole, alternative sentencing and reducing the use of imprisonment is a relevant and key strategy to decongest prisons.

Another area to be explored – and another political and administrative agenda to push – is the fact that the Prisons Act provides the opportunity for prisoners to earn an income. This has not been implemented for years with the justification that the kwacha had been devalued to an extent that makes the funds available meaningless. Yet the kwacha has been rebased, and the opportunity to work and save up funds for release would be a major step forward in terms of inmates having the opportunity to upon release at least to have some funds to start anew, and perceive themselves less as a burden to their families. Hope is a central feature in terms of surviving imprisonment, and this could be an important step forward.

It is, again, engaging the practicalities makes a difference. It is clear from the PhD that it is those with privilege and power who can 'pay' for sexual services. This can be addressed through tackling some of the dynamics

which enables certain inmates to abuse their powerful position – not only in terms of sex, but also in other ways of exercising power negatively. Specific measures could be that cell captains must not be left alone with only one or two inmates during Sunday mass. Another measure could also be addressing the cooks' ability to motivate other prisoners through paying them with extra food. This could mean that cooks have rotating teams and therefore less access to extra provisions of food, thus destabilising their basis for power and making it less attractive to engage in sexual activities with them.

The Zambian prisons have an HIV prevalence of 22-27% on average and this requires an extraordinary response. Yet commitment and taking personal responsibility for action is rare. Instead, responsibility is pushed around between and within organisations. This happens in many countries, and also in Zambia where after having experienced the intensity of the HIV crisis for at least 20 years, Correctional Service still have next to no allocated funding for health.⁵¹ They rely on NGOs and international partners, as well as linkages with the government health system.

A coordinating committee was established in 2005 (Prisons AIDS Advisory Committee) which changed its name in 2015 to Prisons Health Advisory Committee (PHAC). Here the idea is that Correctional Service and various partners coordinate efforts. I can only encourage Correctional Service to take on an instrumental and active role in identifying gaps and asking for support. Currently, the PHAC is indeed intensifying the coordination efforts, and it is vital that Correctional Service take a strong lead in proposing activities based on documented needs. Regional Coordinating bodies led by Correctional Service may supplement national efforts because many organisations are only able to cover regions, and many initiatives are relatively small. Yet, if coordinated effectively, initiatives could make much more of a difference, and could be used as a starting point for resource mobilisation.

The Zambian government has declared prisoners as one of the two most under-served groups in Zambia. Only 66% of prisoners in need of treatment receive it, compared to 85% in the general population. Even if 66% may access treatment, many struggle with adherence due also to lack of food (patients need fatty foods to take the medication). Government (Correctional Service) has done well to reach the 66%, and through engaging government and other partners, it should be possible to reach the same level as with the general population. There are – in terms of treatment – advantages of having patients in prison. Patients are accessible and can quite easily be monitored. Treatment such as prevention of HIV is another important way to curb the epidemic. Correctional Service have done well to identify HIV focal points in all Zambian prisons, and due to HIV education, the prison population is better informed of HIV than the general population. Of course, HIV education needs to continue, and HIV Testing and Counselling Services should be more consistently available in all prisons.

Prisoners themselves are part of the solution to many of the issues relating to prison pain and to sexual risk behaviour. They know much more about local prison conditions and sexual risk behaviour than any outsider would. There are many avenues to follow to make concrete and meaningful improvements, and this could include prisoner committees in each prison, or other ways of structuring participatory communication.

Zambia Correctional Service is progressive in the sense that they are aware of and open to the fact that they cannot solve all the problems themselves and that other partners need to come in. Over the past 10 years important steps forward have been made, including a much stronger commitment to health in policy and practice. There is recognition and ownership to making a difference and creating change. This does not mean

⁵¹ They have funds for World AIDS Day and similar commemorations or events, but they do not have their own funds targeting health systems in prison

that there are not challenges to overcome, but the opportunities are there, and can be explored further. This PhD provides support to engage based on research-based knowledge.

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10 APPENDIX 1 – POLICY BRIEF

10.1.1 PhD Dissertation

PhD Dissertation: Surviving Zambian Prisons – Inmate experiences, coping strategies and sex in prison

10.1.2 Research question

This thesis set out to explore how inmates experience and survive imprisonment in Zambian prisons, and why some inmates enter into sexual relationships. The study posed the following research question:

How do incarcerated men survive imprisonment psychologically and socially, and how do sexual relations play into this struggle for survival?

10.1.3 Methodology

The thesis is built on an extensive data collection in Zambian prisons over three years, where 72 inmates and 15 former prisoners were interviewed in the period from 2011-2013. The interviewing methodology rested mainly in the life story/narrative tradition. Some ethnographic observations were also part of the data

10.1.4 Results and conclusions

The PhD breaks new ground in the way that it provides in depth insight into the lives of Zambian prisoners and contributes to a deeper understanding of marginalised populations' experiences, social and sexual practices as they struggle for survival in places of abandonment.

Conditions in the African prisons place inmates under extreme stress. Conditions of overcrowding, lack of food, deaths, poor hygiene and sanitation, as well as human rights abuses. The PhD explores the painful experiences of imprisonment, which include identity crisis, social abandonment, isolation from society, major nutrition and health issues, and the risk of contracting HIV. It then explores the various coping strategies employed by prisoners to survive psychologically, socially and physically. These include struggling to create a new sense of identity or an attempt to hold on to the identity they had before incarceration. For many, incarceration in a Zambian prison entails a basic struggle for survival. For some, the struggle entails entering into sexual relationships.

Commonly prisoners exist in a situation of chronic crisis, where enormous demands are made on them to survive. Even if they do have the capacity to act to improve their situation, they have limited options to do so. The picture is highly complex. Some have more options and possibilities than others. Depending on family support, social circles (chosen or available), education, roles are taken or assigned. In other words, the physical, social and psychological resources of the individual matter in terms of how they attempt to survive imprisonment, but the range possibilities to act and change one's situation are very limited.

Some prisoners enter into sexual relationships as way to survive. Sexual activities in the closed prison environment will be influenced by the prison context and conditions, and will play into power structures, hierarchies and social relationships, not to mention to individual's coping strategies. Sexual relationships between men in Zambian prisons can generally be characterized transactional. A reformulation and interpretation of gendered roles take place, where 'women' are created, who are to be available to 'men'. The 'men' gain a sense of masculinity through the sexual relationship, whereas the constructed 'women' experience severe threats to masculine identity. The thesis proposes that the social construction of gender and sexuality is a translation or reinterpretation of general society's gender roles in an environment without biological women.

10.1.5 Recommendations

This PhD renders important information on the psychological, social and physical effects of imprisonment and coping strategies of prisoners – and of sexual risk behaviour. This knowledge now holds the opportunity of being put to use to address the issues of prison pain and HIV in prisons. There has been a large gap between the political rhetoric and the actual action on the ground to improve prison conditions both in terms of the commitment shown by the Zambian government and by international organisations. Both levels have recognised prisoners as ‘vulnerable’, ‘key-populations’ or ‘most-at-risk’ in terms of health for more than ten years, yet fail to commit the necessary funds for health care and the general conditions of imprisonment.

In terms of addressing HIV/AIDS in prisons, we must draw upon well-known strategies to address HIV/AIDS. I recommend public health interests to take preference over laws prohibiting ‘deviant’ sexualities, and that condoms therefore be distributed and HIV education must sensitively, but openly address the practice of male-to-male sex in a non-discriminatory way, whilst keeping an awareness of the unequal power relations that often come into play between sexual partners. Based on this PhD, one cannot call for condom distribution in the hope of controlling HIV without paying attention to the fact that a clear majority of prisoners resist condom distribution, or that even if condoms may solve some problems, they do not solve the problems connected to some of the motivations for entering sexual relationships. This would for instance be the stress of incarceration, poverty, lack of food and lack of avenues for positive social recognition. Any reform agenda or any type of HIV prevention activity must address the stress of incarceration to be effective.

We need to start with the basics. A major feature of imprisonment is the lack of food. This can be addressed, and not necessarily in very costly ways. Large scale vegetable projects and chicken (or other forms of protein) projects can with commitment and strict monitoring succeed. Many correctional facilities have own farmland or have direct access to farmland in the near vicinity of the prisons. Currently, products produced – if produced – are often sold externally. Producing vegetables, eggs and chicken have already been demonstrated successfully, and should be expanded to all prisons with access to land. Feeding the prison population is exceedingly important to prevent illness and unnecessary deaths.

In terms of health and hygiene, there is still a long way to go. I encourage government to source the necessary funding to ensure safe drinking water through government resources or partners. The same goes for sanitation. Again, if funds for large scale projects are not available, then focus should be directed at what can be done most effectively with few resources. Distributing a bottle chlorine and a few bottles of detergent to each dormitory cell, as well as few pairs of slippers for inmates to use when on the toilet, has proved remarkably effective in reduction of diarrhoeal outbreaks in Mukobeko Maximum Security Centre.

Zambia Correctional Service have taken the challenge of health seriously and works hard to build human resource capacity of the prisons to address health. There is some attention to mental health, but more needs to be done – also at policy level.

Social exclusion and stigma is an area that needs to be addressed actively. It is time to start treating prisoners as human beings with dignity, resources and potential, but also as human beings with vulnerabilities. Many prisoners have skills and commitment to contribute positively to creating change and improvements – for themselves, for others and/or for the functioning of correctional facilities. These resources can be used more effectively to build capacity of inmates and the facilities themselves.

Importantly, in terms of alleviating stress and stigma, it is essential to look at prison officer training. The curriculum is currently being revised – and I am informed that the curriculum will be centered around human rights. Here, I would encourage partners to engage *practically* with human rights. For example, in a Zambian context it is difficult to live up to all the human right standards, for instance the minimum standards for

treatment of prisoners in terms of prevention of overcrowding. It is of course important to move in the direction of fulfilling the standards, but it is equally important to train officers to see possibilities for improvements in their everyday work. Another avenue for creating change is allowing committed staff members more influence on their work so they can create change. Strict hierarchies sometimes hinder progress and efficiency.

Zambia Correctional Service have for a long time worked towards human rights-based approach to prison management. There has been important progress, but more can be done to change the prison social climate, and here staff as well as inmates play a vital role. Policies need to be followed by coordinated efforts to creating an organisational culture, which is centered on human rights and what matters to prisoners (respect, fairness, order, safety and good inmate-staff relationships). Participatory change processes where all levels of staff are involved, and processes, where inmates and staff interact are vital to changing organisational culture. Top management as well middle management active involvement is important to effecting change. Any change process will entail reticence but involving actors at all levels makes a positive difference over time. Effective accountability structures, complaint systems and opening up of closed environments are also central to implementing a human rights-based approach to prison management. It is also of immense importance to include an assessment of officers' adherence to human rights standards and commitment to inmate welfare as an important part of the evaluation process for promotions.

In this PhD we have established that small things take on a major presence in prisoners' lives. 'Small things' can become very big things. This is important to register as a prison officer, and it is worthwhile to see how incarcerated human beings can be recognised and humanised through acts of kindness and respect (see for instance Liebling 2004 for examples of how 'small things' matter in English prisons as well). Paying attention to human rights carries with it the added benefit of making work easier, as Martin establishes in his 2013 dissertation on appropriation of human rights in Ugandan prisons.

This PhD documents that prisoners can draw upon masculinity to endure imprisonment. By identifying avenues for drawing on positive features of masculinity, such as the role of father and provider, we may allow for prisoners to hold on to that side of themselves. It has been documented that contact to family, in particular children, as well as conjugal visits are effective ways of reducing stress and violence in prison, and therefore ways to connect prisoners with family needs to be explored more in the Zambian context. This includes child-friendly visitation facilities. Further, investing in education and skills-building is another important avenue for incarcerated men to invest in their future as fathers and providers. Of course, a more efficient justice system, parole, alternative sentencing and reducing the use of imprisonment is a relevant and key strategy to decongest prisons.

Meaninglessness is a major feature of imprisonment, but it is possible to address this to a certain extent through volunteering programmes, where inmates work actively to contribute positively to their own and other inmates' lives. 'Listener'-volunteers (inmates who are trained in psycho-social support) may contribute positively to the social climate of the prison through providing a 'listening' ear to inmates with problems. Volunteering to help the chronically ill, act as teachers, caregivers of the ill or cleaners or any other task which an individual may find meaningful and which would contribute positively to other people's lives in any way could be explored actively. If staff would work to positively recognize the efforts of volunteers, this would be a further advantage.

Another area to be explored – and another political and administrative agenda to push – is the fact that the Prisons Act provides the opportunity for prisoners to earn an income. This has not been implemented for years with the explanation that the kwacha had been devalued to an extent that made the funds available

meaningless. Yet, the kwacha has been rebased, and the opportunity to work and save up funds for release would be a major step forward in terms of inmates having the opportunity to at least upon release to have some funds to start anew and perceive themselves less as a burden to their families. Hope is a central feature in terms of surviving imprisonment, and this could be an important step forward.

Again, engaging the practicalities makes a difference. It is clear from the PhD that it is those with privilege and power, who can 'pay' for sexual services. This can be addressed through addressing some of the dynamics which enables certain inmates to abuse their powerful position – not only in terms of sex, but also other ways of exercising power negatively. It could specifically be that cell captains cannot be left alone with only one or two inmates on Sunday mass. It can also be addressing the cooks' ability to motivating other prisoners through paying them with extra food. This could mean that cooks have rotating teams and therefore less access to extra provisions of food, thus destabilising their basis for power and making it less attractive to engage in sexual activities with them.

The Zambian prisons have an HIV prevalence of 22-27% on average and this requires an extraordinary response (even if recent and yet unpublished documentation shows prevalence rates of about the same as the general population, but even if it is at 10-12% it remains an enormous challenge). Yet, commitment and taking personal responsibility for action is too rare. Instead, responsibility is pushed around between and within organisations. This happens in many countries, and also in Zambia, where after having experienced the intensity of the HIV crisis for at least 20 years, Correctional Services still have next to no allocated funding for health.⁵² They rely on NGO's and international partners, as well as linkages with the government health system. A coordinating committee was established in 2005 (Prisons AIDS Advisory Committee), which changed its name in 2015 to Prisons Health Advisory Committee (PHAC). Here the idea is that Correctional Services and various partners coordinate efforts. I can only encourage Correctional Services to take on an instrumental and active role in identifying gaps and asking for support. Currently, the PHAC is indeed intensifying the coordination efforts, and it is vital that Correctional Services take strong a lead in proposing activities based on documented needs. Regional or even facility level coordinating bodies preferably led by Correctional Services may supplement national efforts as many organisations are only able to cover regions (and not nationally), and many initiatives are relatively small. Yet, if coordinated effectively, it could make much more of a difference, and could be used as a point of departure for resource mobilisation.

The Zambian government has declared prisoners as one of the two most under-served groups in Zambia. There are – in terms of treatment – advantages of having patients in prison, and Zambia Correctional Services. Patients are accessible and can quite easily be monitored. Treatment as prevention of HIV is another important way to curb the epidemic. Correctional Services have done well to identify HIV focal points in all Zambian prisons, and due to HIV education, the prison population is better informed of HIV than the general population. Of course, HIV education and testing needs to continue, and quality HIV Counselling Services could be more consistently available in all prisons.

Inmates themselves are part of the solution to many of the issues relating prison pain and to sexual risk behaviour. They know much more about local prison conditions and sexual risk behaviour than any outsider would. There are many avenues to follow to make concrete and meaningful improvements. Zambia Correctional Service is progressive in the sense that they are aware of and open to the fact that they cannot solve all the problems themselves and that other partners need to come in. Over the past 10 years important

⁵² They have funds for World AIDS Day and similar commemorations or events, but they do not have their own funds targeting health systems in prison (as per 2016/17)

steps forward have been made, including a much-increased commitment to health in policy and practice. There is recognition and ownership to making a difference and creating change. It does not mean that there are not challenges to overcome, but opportunities are there, and can be explored further.

APPENDIX 2 – SUMMARY IN DANISH

Forfatter: Anne Egelund

Titel: Surviving Zambian Prisons – Prisoner experiences, Coping strategies and Sex in prison / At overleve fængsler i Zambia – fangernes erfaringer, coping strategier og sex i fængsler

Der findes meget lidt forskning i afrikanske fængsler. Måske overraskende har den eksisterende forskning koncentreret sig om de ansattes og institutionelle perspektiver, men ikke direkte om de indsatte perspektiver. Denne Ph.d. bidrager til fængselsforskningen med, hvordan mandlige indsatte oplever fængslingen, og hvordan de kæmper for at overleve fysisk, psykisk og socialt, herunder hvordan sex i fængsler kan være en del af kampen for overlevelse. Afhandlingen baserer sig på intensiv dataindsamling i Zambias mandefængsler, hvor 72 indsatte, 15 tidligere indsatte og ti ansatte blev interviewet i 2011-13. Interviewmetoden hvilede på den narrative og livshistoriske tradition.

Hver indsats oplevelse og erfaring er unik og hans egen, men vigtige gennemgående temaer kom frem i analysen. De internationalt velkendte 'fængsels-lidelser' (pains of imprisonment), såsom tabt frihed, stigma, isolation fra familie og venner, bliver forstærket af de ekstreme forhold i de zambiske fængsler. Her udgør overbelægning, uretfærdighed, dårlig sundhed og følelsen af forladthed centrale udfordringer. Forfatteren beskriver fængsling i Zambia som en 'kronisk krise', hvor der stilles enorme krav til de enkelte fanger for at overleve.

Axel Honneth teori om anerkendelse anvendes sammen med mere empirisk funderede studier til at analysere fem hovedkategorier i forbindelse med, hvorledes fanger responderer på opholdet i fængslet. Fængslingen kan fundamentalt skade den enkelte indsatte identitet – helt til et punkt af sammenbrud. Selvom indsatte har en vis kapacitet til at påvirke eller forbedre deres situation, er de betinget af de begrænsede muligheder, som fængslingen udgør. Afhandlingen identificerer fem hovedkategorier, som beskriver hvordan indsatte reagerer på perioden i fængsel: 1) Ingen coping (sammenbrud) 2) Moralsk funderede kampe for rettigheder i grupper 3) Individuelle moralsk funderede kampe for at bibeholde eller konstruere en pro-social identitet og 4) kompenserende kampe for anerkendelse, som vil distancere og fremmedgøre dem yderligere fra det almindelige samfund, fordi de opnår anerkendelse for negativ adfærd, men hvor de opnår social anerkendelse til trods. Endelig er der den femte kategori som ikke relaterer sig til anerkendelse, men som handler om basal overlevelse fra dag-til-dag ved en instrumentalistisk tilgang eller følelsesmæssig tilbagetrækning. Nogle trækker også på maskulin identitet for at holde ud.

Nogle fanger indgår i seksuelle relationer for at overleve. Seksuelle aktiviteter i det lukkede fængselsmiljø på være påvirket af forholdene i fængslet, magtstrukturer, hierarkier og sociale relationer samt endelig den individuelle coping-strategier. Seksuelle relationer mellem mænd i fængsler kan karakteriseres som transaktionelle. En reformulering og omfortolkning af kønsroller finder sted, hvor indsatte mænd konstrueres som 'kvinder' til at være til seksuel rådighed for dominerende indsatte, kaldet 'mænd'. 'Mændene' får konstrueret eller bekræftet deres maskulinitet i et miljø, hvor de har svært ved udleve maskuline idealer på anden vis. De seksuelle forhold har den omvendte effekt på de såkaldte 'kvinder', som får store udfordringer med maskulin identitet. Forfatteren argumenterer for, at den sociale konstruktion af køn og sex er en oversættelse eller omfortolkning af det almindelige samfunds kønsroller i et miljø uden biologiske kvinder.

På denne måde leverer afhandlingen et vigtigt bidrag til at forstå indsatte perspektiver i et afrikansk fængsel.