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The 'Cycle of Doing Coercion': An Ethnography on the Use-of-force and Violence in both a Prison and an Asylum

SUPERVISOR
Prof.ssa Luisa Leonini

DOTTORANDO
Dot. Luigi Gariglio

CO-SUPERVISOR
Prof.ssa Roberta Sassatelli

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This thesis is dedicated with love to my parents:
Eugenia Scarna Casaccio and Paolo Gariglio

Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis focuses on one feature of prison officers' job: the use-of force (or, as I call it, 'doing' coercion). It does it from an interactionist micro-sociological perspective. Based on one year and a half of observation within an Italian custodial complex hosting both a prison and an asylum, it aims to explore ethnographically the implicit and explicit practices of threatening and/or actually using force bodily on the landing. Custodial institutions have long been considered as coercive facilities in their very architecture and design. Coyle (2005) calls them 'coercive institutions' (*infra*, Chapter 2); moreover, in the prison literature, both symbolic and bodily coercion has often been considered one of the main features characterizing on one side the daily interactions within custodial settings, and on the other, the prison officer's job as such. However, these topics have hardly ever been the focus of any monograph.

Prison officers' threat and actual use-of-force are timely issues for at least three reasons: *firstly*, they often have a traumatic impact on prisoners' – and

sometimes on officers' – body integrity, health and mental health as well as, more generally, human rights.

Secondly, coercion, and its uses and abuses, are very timely issues on the media and public international discourses, not only in relation to prison, but also to immigration detention centres, forensic psychiatric hospitals (also called special hospital).

Lastly, within the academic agenda, studying the threat and the use-of-force can show some dimensions, routines and sequences of interaction as to how power is exerted in practice by law enforcement officers on the landing.

To the best of the author's knowledge there is not any monograph focusing on the use-of-force on the landing by observation as yet; this thesis does it mainly observing and investigating the emergency squad interventions during so-called critical events. The ethnography was conducted staying side by side with the officers on duty on the wing and observing their daily job.

However, this research was neither designed to be a critical research, nor an appreciative one. Its goal is to start shedding light on one fundamental practice in prison work: the use-of-force. The ethnography was conducted in a country in which coercion is often clearly in the picture on the wing and prison qualitative research is still in its infancy; this is the first independent academic ethnographic research on the issue.

This thesis elaborates on the literatures of prison sociology (and criminology) and the micro sociology of violence. It is an empirical research mainly grounded on ethnographic observation and ethnographic interviews (Spradley 1979; Gobo 2008); yet, it also partially adopts semi-structured interviews and visual methods to integrate its accounts. It will contribute new knowledge in three ways.

Firstly, this thesis will contribute to the growing scholar debate on power in a prison setting and, more generally, on policing. This issue has long been crucial in prison literature; yet very little is known from Southern European countries where power relations in prisons have hardly ever been studied so far.

Secondly, it will fill a gap in the knowledge as to how the use-of-force is exerted in practice by exploring, mainly through observation, how the threat of coercion and the bodily use-of-force are exerted on day-to-day basis on the landing. Here, however, the goal is not so much to articulate the 'inconvenient criminological truth' (Sim 2008) already grasped by activists and prisoners' voices in order to criticise particular wrongdoings or institutional violence. Instead, it is intended to show the lawful, yet problematic and discretional activities daily performed on the landing that imply, explicitly or explicitly the-use-of-force. This work does *not* address the issue of doing coercion during large revolts or in exceptional situations in which particularly heavy measures must be enforced. Nothing like that has occurred in Italian penitentiaries over the recent years.

Thirdly, this research will also contribute to the fields of symbolic interactionism, policing, and the micro-sociology of violence. Despite adopting the interactionist approach, however, this monograph intends to slightly differentiate itself from the micro-sociology of violence by putting a far greater emphasis on both, the structural condition of domination that frames the relationships between the keeper and the kept, and on the well-known vectors of inequality that strongly impinge on those relationships, such as class, race and mental health, thereby introducing new nuances to what we might call *stricto sensu* an interactionist approach such as Collins (2008).

This thesis draws from observation. It clearly distinguishes itself from the

works on power mainly grounded on discourses and narration (Atkinson 1990). Emerging during interviews, or circulating in media reports or official accounts. Yet, by adopting observation as main tool, this work does not pretend to offer a better ontological truth; it simply intends to introduce new interpretation to integrate the extant ones. It does it by discussing what officers and prisoners do in front of an ethnographer, rather than discussing what they say they do.

Moreover, this manuscript shows that doing ethnographic research can help to better understand crucial issues such as the use-of-force, or violence without necessarily being prejudicial on anybody's side. Yet, it also stresses, once again, the necessity of doing research reflexively.

The use-of-force is a crucial legal feature of prison officers' job. Starting to grasp how coercion is exerted in practice can help both to better understand the traumatic and complex world in which so many people live and work, and to better address the issue of prisoners' and officers' own wrongdoings and criminal acts.

Although there are many books on crime and punishment, prison officers and prison violence, only few studies deal with the use-of-force straightforwardly, and those doing so, very often have a strong critical perspective or a normative and political stance. None of these publications (*contra*, Ricci and Salierno 1971) addresses any Italian site. This manuscript will therefore introduce a partially new interactionist approach and a new focus in the debates about power, coercion and violent interactions and, by doing so, it will also offer some thick representations and problematic issues to policy makers as well. For the first time it will also possibly present a visual ethnographic account on 'doing' coercion collected for the scope.

Italian alleged institutional violence and scandalous custodial institutions

Il Carcere in Italia (Ricci and Salierno 1971) is the first and only Italian quasi-academic large-scale research on the keepers and the kept; Einaudi[1] published it already in 1971. It was written by a young sociologist and an ex prisoner – and 'fascist thug' as he called himself in his autobiography (Salierno 1976). *Il Carcere in Italia* started by arguing: '[t]his book is the result of a research on the of the Italian custodial institutions' *violence*' (Ricci and Salierno 1971: 11; *emphasis added*)[2]. It included a chapter titled *the prison officer* (307– 358) that investigated for the first time prison staff[3]. That book was initially a BA thesis written about forty-five years ago. Due to the exceptionality of the research content it became a book. Back then, the Italian '[fascist] Prison rules' had not yet been replaced by the extent '[republican] Prison rules' dating 1975. Since its first publication in 1971, *Il Carcere in Italia* has been reprinted time and again, and had a significant impact on the public opinion for a certain period. On the one side, it was a very strongly politically bias account of the Italian situation inside in the aftermath of the 1960s and its political and civil rights movements; on the other, it represented for the first time an extensive first-hand account of the situation within the wall.

Since that publication, Italian ethnographies have neither addressed the use-of-force, nor, violence inside custodial institutions; let alone a sociological understanding of it from an interactionist perspective.

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[1]   Einaudi is the publisher of Antonio Gramsci *Lettere dal carcere* (1947) as well as the *Quaderni dal Carcere* (six vol.; the first one published in 1948. Einaudi has been one of the most authoritative Italian publishers since its foundation in 1933.

[2]   Ricci and Salierno (1971) interpretation of violence clearly embed a negative moral judgment that today might resonate with the interpretations of violence of both Wieviorka (2011) and Sim (2008). Here we adopt a more neutral interpretation of that word.

[3]   Then, prison officers were still a military police under the authority of mhe Ministry of defences; in that book the authors dealt with the prison officer organization, the relationships among colleagues, as well as the relationships between officers and inmates.

Although academic research on the issue is missing, a few articles and books softly introduced the issue at stake in a way or another either within or against the commonsensical paradigm of the 'bad apple'[4].

Over the last twenty years or so, only few articles addressed the use-of-force in custodial institutions directly. To the best of my knowledge, only one article is published in Italian; yet, it exclusively reviewed the prison legislation of England and Wales in a polished way without any single comparative comment on the Italian legislation nor, to the Italian prisons' situation, the actual prison officers' practice, and alleged misconducts; yet, that article (Giacalone 2009) was written by a senior prison officer and was published on *La Rassegna Penitenziaria e Criminologica*[5]; furthermore, it did not explore any sociological dimension.

Notwithstanding this 'academic gap', over the last ten years, one episode of 'Prison Violence' (Edgar et al. 2012), among others, had a particularly significant media coverage in Italy. In December 2004, as a direct consequence of a previous prison officer's assault in the prison of the city of Asti, in North-West of Italy, two persons in custody were victims of a double jeopardy, violence and humiliation (Buffa 2013a); the officers wanted to 'give a lesson' to the two prisoners. That episode, the following trial, and then the sentence, had a strong echo in the national media and re-opened a latent scar in at least part of the public opinion still very sensible about the Italian fascist history and the well-known police behaviour during Fascism. What emerged during the trial even became the subject of a theatre piece titled *La carogna dentro di me*

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[4]   An informed, yet politically oriented, critical rapport on the situation of Italian prisons is regularly published by Antigone. See the Antigone pre-rapport 'Antigone in carcere. Pre-rapporto sulle condizioni di detenzione 30 luglio 2015' (in Italian). (http://www.ristretti.it/commenti/2015/luglio/pdf10/prerapporto_antigone.pdf)(01-10-2015).

[5]   It is the official journal of the Dipartimento dell' amministrazione penitenziaria (D.A.P.); the Italian equivalent of the British *Prison Journal* published by HM Prison Service.

(Sarzotti 2012).[6]

Regret and critiques were not only publicly upheld against the perpetrators but also against the prison officers as a professional group and the Italian prison system as a whole. Prisons, in Italy, are often understood by the public opinion 'as a dull place where whatsoever [cruel] can happen' (Buffa 2013: 126, *my translation*). Other similar episodes allegedly occurred in Reggio Emilia custodial complex between 2012 and 2013 obtaining significant local media attention[7].

My field notes and interviews support Buffa's quote (*see* above) on the public critical perception of the Italian prison system. Inside the custodial complex, in fact, officers would often show their critical stance on either the media coverage or the public discourses on the prisons and the prisoners. I have heard different versions of those critical stance time and again. Below, I will quote one officer who spontaneously introduced the point brilliantly during an interview. His position has often been shared with his subordinates in front of me, talking about it whenever something appeared in the news related to the issue in a way or another. His quote below resonates with the *officers' interpretations and opinions* as to what the 'Italians' would think both about the criminal justice system, and the prisoners' victimization;

'[w]hen they [in other occasion words such as: criminals, thieves, murders, serial killers and so on would be used] are out there, they are all [described as] very dangerous criminals that must be cached, arrested, put in a cage and ...throw away the keys! Even persons that are nothing more than petty criminals are usually treated like that by the people. Eventually, they end up in custody and enter the prison. By entering the prison those very violent and dangerous

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6   The author is an authoritative Italian sociologist of law (*see also*: Sarzotti 1999).
7   However, the case of alleged double jeopardy against 14 police officers was dismissed on a technicality: all prison officers are free and will not be brought befoure a court (source: *La Gazzetta di Reggio*, November, the 30th 2015: 'Violenza in carcere: scagionati 14 agenti. L'accusa di lesioni partì dai quattro fratelli tunisini Rhimi rinchiusi alla Pulce: il caso è stato archiviato' http://gazzettadireggio.gelocal.it/reggio/cronaca/2015/11/30/news/violenza-in-carcere-scagionati-14-agenti-1.12541579?refresh_ce).

criminals, I do not know how...and why... They become *the* victims. It's enough for them to arrive here and they are [suddenly] the victims, and we become the '*aguzzini*' (perpetrators of violence) (source: video recorded, interview with a senior officer).

Another crucial point about the contemporary public discourses that circulated on the media about the Italian prison system and prison officers, specifically regards the scandal of the forensic psychiatric hospital (O.P.G.) that directly involved one of the two facilities on which my work is focused; in fact, the facility in which most of the observation took place. A 'Parliamentary Inquiry on the National Health Service'[8] opened a large public debate that was quickly afterwards publicly defined a *scandal*[9]. The dramatic and illegal conditions of detention that have been shared widely on mainstream media urged a parliamentary discussion[10]. In fact, over a very short period of time a new law was written, discussed and voted. It formally ordered the almost instantaneous and definitive end of those scandalous institutions and the rethinking of the entire forensic psychiatric hospital system.

The so-called scandal of the O.P.G.s has been the most serious recent scandal regarding the Italian prison system and the institutional violence in Italy; yet, not the only one (Chiarelli 2011). The former President of the Italian Republic

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[8]   The 'Commissione parlamentare di inchiesta sull'efficacia e l'efficienza del servizio sanitario nazionale', so-called 'Commissione Marino', was instituted by the Italian Senato the 30th July 2008
http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/commissioni/servizio_sanitario16/Relazione_OOPPGG_doc_XXII-bis_4.pdf .

[9]   Previously, other institutional inquiries and even few directors of those six institutions had repeatedly lamented the precarious situations in which they had to manage those institutions with no effects at all. On the contrary, the last Parliamentary enquiry had a huge impact and determining the order to close those institutions (which, by the way, only formally occurred). This was due, not only because the public opinion was probably more aware and organized on the issue than before; but also, because scandalous images officially recorded for the Parliamentary commission had been broadly broadcasted and diffused on TV and on the web. The footage was recorded by the video maker Corio who also produced a winning-prize documentary.

[10]   See this article and video interview on the national newspaper *il Fatto* (Source: *il Fatto*, November, 24th 2015: 'Ospedali psichiatrici, gli internati vengono dimenticati dietro le sbarre. Le strutture fuorilegge sono tutte operative')
http://www.ilfattoquotidiano.it/2015/11/24/ospedali-psichiatrici-gli-internati-vengono-dimenticati-dietro-le-sbarre-le-strutture-fuorilegge-sono-tutte-operative/2247826/#disqus_thread.

Giorgio Napolitano – then in duty – made an official speech at the nation at the end of 2012 in which he defined those forensic psychiatric hospitals (O.P.G.) a "real horror unacceptable in any civilized country"[11]. Moreover, a popular news-week magazine, *L' Espresso*, defined those institutions *lager*[12].

This is not a critical study on institutional violence

What has just shortly been introduced is only one side of the issue at stake; yet, I want to put it clearly, this thesis is *not* a 'critical criminology' *kind of* study. It is a completely different sociological one, in which the situation of what I called the *'Cycle of doing coercion'* (or the 'C*ycle of the use-of-force and violence'*) will be unpacked studying the actual officers' use of a set of 'tools of influence' (*infra*, Chapter 2), as well as the threat and use-of-force from a micro sociological perspective. At the centre of the study is the interaction between the keepers and the kept in a particular situation, and not anybody's moral judgement about it.

Moreover, as already said above, this thesis is not intended to target any large-scale collective riots like those that occurred in Italy back then (*see*, Ricci and Salierno 1971; Melodia 1976). It cannot do it for three main reasons: *firstly*, collective riots are a completely different kind of social phenomena that, by definition, do not occur on the landing repeatedly on day-to-day basis; therefore, they should be investigated differently. *Secondly*, they have hardly ever occurred in Italy over the last ten years, if at all. *Lastly*, but more importantly, I have neither directly observed any of such events during my research, nor have I collected enough material about any of such previous

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[11]   (Source: *La Stampa*, April, 1st 2014). http://www.lastampa.it/2014/04/01/italia/politica/opg-da-napolitano-s-alla-proroga-ho-firmato-con-estremo-rammarico-g9e3HKCfUez8rMzVUVUGYN/pagina.html.
[12]   (Source: *L'Espresso*, October, 1st 2015).   http://video.espresso.repubblica.it/tutti-i-video/opg-ecco-i-manicomi-lager/258/260.

occurrences to get a sufficiently clear ethnographic understanding of it so far.

In conclusion, this work uses the expression *prison officers* that is commonly used in UK. Although, *penitentiary police* would be a better translation of the Italian *polizia penitenziaria*. Therefore, both expression will be used interchangeably.

Moreover, and more importantly, also the expressions inmates, convicts, prisoners, kept and so on are used without any particular connotation despite the particular political or academic traditions in which any of those expressions might come from. Here, the keepers and kept are simply called in different ways for writing-style purposes.

Shape of this thesis

Chapter 2 introduces the normative approach to power and Coercion on the landing selectively addressing the literatures of prison sociology, and policing that have developed over the last thirty years or so. It outlines the ways in which the power relations between the keeper and the kept have been conceptualised so far by both the scholars adopting a more or less appreciative approach, and by those adopting a more critical one.

In particular, it will review some of the normative labels used to typify the 'means of influence' (Kauffman 1988) that I will call 'tool of influence' discretionary used by prison officers to rule the wing in day-to-day patrolling operations. Firstly, it will propose a twofold distinction. On one side the legitimate *non-coercive* 'tools of influence' (as I called them); they are mainly forms of verbal negotiations usually occurring on the landing between one – or a very limited number of staff – and the prisoner(s). Usually non-coercive tools of influence would employ either persuasion or inducement; sometimes also

the implicit, or tacit, threads of the use-of-force. On the other, the legitimate and *explicit coercive* 'tools of influence' that would include: both the explicitly threat of the use-of-force, and the actual bodily use of it. These would normally be performed by a larger group of officers and would be the tools of influence through which, at the end, the prisoners' compliance would forcibly be gained with or without the prisoners' cooperation or resistance.

The last section of Chapter 2 introduces the necessity to overcome the simplification of the binary distinction between legitimate and illegitimate practice of doing coercion, already addressed in the literature, by emphasising the existence of a large 'grey area' between the two (Terrill 2014). Manipulation in this chapter is placed in that 'grey area'; moreover, all the other 'means of influence' previously described could also be interpreted through Terrill's lens.

Before concluding it will shortly address the issue of the criminal uses of coercive 'tools of influence' and the related issue of institutional violence (Sim 2008).

Chapter 3 is called 'Studying the prison officers' use-of-force and violence: an interactionist approach'; the very 'generous' clearances given to the author have allowed the researcher to observe the officers' practice of using force face-to-face participating to the actual threatening and/or violent interactions occurring between the keepers and the kept. The discretionary power that the prison director has used to deregulate the ethnographer's access without enforcing any strong constraint in terms of time and place to his fieldwork has been crucial here; *de facto*, the ethnographer's access was granted at any time without any previously note or appointment. The security manager could of course have stopped the researcher's access at any time for any reason without any justification; yet he has *never* done it. Trust has slowly entered into the picture; the process of building trust is also something that must be reflexively

addressed both from an ethical and methodological perspective (*infra*, Chapter 8).

The 'funnel' structure of doing ethnographic research generated a large amount of empirical material; yet, the most of it has progressively focussed on 'doing' coercion, or put it differently on the threat or actual use-of-force. Despite the collection of both 1) *observations* through participating into the day-to-day routine on the wing, and 2) *representations* of it mainly collected via formal interviews, this thesis mainly focuses the analysis on the observations of practices rather than on the representation of those practices.

Doing ethnography, the interactionist theoretical framework was therefore selected as the more appropriate providing a good toolbox to deal with chains of observed interactions; In particular Interactionism appeared to be the most adequate framework to interpret what, gradually, became clearly visible and audible on the field: the routinely practice of threatening and doing coercion that would occur time and again on the landing in front of the ethnographer day in day out.

The main conceptual tools considered throughout the ethnographic experience are mainly grounded on both the Goffmanian interactionist micro-sociology and the micro-sociology of violence (Collins 2008) as well as other interactionist approaches more attuned with taking into account the vectors of inequality (Hochschild 1983) so crucial for understanding the prison field in general and the Italian prison field in particular. I also owe intellectual debt here to Popitz's the *Phänomene der Macht* (1986)[13] and, particularly, to the theoretical analysis of 'doing violence' and 'doing threat and being threatened' (my translation).

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[13] I thank Mario Chiesi for his lessons and for his suggestion to read Popitz.

By presenting substantive ethnographic knowledge, this chapter will also introduce the main conceptual tools adopted in this thesis. It will be divided into three sections. *Firstly*, drawing from extensive ethnographic observations, one section will critically discuss the interactionist's toolbox.

Secondly, a following section will focus on the issue of discretion in using force. Some empirical examples will illuminate the relevance of the prisoners' social position as well as the officer's more or less authoritarian cultures in the process of doing coercion in practice. The extremely different kind of treatment regularly reserved by officers to two very different types of prisoners at the extremes of the internal informal hierarchy – both often present on the wing – will be disclosed. On one side, the prisoners belonging to well-known 'organized-crime families' and, on the other, those belonging to any of the marginalised, vulnerable and stigmatised 'Roman families' who, 'out there' would usually live in Roman camps, either legal or illegal ones. Other examples of less extreme differences of treatment related to status, race and mental health condition, far less consistent, will also be considered – yet, they show a less consistent discretionary treatment in which other factors would impinge as well.

Finally, the last section of Chapter 3 will shortly address the role of hyper masculinity performed by officers 'on stage' using *explicit coercive* tools of influence, and the far more nuanced and multi-layered plural masculinities performed by some officers, and resisted by others, either in their use of *non-coercive* tools of influence in the backstage on duty, off duty with friends.

Chapter 4 deals with the 'organization of the use-of-force in practice'. It will illustrate the main characteristics of the organization of coercion in the custodial complex, then focusing on the particular organization for doing coercion in critical events and on the Emergency squad. Observations have been the main source of data; yet, reconstructing all the formal roles and duties

have also required a few semi structured interviews with key informants such as the area manager, the governor and some senior officers; yet this ethnography is *not* focused on the organization as such. The scope of this chapter is therefore limited to helping the reader not 'to get lost' inside the 'secret world' in which coercion is recursively performed time and again.

This chapter will be divided into three parts. *Firstly*, the initial section will describe the bureaucratic organization of coercion, its officers' formal roles and the staff relationships with one-another in the particular organization observed. *Then*, the second section will reconstruct the prison officers' chain of command in Reggio Emilia, particularly referring to the actors directly involved in the use-of-force. *Next*, the third section will address three *informal fractures* that shaped to a greater or lesser degree that chain of command. *Lastly*, the fourth section will address in particular the Emergency squad, thereby introducing the team whose officers' main duty is threatening and doing coercion in a hyper masculine way.

Chapter 5 and the next two chapters are deeply intertwined with one another. Chapter 5 focuses on what officers do when they routinely patrol the wing, either in calm and boring situations or during more violent situations that may or may not lead to the start of what is here called and reconstructed as the 'Cycle of doing coercion' (that I also call the' Cycle of the use-of-force and violence' or simply 'the Cycle'). Before the Cycle starts, the entrance of the emergency squad is only implicitly in the picture and the wing officer(s) on his own manages all the issues occurring where he is on duty. Both Chapter 6 and 7 will instead focus on the emergency squad intervention on the wing.

This chapter will *firstly* outline the three main phases and the main characteristics of the Cycle adopting the interactionist perspective and toolbox presented in Chapter 3. The Cycle shows the configuration of the routines of the use-of-force that would be usually cyclically adopted on the wing after a

formal or informal definition of a so-called critical event. In particular, it will highlight on one side, the recurrent sequence of events and the cyclic chains of interactions routinely performed by the wing officer, the security manager, and the emergency squad when dealing with institutionally labelled 'critical events' to reinforce soft-power or to overcome it adopting hard-power by threatening or doing coercion bodily. On the other side, it will also provide few thick descriptions, or narrative accounts, of exemplary interventions observed during fieldwork that can only be represented in very general and sketchy ways by the model.

Then, the second section will address the recursive routines occurring on a daily basis. In particular it will address officers, doing routine work on the wing, turning a blind eye, and managing 'normal' local crisis 'minding their own business.'

Lastly, the chapter will examine the initial stage of the Cycle more in depth: the pre-intervention phase. A phase very similar to the one presented in the second section; however, a phase in which, the wing officer asks for the security manager intervention; an intervention where the manager would usually start by informally negotiating with the prisoners. The entrance of the security manager on the wing is a clear turning point that starts the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence'. A failure of the negotiation would clearly move the situation to the next phase in which the emergency squad would enter the wing: the intervention phase. Usually, the security manager's arrival would help the officer in his effort to de-escalate the situation to 'normality'. Sometimes, however, the emergency squad must enter into the picture, threatening (Chapter 6) and/or doing coercion (Chapter 7).

Chapter 6 is about what I called 'soft-coercion' and specifically deals with both threatening coercion symbolically and credibly; it is about the initial stage of the emergency squad's intervention in which soft-coercion is at stake. 'Soft-coercion'

is here defined as any kind of interaction in which a threat of doing coercion is either symbolically or credibly performed by at least one officer of the emergency squad to at least one prisoner.

The intervention phase of the Cycle would start with the arrival of the emergency squad on the wing. The entrance of the squad would clearly start soft-coercion. It is important to note that not only the prisoner who is threatened depends on the officer's threat, but also that the officer's who is performing the threat depends on – and becomes constrained by – his victim's decisions and acts: there is a clear issue of credibility and reputation at stake here for either actors involved in the interaction-chain. It emerged clearly in the ethnography that not only the actual use-of-force, just like violence, is costly (Collins 2008), but that threatening the use-of-force is costly too.

This chapter will *firstly* outline a description of a few examples of the three main recurring reasons that urge the squad intervention. The second section will describe the officers' performance and display of the *symbolic threat* of coercion performed by entering the wing as a platoon and some common traits of these performances as well as a few ethnographic examples. *Lastly*, the third section will address the crucial stage of the *credible thread* of coercion, following with some examples of the scripts normally used by officers to communicate that 'hard-coercion is just around the corner' to one another as well as to prisoners.

This chapter will conclude explaining that most of the time that the intervention squad enters the wing, no hard-coercion is needed to force de-escalation. Yet, this is not always the case.

Chapter 7 is called 'The bodily use-of-force' and addresses the actual officers' bodily use-of-force. Usually, coercion would only be used after following more or less precisely the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence'; in particular it would normally be introduced by a stage in which coercion is threatened rather than

performed like Chapter 6 has shown; however, as it has been observed more than once by the ethnographer, an officer's assault (or alleged assault) would probably directly lead to officers doing coercion bodily, rather than a less hard intervention independently from further prisoner behaviour. This chapter, not only will discuss what the ethnographer has observed on the wing, but will also disclose a few anecdotes from officers' video recorded interviews on their descriptions and interpretations of doing coercion bodily in which officers not only deny but also proudly claim and re-claim their disputable behaviours. (That large amount of those representations will thoroughly be addressed in another publication).

This chapter will be divided into four sections. *Firstly*, an introductory discussion on the idea of credible threats, and on the relationships between credible threats and bodily coercion reasoning around the construction of the squad's reputation. *Secondly*, one section called 'Opening the barred door: doing coercion heavily' will introduce the minutia of events that had occurred in few particular occasions around the moment of opening the barred door to 'start the fight'. *Thirdly*, some descriptions of episodes of doing coercion bodily observed will be reframed and narratively described. *Lastly*, a final section will address the end of the phase of doing coercion: the practice of manual and mechanical physical restraint by which the prisoner is both bodily and symbolically overdue by the squad.

Chapter 8 is methodologically oriented and deals selectively only with few relevant methodological and ethical issues that have emerged doing this particular ethnography on doing coercion in Italy.

Chapter 2

Use-of-force *versus* violence:
Interpreting coercion

Introducing this chapter it is worth anticipating that following the theoretical approach adopted in this ethnography the officers' *use-of-force* will be treated as a particular *type of violent interaction* (Collins 2008; Athens 2005) without any moral judgment embedded in it. Despite the fact that either expressions 'using force' or 'using violence' would implicitly embed a moral judgements both in the public sphere and in the criminological use of those expressions (Ray 2011). The study at hand analyses the use-of-force insteraction-chains as violent interactions in which a sequence of bodily (and symbolic) exchanges between two or more human being in a custodial setting occurs. Furthermore, the focus will not only be restricted to the actual bodily use-of-force between

one or more prison officers and one or more inmates, but it will also include the threat of it.

Any intentional moral judgement will therefore be clearly expressed by the author using an adequate adjective or adverb, such as 'bad', 'wrong', 'abusively' thereby saying i.e. bad violence or wrongdoing and so on. By the same token, the expression 'use-of-force-and-violence' used in the title refers explicitly to the particular interactions occurring in prisons as a consequence of an episode or encounter institutionally, either formally or informally labelled 'critical event'; unpacking those particular events is the main topic of this thesis.

We now turn to introduce some of the ways in which the issues of coercion, force, and violence have been used from other academic perspectives contiguous to sociology. Of course, only a limited selection of the criminological literature specifically resonating with the issue from a sociological or anthropological perspectives will be considered here. Any new *résumé* of the well-known criminological models of interpreting the issue of conflicts in prison will *not* be proposed here once again. Both *deprivation model* and *importation model* are outlined in all Criminology text books[14].

In the next sections of this chapter a few normative assumptions that has been influential among scholars dealing with the issue at stake will be introduced. By doing so we intend not only to better situate this ethnography on 'use-of-force-and-violence' interactions within a larger research community than the sociological one, but also to resonate explicitly on the literatures that had such a great influence in the development of the researcher's education and

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[14]   Criminological interpretations hardly ever, if at all, have referred to the sociological study of violence (Collins 1974, 2008, 2012; Athens 1980, 2005, 2007; Weenink 2014). Those studies are crucial in our ethnography as to what they deal with the observation of actual situations and interactions occurring in front of the ethnographer or discursively interpreted by him or her in which force has been used.

understanding of the issue[15]; in particular this chapter draws extensively on both fields of Prison sociology and Police and policing.

The use-of-force (or coercion)

William Terrill's recent chapter on 'Police Coercion' (2014) – Terrill considers coercion as a synonymous of the use-of-force; and so do will I here – clearly shows the existence of an extended 'grey area' of legitimate/illegitimate use-of-force in between the clearly legal and the clearly illegal everyday police practices that are regulated by law; according to Terrill, that grey area has not yet been thoroughly conceptualised in theoretical terms (2014)[16]. The definition of coercion would often be commonsensical and not adequate to be used analytically. The quote from an old paper presented below is still valid today although some interesting papers have afterwards been published on the issues of Power and resistance in prisons:

[i]n theory, the threat of force by guards is always present [in prison; yet] the literature lacks any systematic analysis of violence as a mechanism of social control [...]. This neglect leaves an unbalanced picture of the structure and process of prisoner control (Marquart 1986: 348-49)[17].

Before continuing to outline the different and sometimes contrasting definitions adopted in the literature to distinguish the diverse aspects, degrees, legitimacy and lawfulness of the use-of-force, it is necessary, first of all, to clearly stress one core attribute and characteristic of the prison officers' job as such. Doing this here is not a neutral decision at all; on the contrary, it is

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[15]   I pay a tribute here to Mary Bosworth, Professor of Criminology at the University of Oxford. Her lessons at the Centre for criminology have been particularly insightful.

[16]   Empirically, then, it has not been studied ethnographically in custodial setting within an interactionist perspective.

[17]   It is worth noting that Marquant has a very political approach; the author here, following Weber, tries to study interactions analitically without emphasising any pre-conception or political interpretation of the 'data'.

intended to unmask the researcher's own realist and pragmatic position on the issue. Following William Terrill writing on the police coercive tactics (2014), it can be argued that *hopefully* 'a portion (a good portion) of the *coercive tactics used by the police* [and prison officers] *is wholly necessary and legal*' (2014: 6; *emphasis added*). I would add that the coercive tactics not only are in the prison officers' tool box, but they are among those tools embedded in the duties that characterise the specificity of the prison officer's job when compared with other prison staff (Bennett et al. 2008) such as, i.e. social workers or psychologists. In other words, the threat of the use-of-force, or the actual use-of-force are lawful (or legitimate in a Weberian sense)[18] duties, among others, that officers *must* use proportionally if and when strictly necessary, and do actually use in discretionary fashions, to manage critical situations day in day out.

In the quote from *Prison officers and their world* (Kauffman 1988) presented below, there is one basic-grade officer's personal interpretation of a righteous way of using force. The officers explains his or her way of handling an inmate holding a weapon in his cell. Instead of promptly rushing to the use-of-force, he or she said,

it's a lot easier [for Prison officers] just to go down [to an inmate cell] and tell the men to give you what you want, and if he gives it too you, then you don't have to go through all that trouble. If he doesn't give it to you, well, ok, then you go in [the cell] and get it (Kauffman 1988: 51).

The previous quote shows a keeper's narrative saying that he or she would try to use his authority (or I would say a threat; *infra*, Chapter 6) before to 'use his or her hands'; yet, it neither tells us much about any actual particular situation that has happened, nor does it address any possible future scenario in which a particular officers could decide whether or not opening the barred door and entering the cell to 'get it'.

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[18]   The distinction lawful vs legitimate is discussed in the next chapter.

Recalling the classical Weber's interpretation of the state, it can be inferred that until now law enforcement agents, including prison officers, have been one of the public agency that has had the legitimate authority to implement in practice the monopoly of the use of physical force within a given territory or within a particular facility; Elias (1939/1978) considers the state monopoly of coercion, and the parallel reduction of the use of violence as a means to solve disputes between citizens, as a crucial trait of the process of civilization[19]. A process that not only progressively leave the monopoly of coercion to the State apparatus, but also tends *to hide the state violence* from public gaze relegating it into closed institutions or confined situations (*also see* Sim 2008; Drake 2015)[20].

According to Garland:

[o]ffenders are now routinely sequestrated from the sphere of normal social life, and the *'problem' that they represent is managed 'off-stage'*, in a discrete institutional setting which carefully controls its impact upon the public consciousness…the business of inflicting pain and deprivation upon offenders has come to seem rather shameful and unpalatable...though it is an activity which is deemed to be necessary none the less, so our sensibilities are preserved by removing this painful undertaking to scarcely visible sites on the margins of society and social consciousness (1990: 235; *emphasis added*).

Another useful introductory understanding of the relationship between another law enforcement agent' work (the police) and the use-of-force is given by Bittner, a liminal author on policing. He argued that

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[19]   Scholars of punishment that explicitly addressed Elias that imbue our understanding of coercion are (Dunning and Mennell 1998; Garland 1990: 213–247; Pratt 2002).
[20]   DiIulio (1990) put the relationships between state power and the prison institution clearly by writing: '[b]y most definitions, the state (or government) is the institution in society that has a monopoly on the legitimate exercise of coercive power. Imprisonment represents one of the most concrete embodiments of state power' (274).

the role of the police [and prison officers] is best understood as a mechanism for the *distribution of non-negotiable coercive force* employed in accordance with the dictates of an intuitive grasp of situational exigencies (1991: 48).

Yet, regarding prison, that definition should be more nuanced; as it will be clear in Chapter 5 presenting the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence', force is far more often threaten that actually used on the landing. According to Collins (2008; 2012) interpersonal violence usually happens rarely (proportionally to potentially violent encounters). In other context, such as organised crime (Varese 2010), credible threats normally suffice (Campana, Varese 2013) as well without the necessity to actually use force all the time.

In a previous publication, Bittner stated that police are monopolist of force in civil society (Bittner 1970); I would rather say that *law enforcement agency more broadly –such as police, prison officers, security companies, and so on – have all together the monopoly of the bodily use-of-force in practice*.

However, all those previous definitions are very broad normative assumptions that do not tell us much, if at all, about what is actually happening in any particular circumstances to particular human being in a particular place when they interact or relate with one another[21]. That's one of the reasons why we will adopt the sociological interactionist approach in which the *interaction* is the focus of the study.

In *Prison officers and their world*, Kauffman (1988) has focused on prison officer addressing the use-of-force and violence clearly distinguishing between the coercive legitimate practice on one side, and the prison violence on the other. Kauffman – an ex prison officer herself – interviewed prison officers at

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[21]   Furthermore the crucial issue of discretion will be addressed in a next section titled 'On officers' discretion'. By now it is enough to add that is well known that enforcing the law in day-to-day situations hardly ever occur 'by the book' (Goffman 1961a; Sykes 1958; Clemmer 1940).

work both in prison and in a forensic psychiatric hospital[22] in USA in the 1970s; in one chapter she focused, on one side, on Prison officer's 'Power in prisons' (45–70) – distinguishing between their authority, persuasion, inducement, manipulation, force and coercion – and on the other, on inmates' power (71-74).

In another chapter Kauffman then directly addressed ' [bad] Prison violence' in a quite unique way (119-162); in fact, not only did she discuss 'Inmates violence against inmates' and 'Inmate violence against officers' like most recent books on prison violence have done so far, (Edgar et al. 2012) – thereby labelling as violent only the kept (Edney 1997; Sim 2008) – but she also concluded the chapter with two sections in which she focussed on the 'bad' violence perpetrated by prison officers, by doing so overcoming the commonsensical distinction that normatively states that inmates use violence and officers use force[23]. However, Kauffman (1988) did not say that much about how the use-of-force was exerted in practice on the landing on day-to-day basis, nor did she show any 'typical sequence' of action (Gambetta 2009: 98; *see also*: Athens 2005; Collins 2012). Kauffman, in fact, did not perform any observation (yet, having been an officers herself she had some experience; not necessarily in emergency squad, though), she only used interviews to write that book.

Trying to grasp the dynamic structure of the use-of-force by conducting interviews would have not be a reasonable goal – in fact, it was *not* her goal. Interesting first hand voices narrating episodes of 'bad' violence, and officers' interpretations of those episodes were collected and analysed discursively instead.

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[22]   This ethnography i salso grounded both in a prison and in a forensic psychiatric hospital.
[23] *See also* Snacken (2005).

Surfing the literatures looking for the use-of-force

Surfing the prison literature three main problems emerged. *First*, the literature is scarce (in Italian or about Italy there is not any academic ethnographic account. Nothing recent exists (*but see* Ricci and Salierno 1971, for a very critical and politically biased account). The international literature is the product of research conducted in very different cultures, geographies and penal contexts that do not easily resonate with one another.

Secondly, there is simply not enough literature on the prison officers use-of-force (*but see*: Kauffman 1988; Marquart 1986; Sim 2008; and Crewe 2009). It is therefore indispensable to consider, on the one side, the sociological literature on violence as such (*infra*, Chapter 3), and on the other, to take the literature on the police-use-of-force into account (*see* Terrill 2014 for updated references).

Thirdly, using policing literature studying Prison officers is problematic because policing the street is very different than policing a prison's wing. Alison Liebling argued for 'the relevance of the policing literature to the work of prison officers' (Liebling 2000: 333). Liebling justified the opportunity of adopting policing literature as a framework to study prison officers; yet, she pointed out *three crucial differences between prison and police officers* work that need to be taken into account. She argued that,

[f]irst, prison officers have (more) continuing contact with their charges. As a result, they form relationships, of varying types and degrees, and often deploy their authority through these relationships. These questions, of rule following, the use of formal disciplinary and informal sanctions, and the use of authority– particularly through or alongside relationships– are critical to the shape of prison life. Second, prison officers are (formally) more visible to their line managers [than police officer] (so that the extent of oversight over their work is broadly speaking more a matter of management choice). Third, the formal legal power they have over prisoners' lives is arguably greater since prisoners are no longer free citizens (335).

Focusing on the prison officers' use-of-force, however, a *fourth* crucial difference is the crucial dimension of the *secrecy* of prison work (Cohen and Taylor 1976; Sim 1990); in particular concerning officers' use-of-force. Secrecy, and the lack of public visibility are still one of the core characteristics of prison officers' work in Italy. Reading the literature, though, the situation does not seem to be different elsewhere. The total absence of ethnography of the officer's use-of-force is a clear demonstration of it (*see* Drake 2015).

On officers' discretion

In the policing literature there has long been a debate on the 'discretion of law enforcement' (*see*: Liebling 2000) that originated around the 1960s by Joseph Goldstein paper 'Police Discretion not to invoke the Criminal Process: Low Visibility Decision in the Administration of Justice' (1960). Bittner (1990) considered discretion a structural component of police officers' work. He argued clearly that 'criminal law enforcement is in practice conditional, even though it is commonly regarded as unconditional' Bittner (1990: 275). He explained this position clearly by arguing that,

[i]t is well known that police officers do not invoke the law mechanically…In addition, officers are expected to consider some general policy interests in deciding whether or not to invoke the law…The extent to which discretionary latitude exists and is regarded as legitimate and desirable varies considerably with the type of crime and he type of suspect' (Bittner 1990: 274).

When this police discretion became largely acknowledged 'people have worried about the extent of discretion and urged that it be restricted by additional rules of procedures' (Bittner 1990: 275).

The importance of discretion of prison officer's work emerged from the outset of the prison studies and was clearly pointed out as early as in the classic prison publications of Clemmer (1940) and Sykes (1958) (*see also*, Sykes and Merton 1978).

The custodians find themselves engaged in a constant struggle to achieve even the semblance of dominance. And the position of the custodial bureaucracy is further undermined by the bonds of friendship which spring up between the guard and his prisoner, by the practices of quid pro quo and long familiarity which serve to temper a strict enforcement of the rules (Sykes 1958: 130; e*mphasis in the original*).

Policing the wing has long been understood as characterised by discretion and compromises (Crewe 2011). The centrality of discretion and the prison officers struggle to rule the wing is what is more surprising in old prison ethnographic accounts; it can be re-read following Crewe via the well-known 'street level bureaucracy' (Lipsky 2010). Reading prison work from Lipsky's perspective discretion can be considered a structural dimension that is necessarily needed to allow officer to cope with their working environment and flexibly follow the laws, regulations and procedures and to translate them into practice in a particular organization and institutional context while doing their job routinely.

Lipsky suggested that at a 'street level' the routine and logic may be based on local scripts and informal norms that may differ significantly from the institutional goals and means as intended at higher hierarchical level within the organization and beyond. Similarly, prison officers should implement the prison functions (to rehabilitate, punish, deter, isolate and neutralise)[24] while, concurrently, maintaining order and security. However, following Kauffman (1988), 'external pressure to pursue multiple goals are not necessarily felt

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[24]   For a classic discussion on prison formal-official and hidden functions see *Prison on trial* (Mathiesen 1990). From a critical perspective it constructed the most influential discussion on the issue. The function discussed and criticised in that book are: 1) rehabilitation; 2) general prevention; 3) 'collective' or 'selective' incapacitation; 4) individual deterrence as individual prevention. Mathiesen then concludes the book presenting a more general discussion of justice and his own critique of prisons.

within a prison at the level where officer and inmate interact (45). Discretional interpretations and common-sense are at the core of day-to-day interactions even in the most regulated and normative context as ethnomethodology have clearly demonstrated with Garfinkel well-known 'breaching experiments' in which participants were invited to unpack the taken for granted in everyday encounters and small talks[25].

Discretion, a necessarily ingredient in officers' interpretations of day-to-day routines and orders could eventually not only lead to abuses and violence, but also be an instrument of reconciliation and negotiation.

The well-known dilemma of custody and rehabilitation impinge on officers' day-to-day work. It is well expressed in Asylum (*but, see also* Tait 2011):

[t]hose member of staff who are in continuous contacts with inmates may feel that they, too, are being set a contradictory task, having *to coerce inmates* into obedience while at the same time giving the impression that humane standards are being maintained and the rational goals of the institution realised. (Goffman 1961a: 92; *emphasis added*).

We now turn to the presentation to the set of 'tools of influence' used by officers to run the wing discretionary.

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[25]   In particular, returning to the quasi-forgotten test on the 'convict code' written by a leading ethnomethodologist Lawrence Wieder (1974) showed a very different approach on the commonsensical discursive use of the prisoner's code for purposefully means: something he described as 'telling the code'. The code used by participants, in other words was not considered as the outcome of a sociological analysis. On the contrary, the fact the conduct of residents had an orderly, coherent appearance was the ongoing, practical accomplishment of residents who interactionally provided staff with 'embedded instructions' for seeing the environment of the halfway house [the research site] from 'the standpoint of the residents' by ' telling the code (220).

On authority

Terrill (2014) argued, as we have introduced above, that the definition of use-of-force is contested, and that the theoretical bases of the studies of it are weak. In the next chapter the interactionist sociological approach will be outlined. Here, other approaches both in sociology and criminology have been considered to grasp the normative interpretations of the use-of-force (from observation to quantitative analysis of official records); yet, the next short sections will mainly focus on ethnographies. However, in the background, also the game-theory-based sociological approaches of Kaminski (2004) and Gambetta (2009) and the contested *Stanford Prison Experiment* (Zimbardo 2007) will be taken into account.

Although the Stanford experiment has been strongly challenged by those who do not consider Social psychological experiments, in particular that one, sound, others, notwithstanding the more or less soundness of the method, suggested, that the Stanford Prison Experiment is a strong remainder of the crucial role that both obedience in a chain of command, and the organizational constraints play in the dynamic of the use-of-force and even in bad-violence and torture within actual custodial institutions in which flesh and blood persons are kept in custody.

Following Buffa (2013a)[26], the Stanford Prison Experiment should be taken into account carefully; despite being an experiment, in fact, Buffa argues that many interesting issues that emerged in that experiment should not be underestimated dealing with 'real' actual prisons and prison interaction.

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[26]   Pietro Buffa (2013a, b, and 2015) had served as prison governor in a large Italian prison; now he is serving as a General manager at the Department of the Prison Administration (the Italian 'equipollent' of the UK Prison Service). He is one of the few who has written extensively and bluntly on governing prisons in Italy and on prison problems and dilemma.

Authority and the prison officers

Authority is a well-known relevant concept in the social science. Bosworth and Carrabine (2005: 506) suggested that '[s]ome [inmates] may obey rules from fear' and then added that 'others might support them out of habit of loyalty' and that '[t]hey may even be obedient because they believe in the legitimacy of regulations in their own right' (506). Authority or legitimate power could be considered as one ingredient shaping the *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Collins 2004) and the relationships between the keepers and the kept in a 'total institution' (Goffman 1961a)[27] on daily basis.

Authority is a legitimated power that produces a normative obligation to obey to a lawful order in those under its influence. Terrill (2014) argued that it can be grasped as the opposite of coercion; coercion, in fact, according to Terrill is the enforcement of obedience through a physical interaction whether or not the inmate complies spontaneously (2014)[28] with an officer's lawful order. Crewe (2009) distinguished between 'power that is taken-for-granted and power that is accepted as just or legitimated' (84); those two types of power would work differently. The first one would be based on habit or ritual; the second one, on 'normative commitment' (84).

Although in England and Wales there is a growing attention about the issue of police legitimacy, and prison officers' legitimacy (Jackson et al. 2010) – and their authority – it worth bear in mind that using the concept of prison officers' and police officers' authority can be challenging (Goldstein 1960) for different reasons, particularly so in prison. Although, agreeing with those who argue that 'total consensus' is very hard to achieve, Ben Crewe (2009) stated that 'authority in prison can be experienced as more or less legitimate' (85); it is a

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[27]   Also see Sennett's *Authority* (1980).
[28]   It is necessary to note, though, that Terrill (2014) considers coercion a synonym to the use-of-force; Instead, Kauffman's definition distinguishes between the two, specifying that coercion refers to the 'treat of sanction' (1988: 61) and not only to the use-of-force.

question of degree of legitimacy rather than the overarching presence or absence of it. The same opinion is expressed by Carrabine et al., who argued 'that there are variable conditions which render [authority] more or less likely that prisoners will accept, however conditionally, the authority of their custodians' (2009: 367). Writing specifically on legitimacy in prisons, Jackson et al. argued that:

[a]pplied to correctional settings, legitimacy in the sense outlined in Tyler's work entails prisoners accepting prison authority and authorizing prison officials to dictate appropriate behaviour (irrespective of whether prisoners agree with the need for the specific behaviours and the rules which govern these behaviours). According to the procedural justice perspective this authorization springs most importantly from the fairness with which prisoners feel they are treated...In other words, prisoners who perceive the prison regime to be legitimate believe that the prison should have rules and that these rules should be followed (Jackson et al. 2010: 4).

In the Italian prison context, it is difficult to follow Jackson et al.'s (2010) perspective grounded on 'procedural justice' and the 'fairness with which prisoners feel they are treated' for two main reasons.[29]*Firstly*, the Italian cultural approach to rules and regulation varies greatly within the country and, in general, I guess, it is hardly comparable with the Anglo-Saxon's one (which I suppose is more consistent on average); this might have some historical as well as cultural explanations that cannot be discussed here (and that would require a specific research agenda). *Secondly*, in most Italian custodial institutions the standards of living and working are quite poor indeed; they have even been contested by the European Court of Human Rights (HUDOC[30]) time and again. Despite the public institutional efforts to challenge the difficult situation using the scarce resources available, many abolitionist or politicians and some critical scholars only argue against the paradoxically 'unlawful', or 'criminal' Italian Prison system. I see the difficulties and I experienced with

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[29] I discussed the issue with one of the authors when I was a visiting scholar at the Centre of Criminology at the University of Oxford. Ben Bradford agreed that the concept was hard to be used comparatively; he added that he was aware that legitimacy was a concept that was likely to work better in some context than in others (personal communication).
[30] See: http://www.echr.coe.int/Pages/home.aspx?p=home&c= (01-10-15).

my body and my psychological well-being what it means to work in such a condition, let alone to live within it (which is hardly graspable as researcher in my opinion); yet, having visited more than 35 prisons around Europe, I contest the picture of the catastrophic situation and keep on going studying it from within ethnographically to serve as a researcher and by doing so contributing to the analytical understanding of the phenomena at stake.[31]

However, following Crewe's argument on the possibility to enhance or reduce the legitimacy of the prison in prisoner's opinions, it is useful to refer to *Prisons and the problem of order* (Sparks and Bottoms 1995); it can give a more practical explanation as to what can be considered to produce a *delegitimising effect*, if not a legitimizing one. It is really pertinent with the discussion on the use-of-force that is the central aspect of the topic under examination in this manuscript. Sparks and Bottoms 1995 argue that:

[e]very instance of brutality in prisons, every casual racist joke and demeaning remark, every ignored petition, every unwarranted bureaucratic delay, every inedible meal, every arbitrary decision to segregate or transfer without giving clear and unfounded reasons, every petty miscarriage of justice, every futile and inactive period of time – is delegitimizing (60).

That quote is a crucial lesson and should never be forgotten. Neither by the officers, nor by the prisoners. At least, this is my normative opinion.

During fieldwork another crucial problem regarding legitimacy in prisons emerged. It had already been illustrated by Kauffman (1988) who argued that '[a]uthority failed the officers in their quest to control the prison in part because the behaviour officers sought to compel of inmates so often *violated what inmates considered to be in their own self-interests*' (51; *emphasis*

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[31]   The nationally well-known Italian politician Marco Pannella has often argued publicly against the 'criminal Italian Prison system'. Moreover, the Italian previous President of the Republic described Italian prisons as inhuman and Italian psychiatric asylum as lager.

added).

By obeying to officers' commands, then, inmates may sometimes risk not only their own self-esteem, their masculinity, their own face and reputation with others, but also their own safety or life as such. Being too docile with officers might lead in some particular occasion to fellow inmates' retaliation, abuses and violence in return.

In other words, inmate would not only obey the law for one's own personal will to do it, but also they would do it for rational, emotional or 'ritualistic' (in Merton's sense) reasons, or simply because there was no other choice available in the picture at any particular time.

Despite all difficulties using the idea of legitimacy, I agree with Kauffman writing '[a]t each of the institutions studied here, *most* officers exercised authority over *some* aspects of inmates' lives' (1988: 47; *emphasis in original*). In fact, often 'inmates recognized the legitimacy of the officers' control in certain spheres and obeyed' (1988: 47); of course, this implies that inmates did not recognised officers legitimacy in other spheres. I also agree with her view when she writes that arguing that officers 'exercise *no* authority overstates the case' (47; *emphasis in original*). However, despite these normative assumptions, in the following chapters the organization and the mechanism through which compliance is obtained are illustrated from an interactionist perspective considering the particular actual course of actions and interactions that had been observed throughout the ethnography.

In the facilities (either in the asylum O.P.G., or the prison C.C.) I studied, officer were continuously obeyed most of the times without resistance by most of the kept; yet, often a few inmates strongly resisted orders and their behaviours and interactions sometime leaded to episodes that would be labelled *critical* (*infra*, Chapter 5 and 6). Although authority have often worked in a

way or another, officers were also compelled to move beyond authority adopting different strategies to be obeyed and to rule the wing accordingly.

In other words, officers could not simply presuppose inmate's cooperation on the ground of prisoners' intention to obey their own orders and, therefore, officers would know that it would be likely that they also had to adopt other *tools of influence* (as I called them) day in day out.

Tools of influence[32]

Officers' authority is neither a sufficient ingredient, nor a sufficient 'tool' to deal with inmates and obtain or coerce compliance. Therefore, other tools of influence are also used routinely inside. Drawing on both the literature and the ethnographic practice a large *bouquet* of 'tools of influence' enter the picture.

Below, that *bouquet* is organized in a three by three table (Tab 2.1). In what follows, however, only few tools will be addressed in more depth: they will either be those most frequently observed on the landing, or those that have more significantly influenced the academic debate on the power relationship and the use-of-force between the keepers and the kept.

In that tables, different tools of influence are organized taking into account two main dimensions. Vertically, they are organized in the three columns distinguishing the tools of influence between those clearly lawful, the ones clearly unlawful and yet others that are neither clearly lawful, nor clearly unlawful. Terrill (2014) refers to the latter as the 'large grey area' in between. Horizontally, each particular tool of influence is positioned according to their

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[32]   I am not referring to power generically here: I am referring instead to specific tools officers (and in turn prisoners) might use to pursue a particular goal in a given situation. I used this expression thinking about the idea of the toolbox. I slightly changed Kauffman's 'means of influence' (1988). Crewe (2009) wrote more broadly about 'elementary forms of social power'.

level of coerciveness: in the higher row of the table there are the non-coercive tools; in the second row, there are the verbally (or symbolically) coercive tools of influence, and in the last row, the physically coercive ones.

	Lawful	Grey area	Unlawful
Non-coercive	Negotiation, Rewards, **Persuasion**, **inducement**	**Manipulation**	**Manipulation** with false and incorrect use of information
Verbally-coercive	Verbally-coercive enforcement of a lawful order; **threat** of sanctions lawfully enforceable with UOF	Verbally-coercive enforcement of an ambiguously lawful order	Verbal-abuse, yelling, joking, verbally discriminating, provoking
Physically-coercive	Physical **use of minimum force** for the shorter period of time if and when strictly necessary	**Use-of-force**, pushing, restraining, locking in and/or retarding unlocking of the cells for no clear reasons	**Use-of-force** if clearly non necessary; overuse of force; violence; torture

Table 2.1 Tools of influence (a normative table) (design: Luigi Gariglio)

Describing the distinct characteristics of working with [or warehousing as Goffman suggested] prisoners, Goffman put it clearly, arguing that:

by the exercise of threat, rewards and persuasion, human objects [meaning, the prisoners] can be given instructions and relied upon to carry them out on their own. The span of time during which these objects can be trusted to carry out planned actions without supervision will of course vary a great deal [...]. Only the most complicated electronic equipment shares this capacity (Goffman 1961a: 80).

In the next sections a few criminological and sociological interpretations of some of these tools will be addressed. Kauffman (1988) did it slightly differently in her chapter 'Power in Prison' (45–82) more than twenty-five years ago; yet her framework on the issue of 'means of influence' (52) are still crucial today and have been very influential on some of the ideas that will be discussed in the next sections of this chapter[33].

Lawful-non-coercive tools of influence: negotiating through persuasion and inducement

The inmate's will to obey does not always necessarily produce inmate's cooperation on the ground of officer's authority; the officer's toolkit have therefore to include other means, or tools of influence, by which strategically interact and negotiate with inmates on daily basis. Following Sykes (1958),

[c]oercive tactics may have some utility in checking blatant disobedience – if only a few man disobey. But if the great mass of criminal [sic] are to be brought into the habit of conformity, it must be on other grounds (61).

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[33]   Crewe (2009: 80–86) recently reinterpreted the issue at the light of the new literature; his discussion is also really stimulating; particularly so, his idea of 'soft power' (Crewe 2011). However, my ethnographic observations conducted within an interactionist sociological perspective (Collins 2004, 2008; Athens 2005, 2007) resonates particularly well with Kauffman's interpretations and with her focus on the use-of-force and violence which is almost missing in Crewe's book.

The first two means that officers can adopt to gain prisoners' cooperation lawfully on the wing during the day-to-day *Interaction Ritual Chains* (Collins 2004) are 1) persuasion, and 2) inducement[34]. Neither the first, nor the latter use physical coercion or the threat of it, necessarily. They are both based – at least the interpretation proposed here – on the human capacity of (rational) reasoning[35], emotion management (Hochschild 1983; 2003), and, following Crewe (2009) '*habit, ritual* or *fatalistic resignation*' (83; *emphasis in original*). Persuasion, and inducement have frequently been sufficient to pursue a possible accord to a dispute in a way or another during the ethnographic observation.

Different forms of negotiation are usually the most common way to deal with a dispute among different actors with the intention to reach a compromise both at an international political relation level and at day-to-day encounters level between human beings not in custody. In prison, negotiations are frequently at stake as well[36]. In prison, the *power dynamic* is constituted and reconstituted within a particularly unequal distribution of power and resources among the keeper and the kept;[37] yet, the outcome of any dispute between one or more officers and one or more prisoners is not always given and fixed. In that situation heading toward a *Pareto efficiency*[38] ought to guide the logic of the

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[34]　　　Here the sociological interactionist position of the author is made explicit. In fact, the interactions between officers and inmates and *not* the *Problem of Order* (Sparks 1996) is the topic here.

[35]　　　Following Weber, rational actions are of two main types: the first is based on a utilitarian perspective; the second, on the contrary, is based on the motive of the action: the value embedded into it (a typical example is someone risking one's life to help a person or to defend his belief or opinion against all odds). Both persuasion and inducement can be read in Weberian terms.

[36]　　　The literature on the negotiation is large; here we will only deal with the reinterpretations of negotiation used in prison sociology and criminology.

[37]　　　In the next chapter, following (Athens 2005, 2007) we will refer to it as domination at a micro level of the day-to-day interaction. Collins also refer to it yet differently (*infra*, Chapter 3).

[38]　　　Pareto efficiency, in fact, is a situation in which it is no possible to ameliorate the individual situation of any of the actors involved in the exchange (or interaction) without, at the same time, making any other actor worse off. It might be difficult and maybe way to abstract to

negotiation between officer and prisoners, at least in a normative and rational perspective.

In the field, officers valued and prioritized their own interests and prisoners' interests differently, and they were allowed *de facto* to work accordingly almost without any serious form of accountability regarding their own performance of their duties. Putting it differently, prisoners' interests and rights, were not always automatically considered to be worth of any serious consideration: they were not considered just like any 'free' citizen, let alone prioritised. Sometimes, the simple fact of listening to a prisoner's request was interpreted by officers and staff as very costly, unnecessary, or even unreasonable because

[prisoners] always say the same things and do the same stupid questions: 'do you have a cigarette?' I just do not go anymore [when they call me]. When they really need your help you can get it straightforwardly from their tone of voice...you can't miss it (field note).

Therefore, the actual possibility of heading towards somewhere next to the Pareto's point of maximum efficiency was in practice very limited indeed, if not purely utopian. Pareto's approach still maintains a useful explicative potential to deal with situations in which both prisoners' and officers' position might be ameliorated by cooperating with one another, like in the contexts of prison work, prison schooling, and in some particular rehabilitative programs. When this happens persuasion can be a valid tool to move the interaction towards the officers' intended goal turning the situation, using rational choice's vocabulary, to a win-win game.

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consider this concept as a valuable tool for grasping any sorts of prison interactions; yet, some interactions observed on the wing where unpredictably fitting into that model. In few particular occasions, in fact, an officer on duty did first try to pursue the inmate's interests against all odds 'working hard for the prisoner' s just cause' (field note) until his own situation was not risking to be jeopardised. In doing so those situations were heading towards a Pareto's efficiency point, at least in our loose interpretation of it. In practice, however, most of the daily situations were significantly different from Pareto theoretical model; social situation, in fact, can hardly ever be explain rigidly by adopting economic rational models (*contra*, Kaminski 2004; Gambetta 2009).

However, in real day-to-day life, rationality is hardly ever the only factor at stake; sometimes it is almost absent. Other factors influencing the interaction or the situation, more generally speaking, would include the following.

Firstly, the officers' and inmates' informal hierarchies (Goffman 1961a); then, the 'emotional labour' (Hochschild 1983) required to deal with 'heavy situations and continuous requests;' next, 'officers' occupation moralities (Scott 2008), and lastly the officers' reputational costs of showing a friendly face to inmates (Goffman 1961b, 1967). All these factors influence the situation in a way or another, making it more complicated that it might appear at first glance within a rational choice model (*see*, Kaminski 2004).

Negotiation is often used on the landing in one form or the other; yet it does not always suffice in ending disputes or fights. The two principal forms of what we, here, call lawful negotiation are persuasion and inducement.

Negotiating by persuasion

Persuasion was a crucial tool of negotiation in the interactions between officers and prisoners in the field[39]; it is based on the idea of convincing the counterpart to accept an accord (often potentially clear to the persuader) over a certain state of affair through reasoning and rhetoric devices. This option is predicated on the recognition of 'the other'; it also requires the intention of the persuader to convince the other by discussing the issue thoroughly with one another. In practice the persuader's goal is persuading (or dissuading) the counterpart to follow or to leave a particular course of action, attitude or

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[39] It is also discussed by Kauffman (1988: 52–54); Crewe does not specifically addressed it in his 'Elementary forms of social power in prison' (80–86) that he defines as: 1) coercion; 2) manipulation or inducement (we treat them separately here); 3) habit, ritual and so on; lastly 4) normative justification or commitment.

conduct that has already been defined by the persuader either appropriate or inappropriate (Kauffman 1988: 52); in our field work prisoners' actions of resistance, protests, and even fights between inmates (but not a prison officer's assault) were often *prima facie* dealt with by using persuasion in order to move the situation to a more desirable end; often, this would practically happen by a 'high' grade officer – higher than the wing manager usually ruling the wing (*infra*, Chapter 4 and Chapter 6) – entering the wing to 'have a talk' with the 'troublemaker' to calm the situation or to prevent another critical event from starting again. This would usually happen even before any critical event exploded. Persuasion was a rhetorical device I have seen in action time and again; inside, it was just everyday routine.

By 'doing' persuasion, the officer would frame the discussion in a collaborative way. An officer (or more than one) would try to convince one particular inmate (or a group of inmates) of doing something he was supposed to do, or to stop doing something forbidden or not anymore allowed. Persuasion is a fare way of facing disputes (or crises) when the two parties have some formal degree of freedom to influence the outcome of the interaction in a way or another; yet, there is no real agreement among scholar on what persuasion in prison might look like. Klockars (1995), writing on policing in the 'free' community, event extends the idea of persuasion to that of 'coercive threats' by arguing that:

[a]n officer displaying a snarling police canine, pounding a baton […] or brandishing the electric arc of a stun gun during a confession is not an example of [the use of physical] force. *They are coercive threats, a variety of persuasion'* (Klockars 1995: 12; *emphasis added*).

In the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence' it will be clear what often persuasion was simply the first tool used at the initial stage of the crisis; afterword, a more articulated sequence of tools of influence would enter into the picture over a short period of time if necessary one after the other or

concurrently.

Accordingly, Kauffman argued that in her field (at Walpole),

"persuasion" too often became a mere preamble to coercion where the threatened sanctions *were* under the officers' control. "I'd say, 'look, I'm putting the handcuffs on you. You may be bigger than me, but I am putting the handcuffs on you because I can get ten guys to help me but you can't get anybody to help you. So just let's put the handcuffs on and go.' And we'd go. Nothing to it" (1988: 53; *emphasis in the original*).

We would refer to those practice as the threat of the use-of-force, limiting, by doing so, the perimeter of the idea of persuasion to a verbal or symbolic dimension in which threats of coercion are not in the picture.

Persuasion – like other forms of negotiations – was not always compatible with the actual formal and informal cultures, value-systems and norms governing both officers and prisoners' behaviour, patterns of interactions, and professional cultures in the prison setting under study.

In order to persuade an inmate, in fact, a certain amount of time, privacy, and 'familiarity' between the officer and the inmate is needed to properly address the issue in a personal way and to interact and communicate with one another properly. In an institutional context in which, traditionally, the common type of interaction between the keeper and the kept is based on quick quasi-authoritarian order or authoritative (sometimes authoritarian) lawful request on the part of the officer (as well as seldom other less lawful behaviours or practices), a style of communication based on a slower, less powerfully biased communicative relationships could be problematic for the officers own reputation among his or her fellow colleagues, and therefore is rarely performed, and often resisted instead. However, persuasion would be a good mean for trying to 'make prison more human' (Buffa 2015).

On officers' side, persuasion might be considered time consuming, too soft, and not masculine enough (Sabo 2001; Ricciardelli et al. 2015) to be adopted; yet, occasionally, mainly in the evening or night-shifts verbal interactions between keeper and kept were more likely to happen; in fact, officers in those occasions needed to 'do their own time,' were less busy performing their own proper duties and paperwork, and also needed to fight against boredom which was usually not considered a nice companion inside.

Normally, however, only very short verbal exchanges occurred between the keepers and the kept. It is still true, possibly to a less degree than in the past that longer dialogues through the bars might easily cause on both side suspicion and produce heavy unintended effects (Kauffman 1988) such as violent retaliations and psychological harm.

Persuasion could be a humane way of dealing with disputes. However, in a prison environment, where the officers-inmates disputes' outcome is normally almost given in advance and where 'you ain't do nothing for nothing', and 'you ain't be snitching' persuasion alone might appear to be an inefficient and/or simply too weak means to rule the wing properly. As argued by Kauffman (1988),

[w]hile many Walpole [one of her research sites] officers could and did attempt to persuade inmates to do something by force or argument alone, *the opportunities for reasoned communication that would have been essential for persuasion to become a major source of influence within that prison were lacking* (53; *emphasis added*).

Almost thirty years afterwards, those 'opportunities for reasoned communication' between the keeper and kept are still a rare resource and therefore persuasion can work only intermittently.

Although, persuasion could not be always working on the spot whenever a crises, or critical event, occurred and other means had to be used instead, it might well have worked in the aftermath of a crisis to try to find out new accommodations of the situation for the near future. In other words, persuasion could have been and have often been used as an ordinary tool to try to control and *prevent* the development of new crises to re-emerge in a never ending constitution and re-constitution of the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence'; particularly so with 'non-problematic' prisoners.

During my ethnography, I often observed superior officers going to the inmate's cell for discussing what had happened before trying to persuade the prisoner, through reasoning, to adopt a new style of interaction for the future, thereby showing to the inmate the institutional willingness to end the conflictual relationships between the keepers and kept differently, as well as, concurrently granting the inmate with the institutional consideration of him as a human being deserving attention, and not only as a trouble-maker prisoner. Whether or not this 'benevolence' I experienced was mainly the consequence of me being there (for almost one year and a half) is unclear to me; I would suggest that in many case it was genuine, at least to a certain extent.

The two weak points of the interpretation of persuasion discussed here are that, first, it would mainly take into account reasoning and symbolic exchanges in a context of a dialogue which is not always available in practice; second, and persuasion would not directly address the actor's interests straightforwardly.

The next tool of influence put the prisoners' interests at the centre of the interaction between the officers and the prisoners; by doing so the relationships becomes more instrumental and does not necessarily need a thoroughly open dialogue lasting a long time to operate efficiently.

Negotiation by inducement

Kauffman (1988: 54) described inducement as a style of interaction that takes the other into account as being *also, or mainly,* trying to pursue his or her own self-interests. With inducement, the art of negotiation is reinforced by particular exchanges; yet, not necessarily only economic ones. Both economic and value based rationality – in Weber's sense – are at stake. In a situation of 'prisonization' (Sykes 1958) characterised by extreme deprivation and infantilization (Goffman 1961a), officers can induce an inmate into cooperation focussing on his or her own basic needs in different ways (Kauffman 1988).

The Italian prison regime is *de facto* formally based on inducement by a set of formal norms – commonly adopted in other national prison systems as well (i.e. in U.K.) in a way or another. Prison rules, in fact, prescribe the distribution of advantages and disadvantages as the (discretionary) institutional response to prisoners conducts, behaviours and interactions, thereby disciplining prisoners softly (Crewe 2009). In so doing, through a regime based on 'stick and carrots' (in Italian, *bastone e carota*) compliance is pursued and often temporarily gained through formal inducement. However, other forms of inducement are in the picture as well. In the ethnography, staff would use a simple act of offering a cigarette, or taking the inmate's post downstairs trying, by so doing, to stop a patient or an inmate from acting-out or resisting to an order aggressively.

However, informal inducement has its own drawback; many officers argued that by giving that cigarette in one particular occasion, might turn that request into a prisoners' habit, and slowly slowly, even to a prisoners' right. Therefore, some officers resisted adopting informal inducement, recurring to it only in exceptional circumstances.

Despite a large emphasis on discretion in the literature, following Goffman (1961a), it is necessary to consider that a few very formal 'old-styled' officers and medical staff working 'by the book' would prefer to enter into a fight with inmates rather than mediating with them taking into account their necessities and deprivations. They would prefer head on for a fight than offering a cigarette; that had never occurred during my observation, though.

However, discretion (Liebling 2000; Crewe 2009) is of course in the picture doing inducement too. If we move away from the formal legal prescriptions and we enter into the day-to-day practice of flesh and blood persons on the landing, a new set of informal practical options are available to officers to induce prisoner to cooperate. Those informal tools are the heart of prison work and its secret 'nature' (Cohen and Taylor 1976). Said differently, informal management performed in discretionary ways necessarily characterizes any particular prison regime, as well as any other organization (Lipsky 2010). Although inducement and discretion have been highlighted from the beginning of prison research, and can be considered a crucial structural dimension of both 'governing prison' (DiIulio 1990; Buffa 2013b) and staff-inmates interactions, following Kauffman (1988), a few critical aspects of this practice have emerged which will be briefly outline below.

First, 'inducement is nearly always a double-edged sword: I get what I want in exchange for your getting what you want' (54); this exchange is said may lead to officers' corruption. *Second*, inmates may tend to easily take for granted – as if they were rights (as already stated above) – what they had been given once as a favour; old informal exchanges, moreover, might occasionally 'be used as blackmail by inmates wishing to ensure that those rewards are granted repeatedly, in which case inmates end up controlling officers at least as much as officers are controlling inmates' (55). *Third*, following the American

scholar, an unequal distribution of privilege, in a context of very limited resources, might also lead to less order and security and not necessarily to the pursued goal. *Fourth*, different ways of informally applying inducement – that is applying it in discretionary ways – may produce disputes among officers with different 'styles' of policing and attitudes toward prisoners. Not only one officer might be seen with more favour than another by inmates because more 'generous' than his or her fellow colleague, but also this might push inmates to request service or favour from other officers because 'others' would always do it.

One very relevant issue that I observed on the wing made this problem very visible; it was the distribution of 'free' cigarettes made available by the chaplain that – although organized efficiently and clearly ruled through visible procedures displayed in visible posters on the wing – was put in practice by different staff in very different ways inconsistently; that inconsistency in distributing cigarettes has often been one of the causes of inter-staff harsh conflicts as well as prisoners' complains and requests.

In Reggio Emilia prisoners' situation was characterised by nothing less than deprivation, officers and staff had had often enough informal means to influence crisis positively, by either formal or informal inducement and/or persuasion. However, the symbolic display of 'the use-of-force and violence', or the credible threat of it in any particular situation would clearly help to reinforce the cooperation greatly and would moreover turn crises to an end.

Lawful coercive tools of influence: Coercion as a rational, emotional and ritualistic action

It is almost commonsensical writing that any custodial institution is based on coercion or in Terrill's terms (2014) on the use-of-force; most of the physical

characteristic of those facilities both enforce and display coercion at the same time. Coercion is therefore always at stake even if coercion do not always operate visibly (Crewe 2009: 80) remaining implicitly in the picture (*infra*, Chapter 5).

One relevant characteristic of custodial institutions – also called coercive institutions by Coyle (2005) – is that they are materially, physically and architecturally (Jewkes and Johnston 2013; Johnston 2007) designed, built and socially organized to *Discipline and Punish* (Foucault 1979) the docile (and not so docile) bodies of the kept and to facilitate officers intervention whenever the legitimate use-of-force is needed to maintain order and security, to subdue prisoners' physical resistance (Bosworth and Carrabine 2000), and to prevent escape. Following Ben Crewe, 'coercion is the bulwark of the penal institution, both in literal and figurative term' (2009: 81).

Not only the prison as such can be interpreted as a coercive institution, but also prison officers' work is intrinsically coercive. In fact, Klockars argued that

what defines police [and I would add law enforcement officers more generally, such as i.e. prison officers] is that *we give them the very general right to use coercive force* as they see the situations they attend to call for it' (Klockars 1995: 12; *emphasis added*).

Klockars continues by arguing that officers 'are in this respect like other professionals (e.g. doctors) to whom we do special right to do things [...] that we permit no other people to do' (12). Particularly so – I would stress – regarding their soft and not-so-soft body-to-body interactions with inmates.

Coercion can be justified in different ways (*see* Scott 2008). One particular justification is interesting here. It refers to a justification of coercion on the ground of the interest of those who are the target of the intervention. Goffman (1961a) put it clearly by arguing that:

[i]n the case of any single inmate, the assurance that certain standards will be maintained in his own interests may require sacrifice of other standards; implied in this is a difficult weighting of ends. For example, if a suicidal inmate is to be kept alive, the staff may feel it necessary to keep him under constant surveillance or even tied to a chair in a small locked room. If a mental patient is to be kept from tearing at grossly irritated sores and repeating time and again a cycle of curing and disorder, (77) the staff may feel it necessary to curtail the freedom of his hands. A patient who refuses to eat may have to be humiliated by forced feeding. If TB sanitaria are to be given an opportunity to recover, freedom of recreation must be curtailed (78).

Although the majority of these tactic are not commonly allowed by law anymore in any Italian institution, those practices are extreme examples of the 'tool of influence' – or coercive means – available on the landing. Both a few keepers and few kept interviewed during the ethnography described similar kind of practices in their accounts referring to 'back then'.

At the end what is a 'prisoner's room'? A small space (some say a cage) in which to coerce a body within a fixed space forcibly.

Despite other public functions, custodial institutions – such as prisons, forensic psychiatric hospitals or detention centres for immigrants (Bosworth 2014) – are first of all and foremost coercive institutions built and organised to segregate prisoners from their own community and the broader 'non-captive society' for neutralising (and/or rehabilitating them). In those institution the actual use-of-force or the symbolic-credible-threat of it is a day-to-day routine.

It is useful to note, Following Klockars (1995), that '[w]ith rare exception, the force used routinely and regularly by police [or prison officers] would constitute criminal offences were they done by persons who were not police […] acting in the lawful performance of his duty' (12-13). Klockars quote expresses clearly something often taken for granted: the actual exceptional coercive capacity given to law enforcement agents by the law. Within those

custodial institutions coercion is always quickly available whenever needed or desired by those whose duty is also, some officers would say mainly, using force if necessary. Prisoners, patients and migrants are locked in coercively and coercion is always 'in the air' ready to be enforced and re-enforced time and again for almost any possible reason by law (*infra*, Chapter 5).

Coercion has been defined by Kauffman (1988) as a means to enforce the prisoners' obedience through 'the use of threat of sanctions' (61); by doing so she distinguished it by the use-of-force[40].

Terrill argued that in the policing literature there is not any complete accord on the definition of coercion so far, nor is there any accord about the boundaries of coercion (2014). In fact, some scholars include within the boundaries of coercion the simple symbolic presence of an officer in a particular environment; others, instead, restrict coercion only to hard physical interactions. Some do not distinguish between coercion and force, thereby implicitly considering coercion as something regarding also physical force; others, on the contrary try to single out each term more or less precisely (Kauffman 1988; Crewe 2009).

In other words, there is no one overarching and uncontested definition of coercion in the literatures on policing and prison. More often than not, coercion is simply described as a list of coercive techniques (Terrill 2014); yet, a body of literature who define coercion at a 'street level' do exist: one of the authors argued that coercion is 'a means of controlling the conducts of others through threats to harm' (Muir 1977: 37).

Importantly, without specifying whether or not any conduct is lawful, Muir's definition just quoted above could be used indifferently either for prisoners'

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[40]   Ben Crewe (2009), instead, pointed out that sanctions include: force, physical constraint and deprivation (80).

violence or for the use-of-force. This consideration is crucial here because, as I already made clear above, following other sociologists and adopting an interactionist approach I will treat the use-of-force as a particular kind of violence (Collins 2008; Athens 2005) trying, by doing so, to avoid as much as possible any moral judgement about the interaction at stake.

In a forthcoming work, however, I will directly address the narration of the use-of-force and of 'bad' violence occurring inside I collected during the interviews. There, the different types of either denial, or self-accountabilities used by officers, inmates, and other staff describing those issues will be discussed taking seriously into account their ethical and moral implications as well as their epistemic nature of discursive 'data' rather than observational 'data' (*infra*, Chapter 8).

Coercion in practice: the use-of-force and physical restraint

The use-of-force was defined very broadly by Williams and Westall (2003: 471) 'as any act or behaviour that compelled a person into submission'. Operationally speaking, this definition encompassed the types of force included in the continuum' developed in *Above the Law: Police and the Excessive Use-of-force* (Skolnick and Fyfe 1993). That definition spanned in a continuum including: 1) the mere presence of uniformed officers [something similar to the idea of implicit or potential coercion discussed below (*infra*, Chapter 5); 2) polite verbalization; 3) strong verbal commands; 4) firm grip; 5) pain compliance techniques; 6) impact techniques; 7) use of less-than-lethal weapons; 8) lastly, the use of deadly weapons.

Although Skolnick and Fyfe's approach, adapted to a prison context, clarifies the actual threats prisoners may perceive in any moment during their incarceration, it is operationally difficult to be applied because it does not help

to distinguish in practice neither what the use-of-force is, nor what it is not. On the contrary (Klockars 1995) proposed a narrower definition arguing that the use-of-force[41] would be

the application of physical strength for coercive purposes. It includes occasions when the use of that strength is multiplied or amplified by weapons [like batons]..."Force" does not include verbal or nonverbal threats, pleadings, warnings, or commands, all of which are a wholly different order of sociological means of domination and control...In and of itself, force makes no such appeal [to the will of the person on whom force is applied], although the person on whom it is applied , as well as others , may reflect on its use and alter behaviour in response to it (12).

Lastly, *physical restraint* is almost always concluding the officers' use-of-force; yet this is not always the case. Some psychotic patients[42] could unpredictably ask to be tied to a bed to protect themselves from self-harming seriously or in order to be cured simply after using the persuasion tool or the display of symbolic threat of the use-of-force. Usually, however, officer would need to use force to overcome a patient or an inmate acting out or resisting 'violently' and eventually would proceed to restrain the person either by hands or by mechanical means.

Although unlawful usage of tool of influence will not be discussed here thoroughly (*contra*, Chapter 8), before to conclude, another relevant, yet ethically and morally critical tool of influence will be described: manipulation.

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[41]   Klockars (1995) does not distinguishes the use-of-force to coercion.
[42]   Staff distinguishes between person labelling them either psychopaths or psychotics and use those commonsensical discursive daily when speaking about them with each other (Rhodes 2002).

Manipulation: a tool of influence in the 'grey area' between lawful practice and unlawful ones

As Goffman noted (1961a), not only officers on duty perceive a structural conflict between custody and rehabilitation, but also, 'a further set of characteristic problems is found in the constant conflict between humane standards on one hand and institutional efficiency on the other' (78). The institutional constraints caused by the institutional efficiency or by any other institutional policies, or formal and informal goals, may suggest officers to use 'shortcuts' to arrive to the institutionally requested or personally desired outcome more quickly[43]. One way of doing so is by using manipulative tactics.

Manipulation is an ethically and morally problematic tool potentially producing foreseeable unintended outcome. Following Collins (2004),

[m]anipulation is possible precisely because ordinary life is an endless succession of situations that have to be acted out to be defined as social realities, and that constrain both actor and audience to take part in the work of keeping up the impression of reality (Collins 2004: 21).

Manipulation is based on the differential power and knowledge between the actors in interaction[44]; it implies some form of cooperation (Collins 2004). It is a quite problematic practice. If information was honestly and equally available to all parties, in fact, manipulation could not play a big role to pursue the desired outcome and, possibly, other tools of influence would be adopted instead. On the contrary, in an environment characterized by the strongly unequal distribution of resources, information, and power between the keeper and the kept, manipulation could and occasionally did work.

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[43] This attitude could be understood using the concept of innovation, one of the five types of adaptation proposed by Merton (1968). Innovation takes place when any subject accept the cultural defined goals or values but rejects the structurally defined means to pursue them.

[44] It is now almost commonsensical to interpret the relation between power and knowledge following Foucault. He notoriously argued, ober simplifying a very thick issue, that power constitute –and at the same time is constituted by – knowledge (1980a, b).

It would work particularly well with those inmates that move in and out the system through the 'revolving doors.'[45]From a manipulative officer perspective, manipulation is a way for obtaining the desired outcome quickly, without 'loosing too much time' explicating the situation thoroughly times and again to the convicts, thereby (ab)using his or her own knowledge bias at his or her own advantage.

More generally, manipulation is surely not a win-win game and its frequent adoption can be detrimental to the prison regime in general and to the officers-prisoners relationships in particular. In institutions such as prisons in which the interactions between the keepers and the kept are repeated and frequent (Collins 2008), this tool of influence is producing – as a not intended consequence – disrespect and mistrust among all parties especially when officers are performing it frequently.

Notwithstanding, manipulation is a (useful) tactical tool that is often strategically adopted to quickly subdue inmates that are in the wing for a short and fixed period of time (and therefore have little contextual information at hand). Moreover, from the staff's standpoint, inmates with a high degree of volatility deserve 'little efforts' and would be treated accordingly. This is particularly problematic because, more often than not, volatile prisoners are likely to be defendants waiting for a trial and not yet convict and, therefore, would deserve particular regard and consideration. In practice, however, the exact contrary is true[46].

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[45]   'Revolving doors' is a commonly used expression referring to all those prisoners continuously entering and exiting within a few days the prison door. That expression was already used by Kauffman (1988: 58).
[46]   This is a crucial issue regarding Justice as such and not only the Criminal Justice system. It is an issue that has long been both in the Italian and International debate; yet, it cannot be addressed here.

Saying ' bullshit' it is an easy way to avoid the obstacle and overdue resistance with those who do not have a clue in here...there are many of them simply passing by for a couple of days. It does not make any sense to spend time with them talking about things thoroughly trying to explaining them all, if they will then leave in two days or so… and there is a quicker and at the same time more practical way to convince them to do it in the way you wish them to. I just mind my own business and manage crisis as possible every single time they occur (field note).

Manipulation was defined by Kauffman (1988) as a tool of influence that 'involves getting someone to do as the manipulator wants by means of misleading or deceitful communication' (56). I am not sure to agree with her point, when she argues that manipulation is typical of prisoners and less frequent among officers; yet, I agree that staff often described inmates as manipulative. In my experience, manipulation is a situational adjustment that could be used and was used by both party whenever it was considered to be convenient in a given situation or was presumed to be more efficient in reaching the desired outcome in the possible shorter period of time and without too much efforts; Few persons on both sides of the bars, seemed to adopt manipulation also because they felt comfortable using it, it was their 'style' of communication, or at least it seemed so to me; they 'played' with it enjoying cheating with one another repeatedly.

What became clear in the field is that whenever a prison officer's interaction with an inmate-*without*-mental-problems was predictably going to last for a longer period, the officer would accordingly be less likely to convince the prisoner to do or refrain from doing something by using manipulation; in long term, in fact, manipulation does not seem to work properly for either of the parties involved. In fact, it isolates the manipulator from the non-manipulative peers and the counterparts, both of whom will avoid any interaction with the subject if allowed to do so (it is a quite predictable outcome, yet it showed to be quite true inside most of the times). In few occasions, being considered to be manipulative and therefore been left alone by the inmate was a good solution for those guards that were only interested in paying the mortgage as one said

'stilling the stipend and go home with the money to my family as [psychological] untouched as possible' (field note).

In the field, staff would often describe inmates and patients as manipulative; they would say that prisoners would do whatsoever to pursue their own goals. Seen from the other side, however, one might say that prisoners legitimate request were often not addressed seriously enough, nor in consistent ways (from prisoners' point of view); therefore, the only way prisoners might feel to be able to be heard would be by 'manipulating' the situation (i.e. simulating a crisis or a physical problems) or using force (i.e. completely destroying a cell, a wash basin, a TV and so on).

Some apparently irrational inmates' conducts, behaviours and interactions, in fact, could be better understood ethnographically trying to grasp the indirect consequence that had been pursued by a particular prisoner through a particular sequence of events rather than trying to comprehend the apparent sense of it sticking to what was visible on the spot. For instance, an inmate laying on the floor to get medical attention can be considered by officers as a manipulative inmate who is either asking for undeserved attention, or is unwilling to wait for his legitimate turn. From the opposite standpoint, it can be understood as a legitimate way to ask for help in a context in which all other 'normal' ways to see a doctor had been pursued but have not worked at all.

On prison officer's side, a manipulative way of interacting would be provoking the inmate thereby 'producing' his reaction and starting a fight to gain – again manipulating the situation (with colleagues) – some personal advantage in terms of sick leave or special pension treatment cause by the alleged assault or to avoid boredom (field note and interview with a prison officer).

In the custodial facility, manipulation was absolutely not a prevalent way of interaction between officers and prisoners; yet, I did observe manipulation in different occasions when staff were working with prisoners with acute mental health issues. In that case, however, manipulation may have served other ends, such as gratifying the patience or trying to relax him according to a medical or psychiatric prescription; yet, until now I have not yet paid enough attention in my analysis to the large amount of notes and interviews sections on these issue so far, to be able to unpack it further.

Some flaws of manipulation have already been described in the literature; a really relevant one would be that 'once unveiled, [manipulation] characteristically leads to the diminution in power' (Kauffman 1988: 58) and a certain level of isolation. Kauffman continues by saying:

[e]ven their ability to use other forms of power suffered: their authority was eroded, their ability to persuade undermined, their offers of inducement suspected. Moreover, each recourse to manipulation served to erode the credibility of officers as a group' (58).

It is the unintended outcome of a lasting negative effect on the officers' reputation that makes manipulation such a contested practice for those professional and serious officers that always prefer to avoid using it.

Before moving to Chapter 3 in which a sociological interactionist approach to the use-of-force in specific situation will be outlined, it is useful to remember, once again, that the boundaries of coercive and non-coercive tactics are fussy and not-clear-cut and that between lawful and unlawful practice exists a wide grey area (Terrill 2014) and possibility of interpretation. The open thread or 'tacit warning' (*infra*, Chapter 5 and 6) or other forms of symbolic communication about the possible adoption of physical coercive tactics might be an efficient tool giving the officer a possibility to rule the landing more softly (Crewe 2009).

Illegitimate coercive tools of influence: bad apple or institutional violence?

The issue of Illegitimate coercive tools of influence is only sketchy introduced here and resonate with both the critical criminological literature as well as with some interviews I collected that will be developed elsewhere. However, some notes on the issue will follow.

Abuses of power happen within the routinized bureaucratic regime 'through distortion of policy and procedures: exaggerated suspicion, misuse of IEP system, and other such acts, whose inequities cannot be easily discerned, let alone proved' (Crewe 2009: 105). However, actual officer violence do occur within the prison secrecy (Cohen and Taylor 1976) in a situation of structural invisibility, cover-ups and uneven accountability (Drake 2015). Critical criminology suggests that often, whenever any wrongdoing became of public domain a scapegoat, or more than one, is likely to be (lightly) punished, thereby denying (Cohen 2001) the structural dimension of the phenomenon (Sim 2008). However, few Italian Prison Service mangers did write on the issue straightforwardly showing a pragmatic and theoretically informed stance to address the issue straightforwardly (Buffa 2013 a; 2015; Pagano 2004).

The problem is felt on the wing by officers too. One officer told me spontaneously:

they sent us prisoners here to give them a lesson 'back then'; and sometimes, we were eager to do it indeed. Almost all patients were immediately tied to a bed [in the forensic psychiatric hospital O.P.G.)], and they were often forgot there for days and days for no reason. Using force [suddenly showing a very serious face] was our routine. Please, Luigi, write this, everybody knows it [here]. I do not mind, it can call me the director, it can call me the area manager, it can call me the President [of the Italian Republic]...It can even call me Father Christmas, ah, ah [smiling, as he often does]. I do not give a fuck! Write this, I beg you, *they* told us to do it. They asked us to do so 'back then'. They knew it and they all agreed with that. It was normal. If they call me let's see what they say... (Field note).

Some other officer did introduce the issue of 'bad' officers' violence. Even in a video recorded interview, one senior officer argued:

the use-of-force is a routine here...yet, there is something I have never understood. I have never understood why prison officers are asked [by psychiatrists] to intervene whenever a patients starts to acting out. We are prepared and instructed to do something else. A long time ago I did a course to become a prison officer, a very short one lasting only three months. In those few months the only thing they taught me properly was to defend myself and beating others in combat with no pity. Ok? My teacher told us that the better form of self-defence was to attack, then (laughing)...he taught us that very well indeed... Because, you see, why should they [psychiatrists, doctors and nurses] call me whenever a mad goes berserk? I intervene to procure pain [in those occasions] not to cure the patient. I am not interested whether he is forced to gasp for air, banging his head [against the wall or the iron door], or whatsoever, I simply do not know what his problem is about. From my point of view, though, I just try to take him by the neck; in fact, I try to decelerate his breath, but I do not know what I should do. I simply learned by doing that whenever I take him by his neck he stops resisting. In my opinion nurses and doctors [and psychiatrists] should intervene! [And not us] ...If I enter [into a cell] I'll hurt him. I do not know why it has always been like this! When a mad starts acting out we [officers] become the luminaries (starting to laugh sardonically). I simply don't get it. Why when the patients is acting out the doctor is not able anymore to cure him, and he calls us for help? Fuck, I am suddenly better than a doctor then! I don't know why? Are psychiatrists supposed to deal with calm patients only? […] If these psychiatrists worked outside [in the community] who the fuck were they going to call [when they need help]? (Interview with a prison officer).

(Klockars 1995: 12) address the root of the problem. He argued that '[t]he enormous range of the legitimate authority of the police [and I would say prison officers] to use force is, of course, at the heart of the problem of defining and controlling the excessive and abusive use of it.

In his section on "the question of violence" in *Medical powers in Prisons*, Sim (1990) had reintroduce the issue of the body and the corporal punishment that is strongly related to the issue of imprisonment as such and to officers' misconducts or deviant behaviours. He did so by challenging one of the main

thesis of *Discipline and Punish*. In fact he *showed* that, in the discussion of prison violence, it is important to read Foucault *critically*; he specifically contested 'Foucault's idea that with the rise of capitalism and professional expertise punishment moved from the body to the mind' (Sim 1990: 178). He explained that,

[a]t one level this conceptualization undoubtedly 'fits' with the emergence of psychiatric practice in Europe and America. However, it misses an essential point, namely that *physical violence and punishment of the body did not, and has not, disappeared but retains a central place in the repertoire of responses mobilised by the state inside prisons.* Autobiographical accounts by male and female prisoners from the mid-nineteenth century to the present...testify to the centrality of violence in the maintenance of order. Recent account of the operation of the criminal justice system in general...further emphasized the importance of violence in state practice (Sim 1990: 178)[47].

Sim continued his critiques of Foucault writing that 'Foucault over emphasized the nature of the shift in punishment that has taken place"; furthermore he has 'underestimate[d] the complex and continuous interrelationship between punishment of the body and control of the mind' (Sim 1990: 179; *see also* Collins 2008). One other critical authors even argued that '[s]ome member of the staff try to help prisoner when they can, but other are brutal and sadistic' (Sabo et al. 2001: 12) and a few pages before '[g]uards rule through the threat or application of violence' (Sabo et al. 2001: 8).

Drake (2015) new contribution in *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Ethnography* unmasked some issued about alleged officers' 'bad' violence inside UK maximum security prisons.

To conclude this section it worth noting with Zellick the unintended outcome that emerge from officers abusing the law.

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[47]   Relevant Italian episodes of both *alleged* police's and prison officers' violence are described in Chiarelli (2011).

Whatever attitude one may have about crime and criminals it cannot be right that the law may be broken with impunity. That is why we sent person to prison in the first place. What kind of experience is imprisonment likely to be if those set in authority over prisoners express a contempt for the law and its processes different only in degree from the offences committed by those in their charge (Graham Zellick, *quoted in* Scraton et al.1991: 89).

Overcoming prison officers' minimum standards

Following Klockars (1995) it could be argued that using minimum standards to judge the officers' work and misconducts is not a good procedure. Considering officer with the professional status they deserve, in fact, adopting minimum standard to the use-of-force is not sufficient in the contemporary society. In fact,

[w]e would not find the behaviour of a physician, lawyer, engineer, teacher, or any other professional acceptable merely because it was not criminal, civil liable, or scandalous and it is preposterous that we continue to do so for police [and prison officers] (Klockars 1995: 17).

In Italy, it could be useful to think about what to do to challenge those 'inconvenient issues' (Sim 2004) starting from *some practical suggestion already given by Klockars thirty years ago.* Following him (and others), in fact, any police agency, and the same may apply to any prison officer agency, committing to the *minimum use-of-force* should at least do the following: 1) monitor the use-of-force [soundly]; 2) educate the officer in its use; 3) and '*evaluate* the skill with which it is used' (23). A fourth point that could be added is: to make officers knowable of their *actual accountability*, of the institutional intention to stop asking officers to use old methods and then 'to turn a blind eye' on the issue of the use-of-force thereby starting to legally charge any intentional wrongdoing and any cover ups thereafter.

In the next chapter we will introduce the interactionist theoretical framework

embedded in the ethnography. It will focus on observed actual thread and use-of-force. By doing so, the moral and ethical issues implied in the discussion we have just conducted in this chapter will be left on the background. However, this is not a way to deny responsibilities, or to turn a blind eye; on the contrary, trying to grasp what is happening on the wing on daily basis both observing and analysing the course of action inside may help not only to enhance the theoretical comprehension of some new aspect of the phenomena under study and on the broader field of the sociology of violence, but also, in turn, it might help shedding some light thereby producing some practical knowledge as to how to better address these issues in practice.

Chapter 3

Studying the prison officers' use-of-force and violence: An interactionist approach

There is a growing body of wok focused on the crucial issue of power in prison both theoretically (Carrabine 2004; Adler and Longhurst 1994; Crewe 2009; Ugelvik 2014) and/or exploring it ethnographically in custodial settings. The majority of these works (*contra* Kaufman 2015; Drake 2012; Crewe 2009) 'alludes to, but does not explore the prison as a site for the exercise of disciplinary power' (Rhode 2001: 66; *quoted in* Crewe 2009); nor do they explore it as a site imbued in the practice of the use-of-force. In particular, there isn't any recent micro-sociological work focusing on a crucial prison officers' duty (*contra* Goffman 1961a), if any: the practice of the use-of-force as a response to a critical event within a sociological interactionist

perspective.[48] A few critical scholars – especially among critical criminologists – have righteously and loudly addressed and criticised officers' abuses and misconducts (Cohen and Taylor 1972, 1976; Sim 1990, 2008, 2009; Scott 2008; Tombs and Whyte 2003; Rhode 2004; Ricci and Salierno 1971; Drake 2015).[49]

However, all those authors have not paid enough attention, if any at all, to the description of the course of actions and interactions that unfold at the micro level in the ordinary episodes in which the force is threatened and/or used in a particular time, space and geography. Often, instead, many critical scholars have, addressed and fought *against* officer misconduct (Ivkovich 2014), 'institutional violence' (Sim 2008), and 'public violence' (Gonnella 2013b) either from within or without their capacity of political activists and/or abolitionists (*see* Sim 2009; Scott 2015).

Despite the intermittent considerable public attention on few critical episodes of the-use-of-force and some critical academic focus on the problematic sides of this officers' duty, the day-to-day use-of-force has hardly ever been the focus of any recent prison ethnography (*but see* Rhodes 2002; 2004 on isolation, coercion and mental health). Usually, the lawful officer use-of-force is hidden from public scrutiny, let alone the unlawful use-of-force (Cohen and Taylor 1972). There might be some plausible explanations for it: the first reason might regard the researcher's constrains in particular regarding the custodial institutional setting and the research time-schedules. Another reason, might be that ethnographers often operate in environments in which the use-of-force is hardly visible if not totally invisible to the researcher. Yet, other two reasons might be that the use-of-force is taken for granted and that the source

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[48]   There are *inter alia,* a few old American macro sociological study of official documents on the use-of-force (Griffin 2001).
[49]   Some Italian critical episodes of death in custody are publicly well-known and have been largely debated on the media; for a (non-academic) description of some of those critical events see Chiarelli (2011, *in Italian*).

of research funding on the issue might be uneasily available (Sim 2008). Finally, very crucial indeed, is the point firstly made by Sim about the researcher's self-censorship (Sim 1990; Drake 2015) which always imping in any ethnographic practice and that is hardly ever pointed out openly by his fellow prison researcher.

Returning to the prison officers' duty of using force, and more generally to the officers' job on the landing, it is important to bear in mind that, in a prison setting, the job 'at the street level' is unsurprisingly seldom performed by the rules (Goffman 1961a; Liebling 2000; Crewe 2009; *infra*, Chapter 2).

Using force, like other duties, is *de facto* also performed with a very large degree of discretion; however this is very problematic and reinforce inequalities and unbalanced power-dynamics inside. It is quite unlikely that any prisoner in any circumstance will be treated equally independently to his own social position inside and outside the facility.

The Research questions

Adopting a micro-sociological approach based on interactionism, this ethnography is compelled to start addressing, or unpacking, using force straightforwardly. In order to do so, it will investigate empirically with particular attention a few dimensions of those set of practices at stake when threatening or actually using force with prisoners.

The main questions would be: what do actually happen in practice when any prison officer (or a few of them) either threats or uses force with flesh-and-blood persons kept in custody? In other words, what routines do officer use to 'do' coercion in day-to day activities? (*Infra*, Chapter 4). Moreover, how does the use-of-force (either the threat or the actual use of it) unfolds in practice?

Are there any relevant stages that can be outlined? Are there any turning point? How does prison officer discretion work on the implementation of coercion? Lastly, what about the emotional context of those situations and interaction?[50] (Collins 2008; Athens 2005)? What about, then, the emotional management – the 'emotion work', and the 'emotional labour'? (Hochschild 1983, 2003).[51]

This micro-sociological research intends to shed some light on some issues raised above on these routinary practices of using force lived and observed by the ethnographer, the keepers and the kept (*infra*, Chapter 8); by doing so, it attempt to overcome the commonly polished discourses about it, so frequently reduced to the quantitative statistical discussion on official data reporting critical events (Griffin 2001), prison officers' burnout and stress (Pasquali 2008), and officers' misconducts or alleged crimes.

Putting coercion[52] at the centre of the ethnography was *not* originally planned (*infra*, Chapter 8); yet, being imbued for a long time within an empirical context in which both officers were openly threatening – or exerting – the use-of-force to the prisoners. Prison officers using force eventually became the main focus of this work (*infra*, Chapter 8): in particular, the focus is here on the dynamic interactions between prison officers and inmates *during emergency interventions following one critical event* or another. Another research outcome, related to the previous one, that will not be developed in this work thoroughly is the issue of officers' and inmates' narration of the use-of-force and 'bad' violence[53] that emerged discursively during the participants' interviews; those discourses about officers' violence are seldom found in the recent mainstream sociological or criminological sanitized literature; however,

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[50]   See 'Managing Prisoners, Managing Emotion: The Dynamic of Age, Culture and Identity' (Crawley 2011); yet, its focus is very different.

[51]   All this interactional sociologists have long been working on violence; none of them have addresses the officers' use-of-force; yet, Collins have addressed the issue of prison bullying.

[52]   Following Terrill (2014), coercion and the use-of-force will be used as a synonymous here.

[53]   Here, attributing to the word violence its commonsensical morally negative meaning.

they spontaneously started to emerge during the photo-elicitation interviews conducted ethnographically after more than a year in the field (*infra*, Appendix); occasionally, however, few quotes from those interviews will also be reported here.

More in general, that interview process and the formal dialogues that took place helped in different ways to interpret the observations collected on the field. The critical discourses of violence were usually referring to 'back then' and were imbued in different rhetoric discourses that ranged from self-confession to different kinds of denial (Cohen 2001), claiming and re-claiming often implying an implicit unaccountability or a reduced accountability of one's behaviour related in different forms to the process of bureaucratization explained by Pratt (2002: 121–144). A process in which the individual responsibility is diluted into the complexity of the bureaucratic machine, its organization and chain of command.

The prison officers ways of using force and the prisoners' way of using violence (as the one and the other violent behaviours are usually normatively labelled in the literature), as well as the particular uses that the ones or the others made of violence both physically and discursively, are really crucial to unpack the core of the custodial institutional regime observed in the field and the strongly asymmetrical power relations embedded in the interactions between the keeper and the kept; the power dynamic inside, in fact imply a particularly visible division between those who performed a superordinate role (who have the keys and the lawful duty to use force if encountering a prisoner resisting a lawful order), and the others, who performed the subordinated ones (that are locked-up in their cells and must respect the rules that can be enforced physically by officer as last resort) and are hardly ever allowed to use force .

There has long been a large interest in the underdog of the prison system, the prisoner's capacity of doing resistance and to cope with the traumatic experience of both incarceration and detention. It is surely important to stress the prisoners' agency and capacity of resistance that has been the mainstream discourse in prison sociology avoiding, by doing so, to reduce those persons to dominated-vulnerable-docile subjects (which in fact some of them are). This prospective has been developed thoroughly at least since the best-seller academic research *Asylum* (Goffman 1961a) to arrive to the recent ethnography conducted in Norway by Ugelvik (2014) in which he introduces his idea of prisoners 'doing freedom' explaining that it might well contribute also to the study of liberty as such.

Despite the great interest of those accounts on resistance and the necessity to continue studying resistance in many more geographical context and from different theoretical perspectives that has had occurred so far, such as those in *The Palgrave Handbook of Prison Ethnography* (Drake 2015a), this ethnography focuses on something completely different.

This ethnography focus on the mechanism of violence that is embedded and implicitly continuously operate in, and structures, the relationships between the keepers and the kept constraining also those inmates trying to 'doing freedom'. It is an attempt to study what a critical criminology defined the 'inconvenient criminological' truth (Sim 2008); yet, without embedding such an antagonistic political stand against prison officers or the coercive state apparatus. Instead of adopting a political prison-abolitionist perspective, this ethnography will try to unpack how prison officers use-of-force occurs in practice in day-to-day situations by focussing on observed course of actions in which the threat and/or the actual use-of-force had occurred during or as a consequence of a so-called critical event, and in day-to-day routinary interactions on the wing.

Avoiding a normatively biased abolitionist position does not meant turning a blind eye to the problematic issues regarding prison officers using force. Nor does it imply to be on the opposite side becoming necessarily an appreciative researchers. (*Infra*, Chapter 8).

The topic of this study: unpacking the interactions in which use-of-force and violence are in the picture in case of a so-called critical event

Before continuing, it is necessary remembering that in the light of the interactionist theoretical framework on violence adopted here (Collins 2008; Athens 2005), in this manuscript the *officers' use-of-force will be treated as a particular type of violence* and, furthermore, that the expressions use-of-force and violence will be used interchangeably without implying any moral judgement or connotation implicitly imbued in the commonsensical use of either the one or the other.

In this fieldwork, the situations in which officers were using force (or violence, here used interchangeably) have been addressed empirically by the ethnographer staying side by side with officers, mainly on one wing, trying to comprehend their practices and, as far as possible, their particular subjective positions and standpoints. I did not adopt an appreciative enquiry approach to the study of prison officers as others have done before me; yet, my decision of staying with officers – yet not necessarily and uncritically on their side – influenced the ethnography indeed. In fact that decision made this ethnography firstly conceivable, then actually possible. Displaying a different attitude, a very critical one, I would have hardly had gained any actual access to the use-of-force; yet, those are ex-post considerations (*infra*, Chapter 8).

The focus of the ethnography was not limited to the action of any particular social actor as such; rather, it was on the *sequence of interactions* between two or more particular subjects within a particular emotional context (Collins 2004) in one particular type of situation. I studied the ongoing situations in which prison officers' use-of-force (or violence) was occurring on the landing as a consequence of a so-called – or so labelled – critical event within a custodial environment.[54] Unpacking the dynamic structure and the different stages of the interaction has become the goal of this study. Paraphrasing Athens 'I will describe my theory of this interaction in terms of the stages[55] that [the officers' use-of-force] acts unfold and nearly unfold' (Athens 2005: 633–4): I call it the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence'; yet I resist to call it a theory: until now this Cycle provides a specification of Collins theory of violence (2008) in a custodial setting and shed completely new light into prison sociology. I rather consider this thesis a first attempt to shed some light in an almost unexplored research field that affects the lives of some millions of persons around the world, either prisoners or custodial staff.

In this research the use-of-force is defined as the typical sequence of interactions occurring between two actors characterised by a very asymmetrical power relation: one prison officer and one inmate with a particular social position in terms of gender, sexual preference, race and so on. The interaction usually starts as a consequence of a labelling process by which one particular occurrence (normally performed by a prisoner – or a group thereof) has been defined critical by a prison officer, and afterwards the situation has evolved accordingly. I will present a model explaining the stages of that routinary situation, here called the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence' or the 'Cycle of doing coercion'.

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[54] One prison and one forensic psychiatric hospital.
[55] Writing on 'challenges, threats and fights' among prisoners Gambetta also suggested (2009: 98) to 'identify a typical sequence'; however, he suggest it within a completely different research agenda keener on game theory than interactionism.

In the next sections some ideas will be targeted. This research theoretical frameworks draws mainly from different versions of interactionism (Collins 2004, 2008, 2009; Weenink 2014, 2015; Goffman 1961a; Athens 2002, 2005, 2007, 2009) and phenomenology (Popitz 1990) agendas[56]; a few of those perspectives have been used *ex ante* while designing the research project, or doing ethnography; others, have been mainly considered *ex post* during the final stage of the analysis.[57]

Has really punishment moved from the body to the mind? Why to study the use-of-force inside?

'Foucault's idea that with the rise of capitalism and professional expertise punishment moved from the body to the mind' (Sim 1990: 178) is almost become a commonsensical notion in the sociology of prison as previously said. This ethnography strongly contribute to resist that philosophical opinion by doing empirical research instead. Both the observation in Reggio Emilia and the more than 80 interviews conducted with staff and inmates (with or without adopting visual methods) – discussing about the issues of violence and coercion in Reggio Emilia and elsewhere clearly emerged that

[p]hysical violence and punishment of the body did not, and has not, disappeared but retains a central place in the repertoire of responses mobilized by the state inside prison (Sim 1990: 178, *see also* 2008; 2009).

Drake (2015) has also recently disclosed her witnessing of violence during her ethnography in some maximum security prison in UK in the 2010s (2012) that was previously hidden between the lines of her book.

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[56]   This distinctions are not as clear-cut as it might seem and are disputable.

[57]   In this research the research phases have not been following a clear path. Fieldwork, writing and analysis have been entangle with each other from the initial stage of the research and they are continuing until the end of writing; however, the fieldwork now is really limited to some contacts and a few encounters.

The micro-sociological interactional framework

Any particular theoretical framework leads to a particular comprehension of the phenomenon under study. Here, the theoretical framework adopted is grounded on the body of work of few sociologists that have recently put violence, and partly the use-of-force, under scrutiny (Collins 2008; Athens 2005; Weenink 2014, 2015). Each of these approaches have its own theoretical agendas – fitting in different strands of the interactionist traditions; neither of them has been used by their author to focus on prison. Developing my own approach, I had to extract them out from their authors' discourses and references, thereby reinterpreting them in the light of my findings, subjective position, and epistemological position. Furthermore I have restricted my focus more specifically on the use-of-force, rather than on violence.

We now turn to the uneasy distinctions between legitimacy and lawfulness and, on the other side, the use-of-force and violence in recent literatures in sociology and criminology.

Legitimacy or lawfulness?

In criminology, particularly in those mainstream scholars focussing on order and control[58] (Sparks et al. 1996; Jackson et al. 2010; Liebling et al. 2011; Crewe 2011) the concept of legitimacy[59] has been largely adopted to distinguish justifiable use-of-force and unjustifiable use-of-force. Sparks (2008) authoritative and synthetic short definition of the issue reads:

In general terms, the concept of legitimacy refers to the claim by people exercising power...to hold and use power in a justified way. It also concerns the question of whether less powerful people acknowledge those justifications and how they respond to the decisions made about

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[58]   For a short description of the issue refer to: King (2008).
[59]   For a short description of the issue refer to: Sparks (2008).

them or to the condition imposed upon them. (149).

Sparks continues stating that 'a number of authors have argued that this is of central relevance to the ways in which power is deployed, and order maintained or disrupted, in prisons' (149).

In sociology, radical interactionism have consistently used lawfulness instead; putting it really simply, with the risk of trivializing a complex issue, lawfulness would mainly refer to minimum legal standard, actual conducts, and actual interactions that can be observed on the ground. Legitimacy, on the other, is imbued in discourses and opinions and it is more difficult to be observable in practice (usually, legitimacy is studied quantitatively by surveys). Said otherwise, lawfulness would refer to the discretionary practice of law enforcement agency dealing with written norms in practice; legitimacy with the idea of justice and authority that are less easily observable.

In contemporary criminology, the Weberian idea of legitimacy and authority (*also see* Sennett 1980; Carrabine 2005) have usually been reinterpreted addressing the problem of order in prison; that strand of research have also grown considerably as a consequence of the series of disturbances and riots that exploded in UK in the 1980s (Carrabine 2005) that push the Home office investigation and to the publication of the well-known Woolf Report (Home Office 1991). That was followed by a plethora of academic publications.

Following Collins, however, '[t]he Weberian definition [of power and legitimacy], imposing one's will against opposition, is not yet sufficiently micro-translated' (2004: 284). Notwithstanding the highly influential contribution of the debate on the 'legitimacy deficit' and the prison officers' morale to the UK and international prison sociology (Liebling 2004; Sparks et al. 1996), the focus here will put legitimacy in the background.

Pushing legitimacy to the background is not only a theoretical decision, but also a practical one. Moreover, it is nothing new both in critical, more marginal, literature (Sim 1990, 2008, 2009) and within few mainstream authors (*see*: Kaufman 2015: 26–33).

Two further empirical reasons urged the author to adopt lawfulness instead of legitimacy. *Firstly* – and this is a reason that adopt a typical ethnographic justification – officers normally would use 'lawfulness' to refer to the law in general and to particular norms when talking on the use-of-force and justifying their actions on the landing with one another and – even more frequently – with the researcher; moreover, neither the word "legitimacy", nor other ideas loosely referring to it, had ever been used by any participants or interviewees to narrate their actions to one another (or to the researcher).[60] *Secondly*, using "the law" we refer to a specific set of norms and practices that are objectified, talked about, and that directly affects the officers' situation on day-to-day basis.

Lastly, using the unique and practically forgotten ethnomethodological understanding of prison interactions constructed by Wieder's (1974) book[61], we might say that officers use those norms and laws 'to tell' their code and interaction to one another.

The issue of the distinction between legitimacy and lawfulness is predictably even more complicated that what sketchy has been argued above. Following Sparks et al. (1996: 89; *quoted in* Carrabine 2004:179), in fact, it is also necessary to distinguish '"between the "taken-for-granted" and the "accepted-

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[60]   According to Richard Martin (University of Oxford, *personal communication*) prison officers working in U.K. use the word legitimacy frequently. They are acquainted with prison sociology and the issue of order. In Italy, instead base-grade officers are normally completely unaware of the prison literature.
[61]   I want to thank Giampietro Gobo here; not only for sharing some chapter of his *Doing Ethnography* (2008), but specifically for indicating to me this brilliant book. A book which I have never found in any reference so far.

as-legitimate""; this last distinction contributes to shed further nuance to the issue at stake. This ethnography, in fact, can re-confirm that the use-of-force and the power dynamic existing within the wall may be experienced as a 'matter of fact' that are simply experienced, accepted and contested as a reality as such by the actors 'without any reference to some version of legitimacy' (Carrabine 2004: 179).

This point clearly expressed by Carrabine is indeed relevant here. On the field, both officers and prisoners have often referred to norms and to informal rules as if they were taking them for granted, independently from the concept of legitimacy and apparently also to their own idea of natural justice; officers were telling what they were doing – one another and to me – by stating in a seemingly un-reflexively fashion that they were often just applying the law[62]; yet, of course Goffman's 'face management' was crucially at stake in those situations and in the narrations that emerged within, as well as the researcher's effect (*infra*, Chapter 8).

Lawfulness and not legitimacy was used by participants on the landing 'to tell' the use-of-force. Lawfulness will therefore be used here. On the landing, the penal code, the prison laws, the regulations, and so on were always in the picture and deeply influenced the situation; they had frequently been referred to – yet not always correctly – by officers talking with one another on the landing and especially so when talking with the ethnographer. Laws norms and regulations framed the use-of-force in practice but also at a discursive and cultural level, in various ways (Wieder 1974); the jurisprudence and its particular uses are far from neutral, and it is unnecessary remembering here

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[62]   Moreover, following Clegg and Haugaard (2009), using legitimacy instead of "lawfulness" would not necessarily be a better option. Any statement including the word "legitimate", in fact, can be contested because it cannot be just an empirical statement. It [would be] an implicitly normatively evaluative statement, endorsing certain political arrangements. Thus, while the concept of legitimacy is doing ostensibly empirical work – identifying institution [and practices] acceded to be legitimate – it [would be] simultaneously endorsing evaluative presupposition (Clegg and Haugaard 2009: 3). Yet, a similar argument might well apply to lawfulness, though.

that the ways in which laws, rules and regulations are constructed and used in one particular field are deeply political, that they embed a particular version of the system of domination, and that they are constituted and continuously re-constituted, challenged and resisted by interacting agents in any particular context characterised by a particular constantly slightly shifting power dynamics; in custodial institutions, however, a power dynamic exists within a strongly constraining formal distinction between superordinate staff and subordinate social actors; yet, it cannot be simply reduced to it.

Lawfulness in practice: 'doing' discretion

Taking lawfulness or legitimacy into account once again here, it worth remembering that prison officers' practices differ significantly from the normative laws, rules and regulation's prescriptions and necessarily imply interpretations of the norms as well as the use of commonsensical knowledge, traditional action (in a Weberian sense) and accommodations (as already remembered above).

Like in any other job at 'street-level bureaucracy', discretion is a practical tool by which the norms are interpreted and attuned to the particular situation. Although discretion is necessarily in the picture, it can be used by officers for good and evil (yet, this imply a moral judgment). In prison sociology we can find normative description as well as moral partisan interpretations. Western (2007) propose an optimistic interpretation by writing that "[i]n their wide discretion to apply force and enforce rules, guards also play a crucial role in keeping the peace" [is peace actually the right word?] (Western 2007: xii). One opposite interpretation stressed the possible 'dark side' of discretion that calls for check and balance and accountability procedures.

Abuses take place *less often* [therefore they do occur] through behaviour that steps outside the rules of the system ― for example, though physical brutality or deliberate psychological persecution […] Instead, they occur within its bureaucratic folds, through distortion of policy and procedure: exaggerated suspicions, misuse of the IEP [Incentive and Earn Privilege] system, and other such acts, whose inequities cannot be easily discerned, let alone proved (Crewe 2009: 105; *emphasis added*).

A fine interpretation of the interactions occurring in prison between the keepers and the kept and the role that discretion necessarily plays in them is described by Gilbert implicitly (1997: 53):

[i]t is difficult to define what corrections officers do, let alone assess how well they have done it. Nevertheless, it is clear that the direct work product that these officers produce is not security, control or safety but personal interactions between themselves and inmates. The affective nature of these interactions directly influences the level of tension between officers and inmates and indirectly influences the safety, security and control within the prison.

Discretion would be a very interesting subject as such; in the ethnographic field observed it was a crucial ingredient of the prisoner officers' job. They called it 'arrangiarsi': a kind of 'do-it-yourself as is possible in the situation'. However, as Goffman argued officers use particular words 'for denoting an inmates who demands treatment "by the book"' (Goffman 1961a: 77). It is worth noting following Goffman, firstly, that some inmates resist discretion; secondly, that officer consider discretion normal and label those inmates who do not accept officers' definition accordingly. In an environment in which force is either threatened or exerted frequently, however, the issues of accountability, supervision and control should be crucially taken into account. It is so at a managerial level; yet, much less so on the ground. In fact, by using discretion without a clear process of accountability there is a great risk of discrimination, disparity, if not racism (Liebling 2000). After all, 'the sociological realities of prison life and work […] are characterized by tradition, experience, accommodation, short-time horizons and daily survival' (349).

Coercion and the use-of-force; just another form of violence?

The distinction between Coercion and the use-of-force is marked by controversy (Terrill 2014). Violence is also an uneasy and unclear term often charged with normative assumptions (Ray 2011). In commonsensical day-to-day dialogues violence usually would refer to illegal or illegitimate acts perpetrating an evil. It is a fussy term deeply imbued with normative assumptions. However, violence, seen in a less normative framework encompass also institutional practices and institution, that either as a non-intended consequence or as an intended consequence imbue or are structured on the ground of the threat and the enforcement of violence (usually called force). Custodial institutions are one among those extreme cases.

Distinguishing between violence and coercion is out of the scope of this section; yet, what is implicitly in the picture here is that in this ethnography a particular kind of violent interaction is at stake: a violent interaction in which both prison officers and prisoners threat or employ violence either symbolically or physically in order to solve a dispute between one another during or after a so-called critical event.

In other words, this ethnography does not investigate why violence occurred and simply investigate how violent interactions unfold in the daily continuous interactions between the keepers and the kept.

Scholars adopting a micro-sociological perspective have not yet found a key to clearly distinguish between violence and the use-of-force (*see also* Ray 2011: 6–23) and have therefore tended to apply only one theory to deal with both violence and the use-of-force (Collins 2008; Athens 2005) leaving the task of building a clear distinction open to further research (Athens 2009).

Following that tradition, here, I will pay a particular attention here to the chain of interactions in which one or more officers use force against one or more prisoners during or after a so called critical event.

Despite unavailable clear theoretical distinctions between violence and the use-of-force (Terrill 2014) (*infra*, Chapter 2) and the micro-sociological tendency to interpret one or the other indistinctly, prison officers showed quite consistent ways of 'telling their practices' (Wieder 1974)[63] and prisoners' ones when talking about the use-of-force or violence on the landing. In fact, officers tended to adopt the expression use-of-force – that is by the way the legal name of it that is used in the legal norms – when 'telling' their interventions; they *never* adopted the use-of-force" describing a prisoner act even when it was quite clearly interpreted by their own standpoint as a prisoners' act of resistance: in the prison officers' interviews, prisoners were never described using force; they were always described using violence. Using the official terminology in the official way might have been a prison officers' way of *saving the face* (Goffman1967)*,* legitimating their own practice (Spark et al. 1996), or showing their knowledge and professional attitude to the researcher.

On the same token, officers have hardly ever used the word violence describing their own interventions; they occasionally did so in order to comment very negatively on a particular episode usually occurred "on their side" in the past: particularly so, telling about gratuitous beating or completely unreasonable over use-of-force due to alcohol intoxication or other exogenous factors impinging in few (some would allegedly say more) officers performances that might be read, following Collins, as particular hard versions of 'forward panic'

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[63] Here, I paraphrase Wieder's expression (1974) *Telling the Convict Code* by which the American ehnomethodologist re-framed the long standing discussion on the prisoners' code existing in the literature unpacking the ways in which prisoners use 'the code' inter-subjectively to create their social word. In that prospective the code is not a sociologist's discover but a lay etnomethod regularly adopted by prisoners interacting with one another to make sense of their world. Although, this research is grounded in interactionism, it is also sensible to ethnomethodology as will be clear below in the presentation of the ethnomethod of "putting the gloves on". I thank here Giampietro Gobo for recommending me *Telling the Convict Code*.

(2008: 83–133) or even in rare occasions 'attacking the weak' (2008: 134–189; *see also* Buffa 2013a). By doing so, one officer or another would only describe a few types of interactions – either performed by himself or by a fellow officer – clearly interpreting those interactions in moral terms as wrongdoing; yet, rarely explicitly using the word 'violence'. The 'simple' excessive use-of-force or the use of excessive force (Terrill 2014) 'clearly' stated in the law would neither be considered as such to be a wrongdoing, nor a problematic type of interaction, automatically. They would be told with a negative connotation only when referring to interactions that have occurred with "normal-non-problematic-prisoner" that had been treated really unfairly for the sake of one (or more) prison officer's own will, or 'due to the situation'; a negative connotation would more probably arise describing a harmful intervention that leaded to heavy physical damaging of the prisoners body, his or her long term hospitalization or to an alleged fatality.

Once again, despite an *agreed* theoretical distinction between violence and the use-of-force is missing in the literature, to the best of my knowledge, not only a distinction was shared on the ground among officers, as it has just been shown above, but also a particularly recurrent – almost commonsensical – usage of the expressions violence and use-of-force was (and is) diffused both in public discourses (at least in Italy) and in prison literature internationally[64]; in fact, in both arenas, the expression "the use-of-force" is usually adopted neutrally, or slightly positively, and refers to officers lawful actions; on the contrary, the expression violence is usually presenting a clear negative moral connotation and refers to a 'criminal' or prisoner's unlawful behaviour or wrongdoing (*see* Ray 2011: 6–23). A clear example among many possible others can be found in the *Dictionary of Prison and punishment* (Jewkes and Bennett 2008). The

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[64]   Following Collins (1974: 418) we must remember that Sorel proposes a similar, yet politically biased, distinction. Sorel wrote that 'there is"force" used by dominant classes in a vindictive (and secretly terrified) upholding of their power; and there is "violence" of the rebellious under-class, with its clean moral purity, without viciousness but with the clarity of practical work' (Sorel 1908).

abstract of the entrance 'Use-of-force (control and restraint)' (303–304) reads that '[f]orce may be used by prison staff as a last resort. It must be reasonable in the circumstances, necessary and proportionate' (303). The entrance then starts as follows.

When violence occurs in prisons, staff must be capable of intervening safely in order to bring the situation under control. Under such circumstances, the Prison Rules states that 'An officer in dealing with a prisoner shall not use force unnecessarily and, when the application of force is necessary, no more force than is necessary shall be used (Jewkes and Bennett 2008: 303).

In the previous quote is it clearly implied, yet not openly stated, violence refers to prisoners' violence specifically. It implies that officers use force and inmates (might) use violence. This interpretation can be reinforced reading the two entrances in that dictionary that include the word violence: 'violence' (307–309) and 'violence reduction' (309). In both dictionary' entrances only inmates are described acting as perpetrators. Over two pages and a half, only the following phrase – yet, to be honest, a quite critical one – put prison officers in the picture as hypothetical perpetrators as well: '[p]rison typically exhibit a wide range of behaviours by which some prisoners are *harmed by other prisoners or staff*' (Jewkes and Bennett 2008: 303; *emphasis added*).

In other words, in mainstream prison sociology and criminology, the term prison violence usually refers to prisoner-to-prisoner violence and to officers' assaults (Edgar et al. 2012; *contra*, Kauffman 1988) and is hardly ever used to speak about lawful prison officers using force; in those literatures officers do not use violence, they use force (Toch 1976; Crewe 2009; Ugelvik 2014). Few critical scholars have challenged this interpretation of the word violence; writing about prison officers' violence they have referred to prison officers' wrongdoing, purposefully, denouncing misbehaviours, abuses and even torture (Sim 2008, 2009; Edney 1997; Marquart 1986).

Occasionally violence is used together with the adjective legitimate thereby

producing the oxymoron "legitimate violence" (Rebughini 2004). The fact that the expression legitimate violence is contradictory could be contested, though. That "oxymoron" Rebughini refers to implies a commonsensical interpretation of that word which is not shared here. In fact, the word violence with no adjective might be also used to stress the similarity of the dynamic structure of the situations described by either expressions, thereby clarifying the fact that the difference between the two lies in the moral judgement embedded in one expression or the other from a particular standpoint. By suspending a normative value-driven judgment of the word violence, the dynamic structure of the interaction at a micro level can be described and, maybe, also explained by models that might relate with one another (Collins 2008; Athens 2005); either for [officers] use-of-force, or for [prisoners'] violence.

Despite the discussion on the differences and similarity between the expressions use-of-force and violence, in the light of the interactionist framework on violence adopted here, this ethnography will interpret officers' *use-of-force as a particular type of violence* (Collins 1974, 2008; Athens 2005) – usually occurring both in completely lawful practices and in the grey area between completely lawful and clearly illegal officers' practices (Terrill 2015) – within a particular custodial regime.

Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism has a long tradition in the social science and has the merit to have put 'the act' and 'the interaction' at the centre of the sociological enterprise (Blumer 1969; Mead 1934, 1964; Goffman 1961a, b; 1963, 1967), differentiating itself on one side from theories that emphasised mental state within the actors' 'black box' or evolution, and, on the other, from theories, such as Functionalism, that emphasised the role of the structure that would determine the behaviours of social actors and groups, thereby emphasising the

relevance of what we now call agency and its complex relationship with structure (Giddens 1984)[65]. Interactionism has the credit to take into account biology (Hochschild 1983; Collins, 2004, 2008), which was at the centre of previous explanations of the interaction, 'but adds [much] more points to social entry: social factors enter not simply before and after but interactively *during* the experience of emotion' (Hochschild 1983: 221; *emphasis in the original*). The term Symbolic Interactionism was coined by Herbert Blumer in 1937 who outlined the core ideas and concepts and would thereby put the foundation for a new discipline. He outlined three points:

[1] The first premise is that human being act toward things on the basis of the meaning that the things have for them. Such things include everything that the human being may note in his word – physical object, such as trees or chairs; other human being […], categories of human being, such as friends or enemies; institutions, such as school or a government; guiding ideals such as individuals independence or honesty; activities of others, such as their commands and requests; and such situations as individual encounters in his daily life. [2] The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows. [3] The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (Blumer1969: 2).

Blumer did not underplay the role of culture, norms, and roles; he considered them relevant insofar as they are imbued in the process of 'interpretation and definition' that give birth to 'joint actions' [66](75).

Symbolic interactionism had also the credit to have introduced the role of emotions in the study of interactions. In this perspective, Hochschild (1979, 1983, 2003), played a crucial role developing Goffman's interactionism to a new level.

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[65]   Giddens is explicitly referred to in Athens (2007) as well as in some prison sociologies (Crewe 2009; *see also* Spark et al. 1996: 79–84); yet, Collins does not explicitly refer to him at all.
[66]   Joint actions are defined 'the lager collective form of action that is constituted by the fitting together of the lines of behaviour of the separate participants' (Blumer1969: 70). They may be implemented by the interaction of only two persons or of by a huge amount of people.

In his works, Goffman developed, among others, two crucial ideas particularly relevant here; the first is *face management*, which was interpreted as a way actors used to build and present an acceptable face to one another on stage, the other is *embarrassment*. Yet, Goffman mainly dealt with the question of appearance, building an interpretative framework of the interactions based on a theatrical dramaturgy of day-to-day life. Hochschild, instead stressed the importance of emotions and introduced the ideas, crucial here, of 'anger boundaries' (1983: 28). 'Anger boundaries' address the ways in which a flight attendant would give the preferred answer to a client calling him or her with a wrong label, or even behaving rudely or violently (28–34). This attention to the strategic use of practical knowledge and of recurrent scripts is particularly relevant studying officers' job. Those symbolic or physically violent interactions she referred to in her book strongly resemble the interactions occurring on the landing between the keeper and the kept; yet, inside, at least on the landing at stake here they often show more extreme traits[67].

Both at the level of 'emotion work' – prisoners have to perform cognitive, bodily and expressive works – not only to 'save their face' as Goffman would put it, but to actually survive their very condition; in fact, it worth remembering that self-harm and suicide occur much more frequently among inmates than the non-convicted population (Liebling and Maruna 2005); on the other side of the divide, officers should perform 'emotional labour' to help those in custody to cope with the situation, as well as simply to do their job. Of course Hochschild's contribution extends far beyond and takes into accounts other forms of emotion management people perform during those interactions. However, despite the relevance of her potential contribution in prison

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[67]   On the one side, officers' are often verbally (and sometimes physically) aggressed, on the other, both prisoners and officers use jokes and banters and at times even offensive label to call one another: prisoners would use the word 'girachiavi' (turnkeys) and, officers would occasionally use the term 'camosci' or other offensive words –even racist one like 'Kunta Kinte' or 'Balotelli' to refer to a black prisoner.

sociology, her perspectives has hardly ever been addressed so far (*but see* Crawley 2013).

Another reason why Hochschild contribution is particularly relevant here, is because she underlies the relevance of the ascribed social position of the participant on the ongoing interaction and on its possible outcomes. She used 'sexes and social classes' (1983: 12) as a heuristic device from the very beginning of her research; she also addressed the ways in which status might shield one person or another from poorer treatment (*infra*, Chapter 7,8); her interpretation can therefore be used as a sensitise concept by which interpreting the prison officer' position in relation to the 'persons in law-status categories' (174): the prisoners and, among them, particular prisoners with particular position at the intersection of class, gender, race, religion and sexual preferences.[68]

Symbolic Interactionism, as well as ethnomethodology (Collins 2004: 65), have played a crucial role in explaining the interactions that usually occur in day-to-day situations both within and beyond the wall. The book *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (Goffman 1961a) is also one of the cornerstones of the sociological study of prison. Goffman[69] contribution to the comprehension of both face-to-face interactions (1961b, 1967) and 'total institutions', and cannot be overestimated.

Particularly interesting are Goffman well-known close examination to the

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[68]   The three main characteristics that seemed to be particularly relevant in this fieldwork and were used in practice to distinguish one prisoner to the others were: affiliation to an organised crime organization (Varese 2010) or not, race (attributed to prisoners by guards) and mental health condition (again attributed by others, both medical staff and custodial one).
[69]   Although Goffman is normally considered a symbolic interactionism he notoriously refused that label as well as the label 'theorist' preferring to be considered an 'empiricist' instead.

prisoners' coping strategies in the 'underworld' (1961a: 171–320), the 'institutional ceremonies' (1961a: 93–112), as well as his early interest in the staff working practices and the staff-inmates interactions (1961a: 74–92). However, neither Goffman, nor his older colleagues have ever stressed the issue of domination as clearly as Athens (2002, 2007) has done. Furthermore, none of them has addressed the micro-sociological analysis of the use-of-force[70].

Studying the use-of-force and violence: Goffman's legacies in interactionism

Introducing his theoretical perspective on *Interaction Ritual Chain,* Collins (2004) clearly expresses his legacy to Erving Goffman defining him 'the founder of interaction ritual analysis' (Collins 2004: 4). He then explicitly referred to *Asylum* (Goffman 1961a), *Interaction Rituals* (1967), and *Strategic Interaction* (1969) throughout his book time and again.

Goffman operates on a level of micro-detail that was unprecedented at his time, he helps point the way toward seeing just how the pressure for ritual conformity is felt, and thus allows us to turn his micro-functionalism into a mechanism of the micro-production of solidarities and realities (Collins 2004: 16–17).

Although, Goffman is considered a functionalist in so far as he is interested in the interaction rituals' role in maintaining 'the moral order of society' (Collins 2004: 16), Collins underlines that not only has Goffman dealt with interactions as such, but also, he has introduced the notion – yet implicitly – of the interaction ritual chain, in particular with such rituals as stereotyped ritual

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[70]   Goffman did address the officers' use-of-force anecdotally; yet, he never really went into any detail. He argued i.e. 'if a suicidal inmate is to be kept alive , the staff might feel it necessary to keep him under constant surveillance or even tied to a chair in a small locked room […] a patient who refuses to eat may have to be humiliated by forced feeding' (Goffman 1961a: 77–8).

verbal exchanges. In these ritual chains, in turn, Goffman have emphasized the role of temporality (i.e. transition-markers), and bodily co-presence. Moreover, addressing ending rituals such as salutation,[71] he has made clear that by using salutations (Goffman 1961b) when living one particular encounter, the same ending encounter is already ritually prepared for a possible future reconstitution of another one thereby possibly forming a chain of encounters. In our research, it has clearly emerged, that transition-marker are more generally crucial allowing the constitution and re-constitutions of 'symbolic credible threaten' (*infra*, Chapter 6) of the use-of-force, that they are the core interaction-chain by which 'critical events are managed' routinely in the Cycle.

Collins presents a few of Goffman's reach vocabulary 'in order to bring out the vast extensions possible of his rather condensed theoretical remarks on the topic' (Collins 2004: 19). Collins added that, being interested in ordinary interaction, Goffman studied extreme cases, such as the asylum, to 'highlight [by contrast] the mechanism that produce the normal' (Collins 2004: 20); on the same token, Ugelvik (2014) has recently attempted to study freedom by studying prisoners in a custodial setting. He then, concluded that '[l]ife follows routine rituals for the most part because it is easiest to do so, and full of difficulties if one tries to do something else' (Collins 2004: 20). It worth noting that in Collins book *Violence* (2008) no critiques on Goffman's approach is outlined.

Radical interactionism

Turning now to *Radical interactionism* (2007, 2009), Goffman's legacy clearly emerges as well. Athens particularly credit Goffman for considering – yet only as antecedent factors – the role that 'gender, race, social class, and age' (Athens

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[71]   We will see the emergency teem entering and exiting the wing as a transition-marker episode of the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence'.

2005: 636) played in the construction of violent interaction. However, Athens position towards the author of *Interaction Rituals* (Goffman 1967) is tainted with a larger degree of criticism arguing that Goffman's approach is based on consensus (Athens 2005); yet, Athens' clearer critiques of Goffman consensualism are mediated by his own comments on Luckenbill (1977) interpretation of violence in which Athens clearly pointed out that,

[l]ike Goffman (1967), Luckenbill (1977) misidentifies the real issue that is being disputed during violent criminal acts. It is not whose character is the strongest but rather who is superior and thereby who should perform the superordinate and subordinate roles in a developing social act' (Athens 2005: 636–7).

Athens not only criticised Goffman interpretation of what is at stake during the context, but also his understanding about the interaction as such. In fact, he stated that '[f]ollowing Goffman's (1967) [Luckenbill] presumes that before violence can break out during face-to-face interactions, the participants must all agree to use physical force to resolve the issue of whose character is the strongest' (Athens 2005: 636). Referring to my fieldwork observation, I agree with Goffman that saving the face is a crucial issues; yet, I am not sure whether or not 'the *participants in most violent criminal action do not mutually agree to use violence* to settle their disputes (Athens 2005: 636; *emphasis added*)'. On the landing the situation varied and depended on different factors. I do not see the reason why structures of domination would not permit the Goffmanian process of 'saving the face' to enter the picture. In fact, structures of domination have constantly emerged during the fieldwork and the use-of-force would frequently be in the picture in a way or another[72].

What I will call 'symbolic credible threat' (*infra*, Chapter 6) will result from a particular interpretation of both Popitz's discussion on 'Threatening and being

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[72]   Extreemely serious form of 'bad' violence might work following a partially fifferent dynamic (*see* Weenink 2014). On the field, however I have not observed such situation as alleged 'lessons'.

threatened' (1986: 65–84) and the idea of 'credible commitment' (Campana and Varese 2013). Both those approaches would be likely to include concurrently issues of reputation, of 'saving the face', as well as, on the other side, of a system of domination.

In the interactions at stake here, unsurprisingly, the officers' decision to threat or to use force would be, first of all, an officers' own decision and would not previously be agreed with prisoners necessarily; nevertheless, as Popitz (1990) had shown prisoners, those being threatened by officers, had a crucial role 'in the game'. The likelihood of an emergency squad's intervention would depend, not only on the officers' threats, but also on the ongoing chain of interaction between the former and the latter. Despite the fact that officers would hardly ever admit, even less publicly display, that their decision is imbued in negotiation 'with the enemy', the observable evidence during field work would support that interpretation most of the time. In other words, it is reasonable to affirm that, more often than not, all parties have *a* stake in influencing the outcome of any conflictual situation in one or the other direction: either towards the actual use-of-force or towards de-escalation.

However, officers' decision would be performed and displayed as if it would be an officer's autonomous decision. However, a completely different picture would occur if a prisoner would unpredictably assault one officer. That prisoner's behaviour would 'cause' a prompt officers intervention a predictably the intervention of the emergency squad as well. In some occasion this would allegedly configure a 'lesson' and not only a proper lawful intervention; accusation of alleged provocation are often performed by both officers' and prisoners' to one another.

To conclude this section, interpreting Popitz (1986), it is worth remembering the intersubjective and interactive relationships implied in each 'threatening structure' (66) that is by and of itself a particular form of interaction. For a

thread to occur, at least two social actors must interact with one another. During the interaction there is a shifting and ongoing power dynamic that depends on how any of the actors involved in the interaction participates interacting with one another. In fact, Popitz argued that, not only the victim who is threatened depends on his or her interpretation of the perpetrator acts or threats, but also the perpetrator depends on –and become constrained by– the following decisions and actions of the victim (68)[73]. As it will be clearer below, the symbolic threaten of the use-of-force is a crucial process occurring within the Cycle. I move now to illustrate few characteristics of Radical interactionism that are interesting here.

Athens coined the term radical interactionism. He is the sociologist that has firstly published *Violent Criminals Acts and Actors: A Symbolic Interactionist Study* (1980). Later on, he has been started elaborating the 'classical' ideas of symbolic interactionism and, eventually, developed a slightly new theoretical approach that he called radical interactionism (Athens 2002).[74] The 'radical' difference between symbolic and radical interactionism is the importance that the latter gives to domination in constituting the interaction (Athens 2002). Writing about his theoretical legacies in a recent paper titled 'The Roots of "Radical Interactionism"' (2009) he stressed the role of the philosopher G. H. Mead explicitly pursuing the goal to move beyond his master and previous professor at the University of Chicago (*see also*, Athen 2007).

Mead has in fact constantly been Athens' main point of reference in his papers throughout his career; yet, his stance has become more critical over time (1980, 1989, 2002, 2007, and 2009). Moreover, Athens has the merit to have strongly re-evaluated the role that Park and Burgess played in the construction of Symbolic interactionism. He argued that they had contributed in different

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[73]   Perpetrator and victims are not terms used by Popitz in that occasion; yet, in my understanding they can be used safely.
[74]   Two Athens' manuscriptes (1980, 1989) are cited by Collins in his *Violence* (2008).

ways; i.e. by both proposing four types of interactions,[75] and by emphasising the role of dominance[76] within each of them[77]. Athens showed Park's and Burguess' contribution by describing their explanation of dominance (2009: 391–396): I will only sketchy list the main four points Athens used to describe it (394). Dominance 1) is always present in a cooperative interaction, or as they called it "corporate action"; 2) it always implies super-ordination and subordination; 3) it is imbued in varying degree in *all* kinds of interactions; 4) it is taken for granted by social actors in interaction[78]. All these points are particularly relevant in custodial contexts.

Athens have also continuously shown appreciation for Mead's lessons, not only because Mead distinguished between five elementary ingredients of social acts, but also, and foremost, because he had distinguished between two types of social acts: *conflictive social acts* and *cooperative social acts*[79]. During cooperative social acts the actor build or pursue a goal within the social action – a social object – and successfully plans his or her action accordingly. A conflictive interaction occurs if participants are in at least one of the following situations: they are unable to build a shared goal or to plan an appropriate action to try to reach it. (Athens 2009: 397). *See also* Collins reinterpretation in his chapters on 'Confrontational tension' (Collins 39–82) and 'Forward panic' (83–133).

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[75]   The four types of interaction are '"competition," "conflict," "accommodation," and "assimilation" […]' (Athens 2009: 392). He offers a different understanding of them by saying that 'despite Park and Burgess' (1924: 506, 574, 785) referring to competition, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation as "types" or "forms" of interaction, they can be more accurately characterized as the ongoing stages or sub-processes in a larger cyclical process' (392).

[76]   'Dominance' is a concept he distinguished to his definition of 'domination'; his definition of domination is also different from the classic Weber's one.

[77]   Athens argued that Park's influence on symbolic interactionism had been minimised by Blumer who 'performed the role of chief expositor of the interactionist's perspective' (2007: 391) after Mead's death.

[78]   Despite Athens' appreciation of the two Chicagoans, he has not appreciated that Park and Burgess centred each of their interpretation on conflict instead of domination

[79]   The distinction *conflictive social acts* and *cooperative social acts is* often used by Collins (2008) too.

Furthermore Athens recognised that Mead put domination in the picture studying social actions (2002); yet, with his evolutionary perspective on it, according to Athen, Mead argued that in his time, at that particular stage of social evolution, domination would only still be relevant for the polity; nor for all other five institutions as it was before; on the opposite, Athens strongly argued domination is still nowadays the most relevant feature to be considered in the interaction[80] (Athens 2007: 138). In all prison context, yet to different degree, domination (or power unbalance) is a clear characteristic of the situation and deeply structure and influence the interactions between the keepers and the kept.

Mead had suggested that sociality became a better conceptual tool for explaining interactions than domination; in fact, sociality, through the idea of merit, would better explain the actors' roles within the interaction and even one's superordinate or subordinate roles performed in it (2009). That might also help to grasp the rationale imbued in the *Incentive and Earned Privilege* (IEP) scheme used in UK as well as, yet differently, in Italy too. Athens have strongly disagreed on this point with Mead. He eventually concluded his critiques to Mead by writing that,

[b]y overlooking domination's impact on all our societal institutions, Mead and his students, such as Herbert Blumer (1966, 1981, 2004) and David Miller (1973a, b, 1982) failed to make it the basic principle on which all societies, past, present, and future, ultimately operate. (2007: 139).

That was a very strong Athens' argument given the centrality he has given to domination in his own theory (2002)[81].

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[80]   Mead' six most relevant institutions are: 1) language; 2) the family; 3) the economy; 4) the religion; 5) the polity; 6) science.
[81]   Athens idea of domination as a central component of any social interaction is strongly in contrast with Blumer' idea of power. According to Athen, in fact, Blumer had not distinguished between power relation and power conflict thereby hiding, or denying, the crucial role of power in any kind of interactions.

The most recent Athens' legacy is Giddens. Unlike Collins who did never put him in his reference we considered (2004, 2008 and 2009), Athens refers explicitly to *The Constitution of Society* (Giddens 1984)[82] discussing domination. Notwithstanding his 'radical' position, Athens have not shown any particular interest in Foucault's idea of power other than in the edited collection of interviews Power/Knowledge (1980b,c). Giddens' interpretation of power had surely had a greater impact on Athens[83]. Athens, in fact, neither minimised the role of the structural variables, nor did he forgot the agent's positionality in his research. His theoretical framework might allow researcher to take into account any vector of domination: class, gender, ethnicity and so forth. The link Between Athens' idea of domination clearly resonate with Giddens, particularly when – in the section 'Change and Power' (256–262) – Giddens stated that 'power is the capacity to achieve outcomes […] Power is not, as such, an obstacle to freedom or emancipation but is their very medium' (257); afterwards, he argued that 'the existence of power presumes structures of domination whereby power that 'flows smoothly' in processes of social reproduction […] operates' (257). I now turn to the interactionist perspectives on violence.

Violent encounters

Athens and Collins would probably both agree that 'most existing explanations of violence fall into the category of background explanation: factors outside the situation that lead up to and cause the observed violence' (Collins 2008:

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[82]   Collins (2004, 2008 and 2009) did not have any Giddens' work in his references.
[83]   'Domination is not the same as 'systematically distorted' structures of signification because domination – as I conceive it – is the very condition of existence of coded of signification. 'Domination' and 'power' cannot be though of only in terms of asymmetries of distribution but have to be recognised as inherent in social association (or, I would say, in human action as such). Thus – and here we must also reckon with the implication of the writing of Foucault – power is not an inherently noxious phenomenon, not just the capacity to 'say no'' (Giddens 1984: 31–2).

20)[84]or, to put it differently, they would also both agree that 'almost every imaginable explanation of violent crime has been proffered at one time or another (Athens 2005: 632); moreover, that 'the interaction […] is always a formative process in its own right' (632–3), and that a theory must 'explain what actually takes place during the interaction not only [when violent interactions] are committed but also when they are *nearly* committed' (633; *emphasis in the original*).

Both authors share a micro-sociological approach; yet, Collins (2008) understanding of violence is grounded on a new version of what he had previously elaborate under the rubric of 'Emotional Energy and the Transient Emotions' (Collins 2004: 102–104) and is influenced by Hochschild (1983); Athens understanding of it is instead grounded on domination (Athens 2002). The former argued that,

[f]ighters get into a state of fear or at least high tension as soon as the confrontation comes to the point of violence. I will call this tension/fear; it is a collective interactional mood that characterizes the violent encounters on all sides, and that shapes the behaviour of all its participants in several typical ways (Collins 2008: 41–42).

The latter claims instead that

[i]n all its varied manifestations, violence is a by-product of the struggle for domination found throughout the social world. Although all struggles for dominance do not give birth to violence, all violence is born from struggles for dominance (Athens 1998: 686).

I am not sure about Athens clear-cut definition – or better manifesto – describing violence quoted above.

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[84]   Treating violence slightly more commonsensical than 'neutrally', Wieviorka contested the interactionist approach to violence – particularly referring to Collins (2008, 2011). He argued that: 'violence is sociologically the contrary of the conflictual relation. Violence indicates rupture and not relation and violence involves the subjectivity of the person or persons who perpetuate it, much more than the inter-subjectivity of actors in relation and interaction' (2011: 5).

To challenge an assertive definition such as the Athens' one above is an easy task. Simply from a logical point of view it would be enough, in fact, to find one exception, and it is plenty of exceptions 'out there'. It would be enough to think about the crucial role that emotions play in violence (Collins 2008), the issue of 'emotional asymmetry' (Weenink 2014: 430), as well as other types of violence loosely related to domination, such as, i.e. violent encounters and assaults related to specific kind of mental health or alcohol and other substances intoxication to falsify it[85]. However, Athens contribution to the understanding of the violent interactions and his contribution to put domination into the picture cannot be overestimated. In particular his long paper *Violent Encounters: Violent Engagements, Skirmishes, and Tiffs* (2005) constructed one of the first useful tool to be adopted in interactional studies of violence, or, as Collins recently called it the 'micro-sociology of violence' (2009).

Referring to Mead distinction between cooperative and conflictive social actions Athens stressed that in those situations, the individual or collective social actors involved do not agree on the power relations constituted in the interaction as to whether one or the other social actors should be in a super-ordinate position or not.

Athens argued that, '[u]nsurprisingly, violent encounters do not arise during individual or collective cooperative social acts but instead during conflictive ones' (2005: 670); once again, a less assertive statement would help his interpretations to avoid to be easily falsified. During the ethnography in fact, violent interactions also exploded during day-to-day cooperatively activities.

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[85]   I am not implying that there cannot be a rationality or at least some form of purposeful actions in mental-health and alcohol intoxicated patients, I simply suppose that domination might not always be the main factor explaining those persons' actions and interactions.
        Furthermore, although mental health issues and drugs abuse have also been interpreted by scholars at the light of domination. I am not too sure about using concepts and proposing explanations in such an all-catching manner.

Nevertheless, Athens contribution[86] is crucial indeed. He proposed 'Violent Engagements: A Five-Stage Process' (only occurring all five in the violent encounters) that he claimed could potentially be used with all violent social actions both lawful and unlawful once (652–66); either attempted or committed. Athens also singled out the relevance of the quality and quantity of the social actors involved in the actual violent encounter; a question addresses in its multifaceted configuration by Collins (2008) in his chapter 'Violence as Dominance in Emotional Attention Space' (413–462) in which he addresses such different contexts as violence occurring during riots and 'violence without audience'.[87]

Athens's five stages of violence: a partial truth to explain all violence?

I am not quite sure whether or not one single theory might explain all forms of violence with a sufficient approximation; yet, I think that typologies and sequences of interactions are good ways to produce sociological knowledge. In this section, I will pinpoint one relevant contribution to study violence empirically at a micro level. All kind of violence, following Athens (2005) might possibly occur in five stages, yet, the conditional tense *is* necessary.

The first stage is 1) '*Role claiming*'. At this initial stage, 'a would-be superordinate must decide to place himself into the role of the superordinate and cast someone else into the role of the subordinate' (652). Then 2) '*Role rejection*'. During this stage, a 'would-be subordinates must not only decide whether to resist being placed into the subordinate role but also decide if they

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[86]   Collins (2008) only referred to two old Athens' publications (1980, 1989) and not to the recent ones (2005, 2007 and 2009).
[87]   He studied available visual materials from different sources and media; yet, his use of that material have apparently been conducted in a quasi-positivistic way; there are neither methodological, nor ethical issues raised at all; only rhetoric questions such as: 'we might question whether there is a methodological bias in this photos. Isn't it possible that most of violent activists are out of the picture frame, somewhere else in the crowd?' (416).

should resist *actively* or *passively*' (654; *emphasis in the original*). The next stage is 3) '*Role sparring*' […] If the would-be superordinate do not achieve their desired result [in the previous stages] then they can make additional gestures for this purpose, setting into motion dominance-claiming or rejection *strategies*' (657). Yet, another stage is 4) '*Role enforcement*'; during this phase 'at least one of the two disputants must decide to use physical force to settle the issue of who should perform the superordinate and subordinate roles in the social act in which they are jointly participating' (659). The last stage is 5) '*Role determination'*. During the role-determination stage, the impact of the dominance engagement on the allocation of roles in the social act is determined'. There is no one single possible outcome 'to dominance engagements: a "major" or "minor victory," a "major" or "minor defeat," a "draw," or "no decision"' (663)[88].

According to Athens, these five stages do not all necessarily occur in each and every violent encounter (2005); yet, I think they might contribute explaining at least some officers' use-of-force as well. Each time that all five stages are not completed within a violent interaction, again following Athens (2005) the encounter is one of the two possible 'inchoate violent Encounters': It would be a 'dominance tiffs' or a 'violent skirmishes'. The first would be a violent encounter that would not reach to the confrontation stage thereby role enforcement would not occur, thereby remaining at the level of threat (Popitz 1990); the other would be an encounter in which, despite the confrontation had occurred, there would be no role determination.

Athens' approached will be expanded further focusing on a specific environment and type of situation. This will help both, to be much more

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[88]   'In a major victory, one combatant scores a clear-cut win and in the process inflicts serious injuries upon the other one. A major defeat is simply the reverse. A minor victory or defeat is the same as a major one, except that no one is seriously injured. A "no decision" is where the engagement never progresses to the point that a "winner" or "loser" could be declared; it ends before any of the combatants could inflict serious injuries upon the other' (Athens 2005: 663).

precise, and to have a cycle that better approximate what actually occur in the wing on day-to-day basis; however, by doing so, the Cycle will not pretend to explain all forms of violence, but simply to better grasp an often invisible custodial setting and the daily violent interaction continuously constituting and re-constituting it in a context characterised by the ethnographer's presence on the scene.

Interactionism and the body[89]

Collins, to the best of my knowledge is the sociologist who emphasised the role of the body in violence encounters more synthetically and eloquently by arguing that violence is, concurrently, a social process; a social process though strongly involving flesh-and-blood bodies (Collins 2008). On the opposite Wieviorka strongly contested the interactionist approach to violence by writing: 'Violence indicates rupture and not relation and violence involves the subjectivity of the person or persons who perpetuate it, much more than the inter-subjectivity of actors in relation and interaction' (2011: 5).

I do really appreciate both authors in different ways and I see that there are some partial truths in each position according to my observations. The main point is that, although both of them focus on the body, Collins thinks about violence in general and focus his attention on the actual occurrence of violent face-to-face encounters, just like I tried to do here. Wieviorka, on the contrary, adopts a less all-encompassing interpretation of violence referring to violence in a more commonsensical way and in so doing, emphasis the role of the wrongdoer or violence perpetrator embedding an explicit normative moral judgment that is out of scope here.

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[89]   Here I want to thank explicitly Roberta Sassatelli for guiding me in this direction as well as for indicating me the relevance of Wacquant ethnography on Boxing to my research and for her brilliant insights on the issue in Sassatelli (2010).

In this ethnography I adopt an interactionist approach and therefore, this section will start once again with Mead who already introduced the role of the body in his interpretation of the social act. Following Mead, it worth remembering that social act can either be cooperative, or conflictive'. Both types of social acts are made of: 1) roles; 2) attitudes; 3) language; 4) attitudinal assumption; and 5) social objects. It is worth noting that in Athens' interpretation of Mead, '[a]ttitudes are the *physical and mental preparations* that we undergo to carry out our particular roles in a social act. They also connect our bodies to our actions'. (Mead 1934, 7–13; *emphasis in original and added*). This original Mead's interest in the body, reached a different level in successive interactionist scholars. The body was already there in Hochschild (1983) 'feeling management'; she has been dealing with bodies in interaction in close proximity for the last thirty years (2003). In *Interactional Ritual Chain* (Collins 2004) the body played a crucial role as well: the intersubjectivity was constituted and re-constituted during the physical and social interaction among persons in proximity to one another; intersubjectivity was both embodied and performed bodily. This becomes particularly true in Collins study of 'conflictual confrontation' and 'violence' (2008; 2012).

Violence is so difficult because it goes against our propensity to attune our nervous systems to those with whom we establish intersubjectivity. Quite literally, persons in a conflictual situation, who are close enough to send and receive *signals from each other's face and body*, feel the tension of simultaneously becoming highly attuned to each other, while trying to force the other to submit to one's will. (2012: 136; *emphasis added*).

The use-of-force – within the wall – is a deeply relational bodily activity in which intersubjectivity is strongly embedded in both symbolic and physic social encounters time and again.

Both Collins' idea of 'Confrontational tension and fear' (2008: 41–57, 2012) and Athens' interpretation of violent encounters (2005) argue that violence may influence and occasionally provoke bodily reactions like sweating,

trembling, having a red face and even, Collins notices writing about wars '[n]ot uncommon is loss of control of one's sphincters, urinating or shitting in one's pants' (2008: 46). This research strongly support it.

In other words, particular bodies interact violently with one another in particular ways producing particular effects that afterwards may interfere with one's 'emotion work' and in particular with what Goffman defined as 'saving the face'. However, here, Athens interpretation of the body is the one that better resonate with our field work and with the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence'.

Satisfying the impulses originating from our bodies, such as hunger, lust, warmth, and shelter, can be the ends of our action (Mead 1938: 3–25; *also see* Blumer 2004: 69–102; Shibutani 1961: 64–70). Thus, our bodies not only are a resource for creating and maintaining our identities [like in Messerschmidt's view of masculinity] but can be the original, unadulterated ends of our actions, including actions whose sole end is usually neither the creation nor the maintenance of gender identities (*see* Athens 1994: 523–28; Wiley 1994: 2). For example, people seek shelter from the cold to keep from freezing to death rather than to prove that they are a "man" or "woman" (Athens 2005: 647).

Doing ethnography this interpretation is particularly keen. However, I think that 'doing gender' is crucial inside and cannot be dismissed. I saw prisoners fighting and breaking each other's teeth on the yard 'simply'[90]for refusing to share the last third of a cigarette, for having refused to follow a cue, and for pretending going back from the yard to the cell before the scheduled time thereby trying to urge others to lose their own precious exercise time in the yard.

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[90] However, the interpretation of the word 'simply' should be contrasted with the reality of deep inequality and poverty lived by many prisoners inside.

Masculinities

The crucial point, however, is not only limited to the bodies that can be observed by the researcher in the field. The researcher's own body in the relation to his or her observation is also crucial in prison sociology. In fact, studying violence within a closed environment in which the threat, or the actual, use-of-force is a typical trait of the situation, and both the researcher and the prison officer(s) are numerically largely outnumbered by prisoners, is a strongly bodily and emotional experience.

My own quite tall and not too weak body was often seen a sign of my maleness and was commented on positively often with sexual second meanings joking on my alleged 'male performance out there' by officers and other staff, also female one. Healthy – meaning strong – bodies are often performed and displayed both by officers and inmates. The 'muscular body' was a clearly *shared code of masculinity* between the (strong) keepers and the (strong) kept. Officers showed their own body mainly through proxemics, being constrained by a uniform (and with no weapon at hand!); they did it more often than not when in interaction with female medical or custodial staff. Inmates used proxemics as well, but they also exposed their own body literally through the selection of appropriate clothes some times of well-known sport brands.

Officers mainly displayed their masculinities mainly on the wing or in backstage situation outside the wing playing fight with one-another or joking with female nurses; inmates instead did it in the wing but, more intensely in the gym and during exercise (in the yard). Weak bodies and disease were sometimes ridiculed and publicly 'othered'; yet, extremely weak bodies and explicitly disabled were usually treated more or less fairly most of the times. More often than not, in those extreme cases, such as a young inmate with no legs living on the wing, pity, empathy, and even a friendly smile were in the picture as well on both sides of the gate.

According to Ricciardelli et al.

Masculinities can take radically different forms in diverse environments. The existing literature on prison masculinities does not sufficiently capture the nuanced differences in how forms of gender are tempered and change within penal cultures and structures. (2015: 18).

A gender prospective on masculinity is not new in prison sociology at all (Newburn and Stanko 1994; Messerschmidt 2001; Jewkes 2002, 2005; Aboim 2010; Phillips and Earle 2010; Earle 2016) and it can be useful to study violence either in prison (Sim 1994; Toch 1998) or beyond the wall (Messerschmidt 1993).

It would be useful to incorporate the attention to masculinity more strongly in the sociological interactionist perspective on the use-of-force and on violence. Both ideas of domination and dominance could resonate with Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) concept of 'Hegemonic Masculinity' and 'Hyper masculinity' (Toch 1998); however, Collins have neither put any Connell's, nor Messerschmidt's work into his reference list and Athens have even argued that '[t]he "doing gender" theory of […] has more weaknesses than strengths' (2005: 644). I do not quite agree with Athens opinions about gender. I do agree instead that neither Connell's, nor Messerschmidt's, approaches have helped in identifying the stages though which a threatened, nearly completed or completed violet interactions unfolded during a violent interaction by the more or less active actions that all parties involved performed interactively with one another.

In the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence', different versions of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities enter in the picture; yet, to be honest, this work does not focus on masculinity. Despite my long-time interest in the issue, in fact, other dimensions played a more visible role in the field; furthermore, in Italy masculinity and machismo are common male attribute either within or without prison. Distinguishing between those different dimensions clearly

would deserve a specific research agenda. Masculinity will only be considered intermittently while describing the stages of the cycle here: yet, this research will only be a first attempt to doing so in Italy and much more research is needed indeed. In such a hyper masculine environment failing to take into account masculinity completely would be difficult to justify.

In the next chapter, we will move to the research site and enter the custodial institution. We will present the organization that implements in practice coercion on the wing by performing the Cycle.

We will first show bureaucratic formal organization of coercion in the Reggio Emilia' custodial complex. Then, we will address the prison officers chain of command that emerged ethnographically on the field; next we will explore other informal dived that shape daily interactions inside; then we will introduce the emergency team. In other words, this chapter will allow the reader to better situate and understand the ways in which the Cycle – that will be discussed in Chapter 4 and in Chapter 5 – is performed within organizational constraints that are characteristic of one particular total institution. By doing so it will also emerge clearly how the emergency interventions that will be unpacked here, might help others – in different context, space and prison regime – to begin to study those situations empirically, within a micro-sociological frame, allowing the issue to be treated also from a different perspective, than the normative one previously described in Chapter one.

Chapter 4

The organization of the use-of-force in practice:
A 'street-level bureaucracy' within the wall

In this chapter, I will illustrate the main characteristics of the organization of coercion, in particular at the wing level. I have studied it for more than one year and a half through observation, dialogues and interviews with staff and a few prisoners in order to shed light on the context of 'doing' coercion in practice and to unpack the chain of command through which coercion is exerted by prison officers onto prisoners; yet this work is not primarily focused on the organization as such; studying the organization is not its main goal and would require a specific research agenda; rather, this chapter simply intends to shed some light on both the social organization and the social actors working within the wall; particularly, focusing on those 'doing' coercion. The scope is therefore mainly to help the reader not 'to get lost' inside a secret world (Cohen and Taylor 1972) in which the Cycle is recursively performed time and again.

In the next sections, *firstly*, I will describe the bureaucratic organization of coercion by a way of describing the main roles in the officers' relationships with one another. *Then*, I will reconstruct prison officers' chain of command in Reggio Emilia. *Next*, I will address three informal fractures that shaped to a greater or lesser degree that chain of command.

The bureaucratic formal organization of coercion in the custodial complex in Reggio Emilia

The custodial complex of Reggio Emilia, is one among the 207 public Italian penal custodial institutions.[91] The Italian Ministry of justice has a Department called D.A.P., 'Department for the penitentiaries' administration'[92] that specifically deals with detention in the realm of Criminal justice. That department has eleven decentralised offices (*Provveditorati*), each one managing one of the eleven areas in which the Italian *custodial-scape* have been recently divided into; each of these areas is directed by one area manager (*Provveditore/trice*)[93].

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[91]   At the moment a total of five Forensic Psychiatric Hospitals, or Asylum (O.P.G.) are still functioning despite the law (On December, the 22nd 2011, the Italian Government issued a legislative decree n. 211/2011 converted into Law n.9/2012 that has ordered the closure of all Italian Ospedali psichiatrici giudiziari O.P.G.) that prescribed their definitive closure within a year from the publication of the law. Only one asylum, Castiglione delle Stiviere, a forensic psychiatric hospital near Mantova, in the north of Italy, has been officially closed until now. In fact, it has been renamed as 'Residency for the execution of the security measures', R.E.M.S., (*residenze per l'esecuizone delle misure di sicurezza*). Before the law that ordered the institutional closure, they were ready to comply with the new normative. However, Reggio Emilia's staff considered the asylum 'Castiglione delle Stivere' an easy institution to be run. It was often referred to as a 'hotel' where only good prisoners and patients are locked up. This is probably not completely true; yet, In Reggio Emilia, I saw many 'difficult' patients arriving from the 'hotel' because they were considered to be too dangerous to be kept there.

[92]   In Italian, *Dipartimento dell' amministrazione penitenziaria*. http://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_12_3.wp.

[93]   In Italy there are no private penal custodial institutions.

Immigration detention (Bosworth 2014) is an administrative task in Italy, just like in UK, and it is therefore not included in the departmental duties. Instead, the Centres for the identification and expulsion (C.I.E[94].; *Centri di identificazione ed espulsione*) are managed by local authorities (*Prefetti*) under the Italian Home Office (*Ministero dell'interno*) and are often outsourced to private companies. The Department for the penitentiaries' administration manages and directly administers *all* the Italian custodial institutions for adults (and juveniles) in which approximately a professional group of almost 39.000[95] people, of whom about 3.500 women, work as prison officers managing and controlling a population of 52.754 inmates of whom 2.210 women[96].

The custodial complex in Reggio Emilia (*Istituti penitenziari di Reggio Emilia*) is one of the ten custodial institutions managed by the Area Manager based in Bologna. That custodial complex hosts both a prison (*C.C.*)[97], and an asylum (*O.P.G.*) also called forensic psychiatric hospital[98] in two exactly identical buildings designed and built to be a maximum security prison in the 1980s (*infra*, Image 4.1) and inaugurated in 1990.

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[94]   Article 12 of Law 40/1998.
[95]   Source: personal communication with a 'funzionario' of the Ministry of Justice; this data refers to December 2014.
[96]   Data refer to 30th June 2015; source: Ministry of Justice.(http://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14.wp?selectedNode=1_5_32).
[97]   It's a remand prison for defendants (in Italian, *Casa Circondariale; C.C*).
[98]   In Italian, *Ospedale Psichiatrico Giudiziario;* O.P.G..
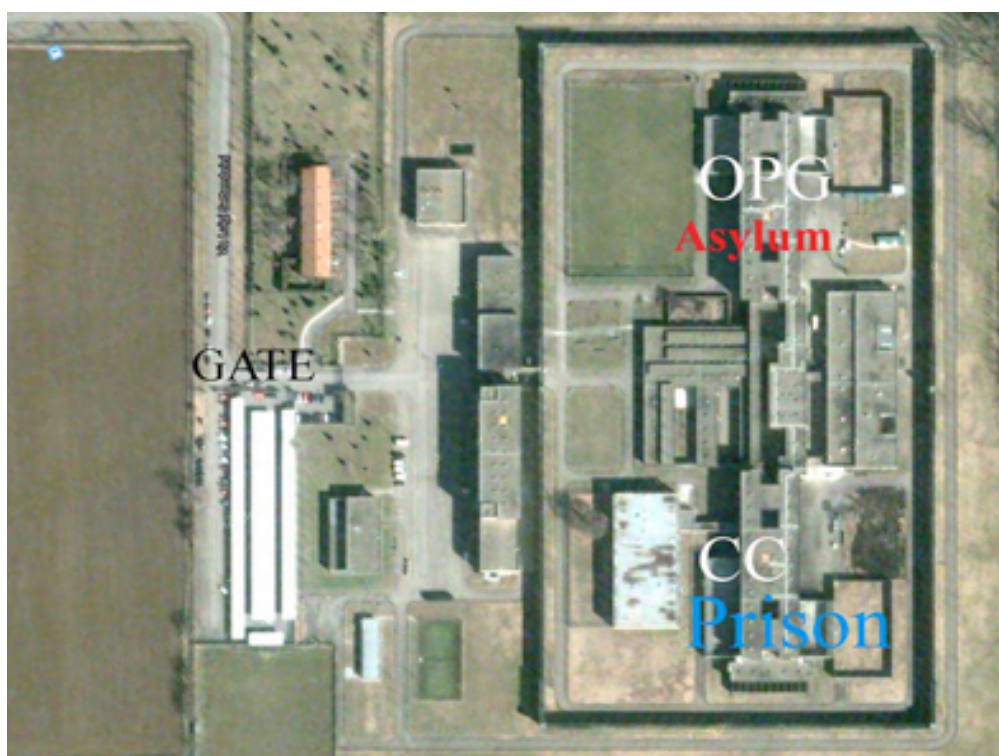
Image 4.1: *Aerial view of the site* (source: https://maps.google.it/; graphic elaboration added by Luigi Gariglio).

Not only are the asylum and the prison identical in terms of architecture, interior design (Jewkes and Johnston 2013), furniture and even walls and bars' colours, they are also almost the same in terms of hierarchical organization, particularly so regarding the prison officers' chain of command (*infra*, Image 4.2 and 4.3): the focus of this chapter.

In fact, both institutions are directed by one prison governor (*Direttore* or *Direttrice*) who is a civil servant without any military or police professional training or expertise; they both have the same medical director (*Direttore* or *Direttrice sanitario/a*)[99] providing health care to those in custody, and managing all issues regarding prisoners and patients' physical, psychological

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[99] Since 2008 the prisoners' health care is a duty of the Ministry of health. Before that, the Ministry of Justice employed or hired in different forms doctors, nurses and specialists providing a very bad health service to the population kept in custody.

and mental health[100].
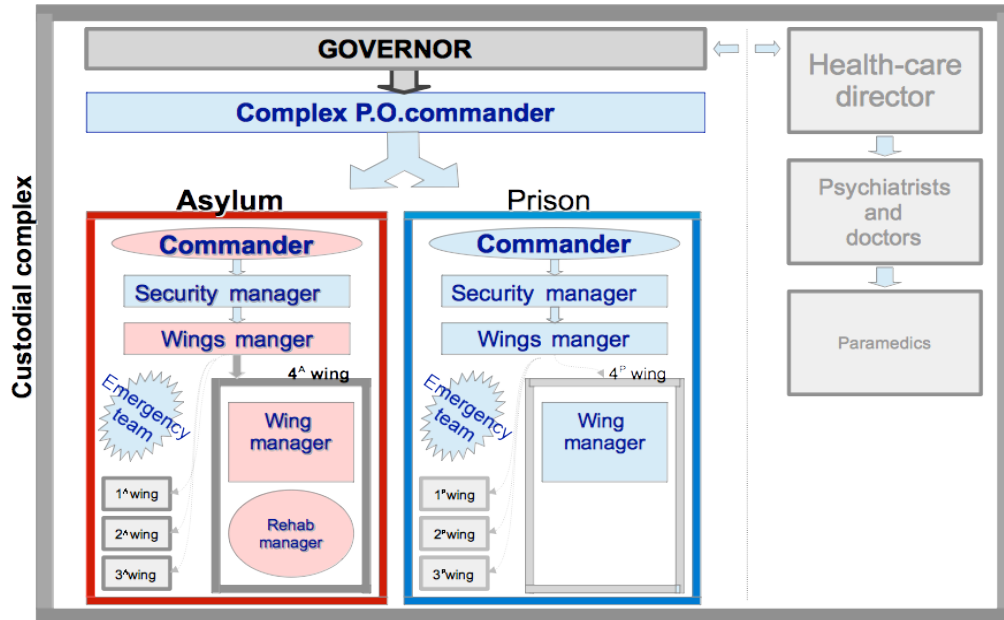
Image 4.2 The *chain of command* of the custodial complex (design: Luigi Gariglio).

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100   On medical power in U.K. see Sim (1990).
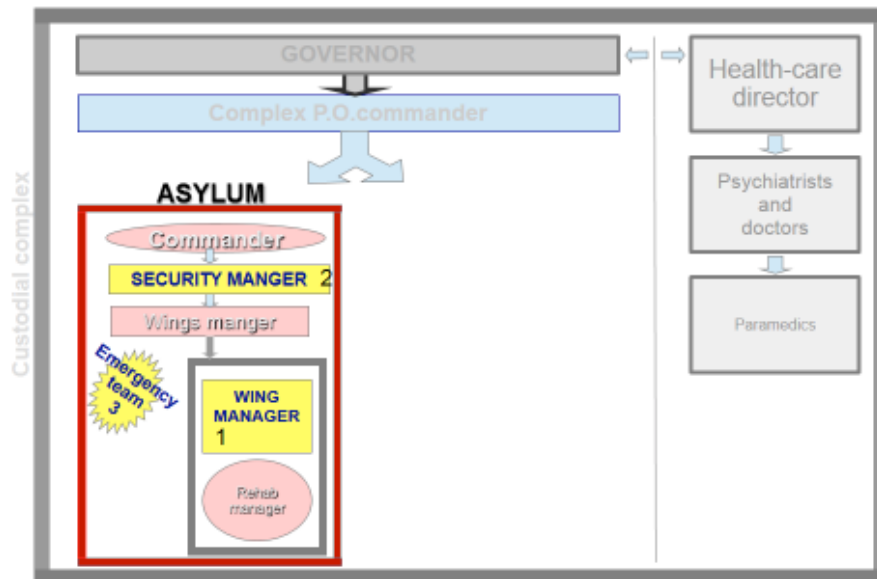
Image 4.3 The three main actors of the chain of command. Doing the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence' in practice.

The prison governor's duties are divided into four main areas: bookkeeping (in Italian, *contabilità*), prisoners' rehabilitation (in Italian, *trattamento*), administration and, lastly, security (in Italian, *sicurezza*) as the custodial complex's governor explained in a video recorded interview (*see also* Faugeron 1996).

The prison officers' chain of command in Reggio Emilia

The Prison officers' (in Italian: *Polizia penitenziaria*) chain of command is structured in 5 levels of authority[101]. In the custodial complex of Reggio Emilia, the higher ranking officer was a commissioner (in Italian, *commissario* or *commissaria*). During the ethnography she was the general commander and was only directly subordinated to the governor. Being at the apex of the hierarchy, she directly commanded two police inspectors (in Italian, *ispettore* or *ispettrice*) (third level in the Italian prison officer hierarchy): one of whom would be the local commander of the prison; the other would be the local commander of the asylum.

Until recently (2014), the two institutions have been run completely independently of each other. A reorganization had occurred which formally unified the two previously independent organizations into one organizational body; yet some resistance still existed among staff, not only at the 'rank and file' level, but also at higher positions in the hierarchy throughout my entire fieldwork; in fact, I experienced a very low level of collaboration and sympathy among the staff working in one facility or in the other; the same kind of low level of collaboration had also been reported by staff during the interviews in both the prison and the asylum.

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[101]   The polizia peniteniaria' s personnel is divided in five levels: from 'ruolo agenti assistenti' to 'ruolo dirigenziale'; http://www.polizia-penitenziaria.it/le-insegne-di-qualifica..
      During my observations there were very few superintended (second level officers (*sovraintendenti*) and inspectors (third grade) to manage all the crucial nodes in the organization or 'posto di servizio'; often, prison officers (first level) complained that they had a role in practice that did not match with the power position they held in the hierarchy, thereby performing roles with high responsibility– like managing recurring crisis– with nothing in return.

The chains of command below each local commander were practically identical at the prison and at the asylum, as the woman commanding the whole custodial complex explained in a formal video-recorded interview.

All those in the local chain of command were police officers and, from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy, were continuously potentially involved in threatening or using force if necessary; yet, doing coercion was particularly frequent at the asylum because, as the commander clearly stated in an interview, critical events were just 'a normal business' there. Usually, critical events had been occurring more than ten times a day on the wing observed during the fieldwork; yet, only few of those episodes were officially labelled, or just treated, as such and put in the appropriate *Register of critical event* accordingly.

Answering to an informal question in which the fact that so few critical episodes had been actually registered was challenged, an officer argued:

if we scribbled on paper all the shit happening here... we'd never stop writing...and when would we start working then? All the prisoners…you see…are here because they gave problems somewhere else. We only have those kind of kids here…OK…let's put it like this. What is absolutely normal and acceptable for us here could be very critical somewhere else... you know what I mean? Anyway, we must work in here...it's our job (field note: not recorded dialogue with an officer).

Predictably, however, the lower level ranks-and-files officers were more frequently doing coercion physically than the others. At the top of the chain, the general commander would rarely enter the wing and would consequently be less likely to be involved in day-to-day routines about 'doing' coercion; yet, she was the one who, as she proudly told me, 're-designed the service order regarding how to deal with critical events [*Managing critical events; service order n. 23/14 (23/05/14)*]' and the rules, regulations and procedures that prison officers must follow in case of emergency (Image 4.4).
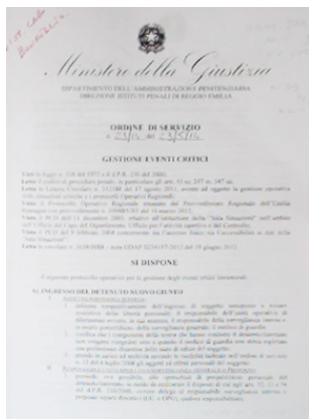
Image 4.4 Service order 'Managing critical events' n. 23/14 (23/05/14) (photograph: Luigi Gariglio).

She was clearly proud of her job and doing her best to cope and to manage all the many difficulties and resistance she encountered in her daily interaction with 'her men'. Despite the positive and enthusiastic approach, she was often described from the officers working on the wing, yet only informally, as a distant manager doing all her duty 'from her desk' and without 'boots on the ground'. Initially, she had not given me any confidence and I also perceived her as a distant and cold manager; afterwards, she had been very open and friendly to me speaking quite openly both in the informal dialogues and in the two formal interviews in which she did not put on any politically-correct face, i.e. criticising the difficulty to work with the medical staff given the resistance she felt from their side. However, it became clear to me, doing observation on the landing, that she would pretend formal respect from subordinates and mark a clear distance between herself and those 'below' her. She had even stressed her managerial role and femininity during both video-recorded interviews by *not* wearing a uniform and being nicely made up and well-dressed for the occasion instead.

The disciplinary hearing: 'il comitato di disciplina'

Notwithstanding both officers' perceptions and my initial observations have shown the commander's 'absence' from the Asylum day-to-day life, her formal role in dealing with all cases of alleged discipline occurring there was indisputable and had often, if not mainly to do with cases that eventually ended up in officers threatening or 'doing' coercion in a way or another.

Every time the prison governor would hear a case of alleged breach of discipline, the commander or her nominated deputy would sit next to the governor or his nominated deputy in a very formal setting inside the commander's office. The prisoner would be escorted to the room and the situation would be often described by prisoners (and by some low-ranking officer) as unfair and to a certain extent even intimidating. The accused prisoner has almost no way to defend himself from the accusation and hardly ever finds a fellow prisoner to testify in his favour. The accused prisoner would be at an obvious disadvantage. Rank-and-file staff would be trusted the most. In other words, the situation of the hearing would seem quite intimidating and the results too predictable indeed to be fair.

One step below the general commander, each one of the two local commanders would be at the head of his or her local chain of command, responding directly to his or her general commander and occasionally directly to the governor. Despite an organizational difference at the wing level – that will be illustrated below – each of the two chains of command were very similar indeed to one another. Below each commander, there would be a so called security manager (in Italian, *responsabile sicurezza*) supervising all security aspects of his or her facility, an all-wings manager (in Italian, *capo-posto* or *preposto*) who would organize and manage all the day-to-day routines occurring in all four wings of each facility, and who would continuously dialogue with other fellow officers

working in other offices[102]. Lastly, at the very bottom of the hierarchy, there would be those rank-and-file prison officers working on the wing.

The main difference between the chains of command of the two facilities is about the role and presence of the medical and paramedical staff on the wing. In the Asylum, the psychiatric, medical and paramedical staff was more relevant than in prison; at least one nurse would be on the ward H24 day in day out. Seeing it from officers' perspective it became clear that the non-custodial staff presence was in turns perceived concurrently as both welcomed and problematic. 'We have to take care of their security as well, you know? Just like it happens with you being here with us now' one officer told me critically. 'They do a lot of things we previously had to do ourselves' said another more appreciatively.

Focussing on Prison officers, the organization of both institution would be quite similar; yet, in prison facility only one officer would always be on duty simultaneously; on the contrary, at the asylum, for more than twelve hours a day two officers would be working concurrently on any asylum's ward (with a close cell regime). Firstly, a prison officer working as a wing manager would be working patrolling the wing or, *said differently,* doing policing (Liebling 2000). Secondly, another prison officer working as a rehabilitation manager, would 'work' helping healthcare staff 'just doing rehab' (*infra*, Chapter 5) (*see* Image 4.2; asylum 4th wing, and prison 4th wing).

During a large period of the ethnography some of the wings in the custodial complex were operating with an *open-cell* regime in both institutions; those patients and inmates living on any *close-cell* regime wing, instead, would therefore be daily locked-up for minimum twenty-one-hours a day; almost all

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[102]   One crucial office is the reception (in Italian, *Ufficio matricola*) which assure that the required information is gleaned, assessments made upon a newcomer's arrival and that all the available personal information are properly archived and accessible by any fellow colleague that would need them.

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of those prisoners had the formal right to do exercise (going to the yard) twice a day: it was a close regime cell yet not a cellular isolation like in USA or at the '41 bis' for organized crime; all the cells were only closed with barred doors and prisoners would communicate both from one cell to the other, and by the mediation of the persons passing in front of their cell. In fact there has hardly ever been a strict control on prisoners' internal communication within the wing. Moreover, many of those prisoners would go to do their exercise on one of the yards or to the recreational wing together.

The role of 'wing manager officers' was organised in four shifts and was normally performed by a first level officer, yet not necessarily a 'rookie'. The shifts were organised as follows: the first shift (7-13), the second (12-19), the third (18-24), and, lastly, the night shift (0-7). Only the night shift would not overlap with the previous and/or the following ones. As said above, in the asylum two officers at a time – one wing manager and one officer doing 'rehab' – and not only one, would work on the wing during the 'busy hours' one next to the other; yet not together. One rehab officer would be present on the landing (not necessarily on the wing) from eight o'clock in the morning to nine o'clock in the evening on two shifts. One particular role description was written for each one of the two officers' role in on particular internal document (the so-called '*modello* 14 A').

That organization seemed to be working quite smoothly and efficiently. However, this distinction between two specialised roles, a security manager, and a rehab manager, seemed to have emphasised the classical prison officer' *role ambiguity*. Prison officer's duty has been described as ambiguous in its 'DNA' at least since Asylum (Goffman 1961a). On one side 'doing' coercion; on the other, concurrently, doing rehabilitation or, at least some kinds of social work.

The Emergency squad (or team): the specialised team for using force

The last crucial social actor that must be considered here is the emergency squad; its main duty and organizational *raison d'être* is specifically the symbolic or credible threat of force (*infra*, Chapter 6) and its actual bodily use (*infra*, Chapter 7). Notwithstanding its main duty, the emergency squad is sometimes used for different purposes as well. For one reason or another that team is also called 'available officers team'. It will play a crucial role in the Cycle both as a symbolically threatening team, and as a team credibly able to use 'force' whenever required by the situation effectively. It will clearly mark both the beginning and the end of what is called the intervention (*see* Image 6.1 and 6.2).

The emergency squad is not usually operating on any of the wings; it would not enter the wing in ordinary, non-critical, day-to-day routine situations if not ordered to do so by either the security manager or the commander. Normally, only after an alleged critical event the security manager would order the emergency team to enter the wing in which case the Cycle would enter into its second and harder phase, and the threaten or the actual use-of-force would start accordingly.

The emergency squad[103]: performing the duty of doing coercion and, concurrently, doing masculinity

One particular group of internal officers, including less or more people depending on the time of the day or night, the period of the year, or simply the personnel available were working together in the *emergency squad* (*squadra emergenza*); some of the officers usually included in that team would be particularly well built, muscular, and experienced. Usually, they would show a

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[103] In UK a similar duty is performed by a C&R team.

face and talk with a strong masculine but not necessarily macho attitude; more often than not, they would be pretty well considered by their fellow officers working in that same hegemonic masculine environment (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messerschmidt 2001; Jewkes 2005); yet, some fellow officers had even labelled them as 'agents with attitudes of back then'.

Jokes and banters would seldom occurred on the landing among prison officers with one another while 'doing' coercion; yet, 'while waiting for action', particularly so when female young paramedical staff would interacted with officers, officers would be more likely to become more talkative and hilarious; either in the aftermath of an intervention, or simply during routine patrol, a chat, or a cup of coffee with some 'pretty girls' would always be appreciated by 'the boys'; in those occasions, both funny, stupid, sexual stories as well as war stories from 'back then' would easily enter the picture.

Emergency squad's officers are, in their own words, 'always ready for action' (video recorded interview); that expression had a double meaning immediately clear to all involved in the conversation; the first meaning was of course expressed with phrases like: 'whenever the alarms ring or the next crisis occurs we'll be there in a sec'; the second meaning had a clear sexual implication and this did not create any apparent significant problem to the female medical and paramedical staff who would respond accordingly, often with another sexual joke.

However, in all interviews I conducted with the few women working at the custodial complex (never on the man wing because in Italy it is forbidden by law), female officers would consistently state that their working environment and male colleagues would recurrently displayed macho behaviours and opinions that they would not appreciate. This kind of masculine attitude is quite common in many Italian prison contexts (and beyond) and Italian women often just accept to cope with it officially, laughing behind their male fellow

officers' back afterwards. I experienced it frequently in the infirmary where I would sometimes stay to write my note sitting in a corner while the women would chat with one another commenting on their macho colleagues – maybe also because of my presence.

Unsurprisingly, the emergency groups' main duty would be doing coercion both symbolically and physically (*infra*, Chapter 6 and 7) whenever ordered to do so. They would also be frequently called each time a very violent or legally 'dangerous' inmate had to be escorted anywhere outside his cell either within the wing or outside of it. They would be ready to react to any tempted assault accordingly. The emergency team was quite often busy at the asylum; yet, there were few days in which mainly boredom, reading weekly magazines and some TV would help emergency team members to kill their time.

Doing coercion in the prison and in the asylum: penal power and medical power interacting with one another

In the custodial complex of Reggio Emilia 'doing' coercion was enforced differently in the prison and in the asylum. In prison, custodial staff most of the time operated independently to the medical staff as far as coercion was concerned.

At the Asylum, the 'medical power' (Sim 1990) and the 'penal power'– the prison officer's chain of command together with the director – should have been continuously negotiated with one another. On one side, the psychiatrists needed the prison officers' capacity of doing coercion in order to compel a prisoner to comply with a compulsory medical treatment, to block him and tighten him to a bed or to restrain him manually for as much as three hours if necessary; psychiatrist would usually either implicitly or formally threat patients with the intervention of the emergency squad in order to pursue their

own goals and provide the compulsory treatment either voluntarily or coercively (*infra*, Chapter 6 and 7). By doing so, the penal power was helping psychiatrists to enforce their duties and proceed more efficiently and quickly; in the occasion of the request of an emergency squad intervention, psychiatrists would treat officers working in the squad with some degree of deference and often with some humour too; something hardly ever occurring in other situations during day-to-day interaction on the wing in which the psychiatrist would clearly display the gulf between their status and those of the 'turnkey'.

On the other side, the asylum psychiatrists were formally, much less so in practice, the gatekeepers whose permission was required by law before any squad intervention could occur, at least when psychiatric patients, rather than simple inmates, were the target of the intervention. In other words, a psychiatrist would have the authority to allow or to stop the squad's intervention from doing hard-coercion (*infra*, Chapter 7). Of course, in practice, that formal control could easily be bypassed by the officer in case of alleged dangerous prison-to-prison violence, suicidal attempts or other dangerous prisoner's self-harm, and officer's assault, where 'there's no fucking time to call anyone'. Moreover, bypassing the psychiatric gatekeeping would be very easy during nightshifts, week-ends and in all the frequent situations in which psychiatrists were not physically present in the facility or could not be immediately found by phone or any other available means and the substitute had not enough reputation or will to enforce his or her legal power.

This is not to say that the squad would usually operate like that; yet, it is just to point out that this tension was present, it could be grasped partially by observation, and became much clearer through interviews[104] with the prisoners and the staff.

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[104] A forthcoming publication will deal with *Telling Coercion.*

Not only custodial and non-custodial staff relationships and hierarchy was a critical issue in the organization of coercion, but also personal idiosyncrasies made the situation even more difficult like it could occur in any other working environment. Another peculiarity of the asylum was that at least one nurse, often a woman, would be on the wing – or ward – twenty-four-hours a day (usually organised in three shift of eight hours each) working on the same wing with at least one male officer[105]. Despite possible friendships and cover-ups that had *allegedly* occurred in different occasions, the presence of at least one paramedical staff on the wing impacted to a certain degree on the officer's accountability; on the other side, that female presence influenced the display of masculinity and occasionally hyper-masculine violence (Toch 1998) in some of either the officers and the inmates but this is altogether another research topic.

High-grade officers just doing paperwork versus rank-and-files officers 'fighting at the front line'

The prison governor and high grade officers have their own offices either 'downstairs' (1st floor) in an area separate from the everyday routines, or outside the detention area in the 'Governor's building' (in Italian, *la Direzione*). All detention wings are located upstairs at the second and third floor of the detention building instead.

Rank-and-files officers were often described as those not directly working on the wing critically; they would be too uninvolved from the front line, comfortably sitting at their desks outside the detention wings, thereby missing out on the real picture of 'what's up inside'.

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[105]   In Italy, custodial staff on duty on the wing must be of the same gender as the prisoners. Non-custodial staff do not follow the same rule.

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Either the prison or the asylum local commanders is, of course, at the top of the local chain of command of his or her institution. One step below in the hierarchy, there would be one *security manager*[106]*,* and one *all-wings manager*[107] that should be at least a superintendent. The former would be responsible of the order and security issue; the latter, would be the superordinate – or as officers would address their superordinate: the boss – of those officers ruling the four wings. Despite the law prescriptions, both roles just described were routinely performed by first level officers. To be honest, however, the general commander told me that things would have been changing soon.

A major cleavage clearly existed between very low ranking staff – who would work on 24/7 basis shifts – and higher ranking officers who would primarily work during normal 'office time'– this internal division is well known both in policing and in prison staff literatures.

Lower rank officers working in the 'external group' helping managers doing paperwork, or in the 'internal group' fighting on the wing

At a low level of the hierarchy, another division seemingly related with the previous one, separated – not only symbolically, but also physically – rank-and-files officers working in the internal group doing the dirty work on the wing and those helping 'managers minding their own business and paperwork'. The interactions and even more the narrations about those interactions recorded in the interviews among one another *separated the lower ranking prison officers* (first level) clearly into two large groups: on one side, the *external group*, that would include those officers never working on the wing; in other

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[106]   The security manager should be by law be at least an inspector (3rd level); yet it was often performed by an officer with a much lower grade.
[107]   In Italian, *capo-posto*, or *preposto*.

words, those officers having 'quasi-regular' job, less polluted (Douglas 1966)[108] by the constant interaction with prisoners, less exhausting, and less penalised by the effect of prison work (Liebling and Maruna 2005; Bennett et al. 2008). On the other, the *internal group* that would include those officers mainly working 'on the front line' in the detention building and more or less regularly doing 'wing shifts'.

The officers working as 'internals' would perform one particular task or another, depending on the day's schedule prescribed by an official document that is communicated daily at the 'operative unit meeting' (in Italian, *conferenza di servizio*) in which a high grade officer would order face-to-face with his or her subordinated the day's duty to all those starting their daily shifts.

Some of the most important activities performed by officers working in the internal group are: supervising prisoners working on the wing, either as wing manager (in Italian, *agente responsabile della sezione*), or as rehabilitation officer (in Italian, *agente responsabile della riabiltazione*); being part of the emergency team; being in the 'reception' group to the new patients (and prisoners) daily entering the institution; carrying out patrol duty on the yards when prisoners 'exercise' (In Italian, *sono all'aria*); supervising visits, when prisoners meet their own family or other authorised visitors of theirs (in Italian, *vigilanza sale colloqui*); supervising prisoners' visitors while they are waiting for their turn to meet a person in custody (in Italian, *rilascio colloqui*).

Some officers would prefer to work in the external group, others in the internal one for different reasons. Staff preferring to be internal normally would think that working on the wing is what being a 'proper' prison officer is actually all about, and this could be culturally explained referring to the police and prison officer's culture literatures (Bennett et al. 2008; Wieder 1974); the wing is

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[108]   I thank Enzo Colombo for stressing the relevance of Douglas.

where the action is and where 'war stories' are narrated and experienced; yet, a more pragmatic explanation could be included in the picture: many officers also want to work in the internal group for two pragmatic reasons; firstly, doing night-shift pays much better (about 30% more, or so); secondly, it gives a better opportunity for organising one's life and family's responsibility flexibly.

However, some showed some proudness telling about their own 'actual' prison work. One prison officer told me,

they [the officers working in the external group] just do paper work and do not have dirty hands at the end of the day, they don't risk assaults, and they are not afraid and busy protecting each other on the wing [like we do]' (field note).

Each particular officer has the right to apply to be part of the external group for a fixed period of time on an equal opportunity base. An officer has the right to apply to a particular position after a certain period of time working as internal; The right to obtain a work 'outside' the wing is intended to allow officers to calm down, and reduce stress and anxiety that might be due to both emotion work and emotional labour (Hochschild 1983), thereby looking forward to reducing burnout and sick leave, a real organizational problem in Italy (Buffa 2013b) and beyond[109].

Working with the 'crazy' versus working with the 'criminals'

A last divide highlighted here would seemingly influence the officers' interactions with one another. Due to the particular organization in Reggio Emilia, in which both a prison and a forensic psychiatric hospital were working next to each other, another clear us-versus-them approach characterized many

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[109]   However, it is worth noting Kraska (1996) argues that being at the front line can also be appealing to some officers particularly imbued in a militarist culture as well as for researchers.

of the relationships between the officers working with the 'crazy' and those working with the 'criminals' at most grades of the hierarchy – yet, to a different degree.

That divide clearly labelled those working in the asylum 'with the crazy' that often explained their jobs to me confronting theirs with the real officers working in a real prisons – yet, the majority of the officers in both facilities considered both institutions primarily as custodial ones.

This divide was even evident through observation. Both ways in which officers of one group sat at a table at the canteen, and the spontaneous groups outside the cafeteria in which people were smoking or simply talking with one another, were two easy examples in which that divide was visible. Normally custodial staff working in one group would not mix with fellow colleagues working in the other; during nightshifts, when only a few officers were inside, things might evolve differently and the prison officers working in both facilities might eat together (*see also* Wieder 1974 for an ethnometodological approach to the issue of spatial configuration at the prison-canteen's table).

In almost all interviews conducted over the last period of the ethnography with both prison and asylum's officers, it clearly emerged that officers working at the asylum had a much stronger bound with each other than those working 'on the other side'[110]. Two officers that started working at the asylum a few months before being interviewed expressed their positive surprise about the friendly working environment that they had found at the asylum; they contrasted it with the previous long experience they had in prison where 'coldness, distance and even [alleged] unfairness', in one officer's words, characterised the officers relationships with one another. That benevolent representation of the asylum might be caused by the interviewee's understanding of me being on the side of

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[110]   'On the other side' was the usual expression by which officers working in the Asylum referred to prison. I never heard the contrary happening. However, it took me some weeks to understand what they all mean with 'di là'.

officers working in the asylum; yet, that divide was also often perceivable during observation.

Trading working shifts within the internal group in the asylum: Performing both authority and paternalism

Shifts are organised differently between internal and external staff. Some particular jobs– like the officer working in the kitchen – would have a specific shift. The main difference, however, is that 'internals' would work on 24/7 shifts and regularly do night shifts and week-ends as well, day in day out; on the contrary, officers working in the external group – except those working at the 'Block House', the very entrance to the prison, and other gates – would never do night shifts and would often only work on a maximum two shifts basis; often on one shift only.

These differences would be crucial to comprehend the particular staff cultures and the different sense of belonging characterising those working either in one group, or in the other. Although, this is not the goal here, these particular cultures imbue the officers' narration of 'doing coercion'.

The division between those working in one group or in the other was reinforced by the two different time schedules by which the shifts of the first and the second group were organised. Due to those different time schedules, the possibility that any officer had to frequently meet a colleague from the other group was significantly reduced to a minimum and this would not help in integrating the ones with the others. Discussing the issue with officers, however, not all officers agreed to emphasize that divide and contested my understanding in different ways; a few officers did not seem to be interested (or even aware) of it, and showed indifference; few even argued that they would work in one group or in the other indifferently. 'We are all prison officers, at

the end' (field note). Despite those different opinions, however, that cleavage was clearly in the picture.

Shifts were regularly 'traded' and exchanged among colleagues. It was a very common activity on the landing during one's duty; in some periods more than in others. I have regularly observed it time and again throughout the entire fieldwork. Not only, have I observed older staff friendly convincing rookie officers to consider older officers' needs and exchange their shifts with them accordingly thereby respecting their authority; but I also observed older staff being paternalistic by helping rookies 'to have some fun' exchanging their own shift with their younger fellow officers who would publicly show thankfulness afterwards both with the benefactor and with other colleagues working in the internal group with him; thankfulness would be shown during both informal and formal conversations for at least a few days.

Before entering into the picture of 'doing' coercion by exploring the ways in which the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence' is repeatedly performed by officers on the landing (*infra*, Chapter 6 and 7), in the next three sections of this chapter I will attempt to tell narratively what it means to enter coercion physically, with one's own body trying to interpret, by doing so, two subjective standpoints. I will first attempt to convey a partial and particular description of *what it meant to me as a researcher* entering prison with a badge. Then, I will attempt to illustrate anecdotally some emotions about entering in Reggio Emilia prison coercively.

The last section, being about prisoners is particularly risky here; my position in the field has always been visible on the officers' side in this ethnography; yet, my previous experiences in many other prisons had greatly helped me in attempting to do so.

I thank all prisoners that asked me to hear their voice despite me being with the 'enemy' and showing (on purpose) no particular interest in them. Without their contribution to the research, and the human experience I had while conducting it, the research would have been significantly different. Due to the prisoners' cooperation, through the last section, we will have the opportunity to move further to the next chapter symbolically 'hand-in-hand' with those who live coercion on their very bodies the most: the prisoners. Their worries, their desperation, and their hopes will accompany us to the core of the prison, the detention wing. Those wings are where the Cycle occurs more frequently (*infra*, Chapter 6 and 7).

Entering coercion as a researcher (or simply as staff): the claustrophobic architectural route to the coercive environment of the wing

Entering the custodial complex is neither a quick walk, nor is it emotionally neutral. One has to pass *three main supervised gates* and approximately twenty barred doors[111], one after the other before entering any detention wing[112]. First of all, to enter the prison one must pass through a gate called 'Block-House'[113]. It's the first checkpoint that must be crossed to enter the low security area of the complex. The perimeter of the complex is protected by an approximately six to eight-meter-high, white fence.

By showing one's documents to the prison officer at the block-house, the first security check procedures would begin; the officer has to control each visitor's access-permission level and check its validity. Afterwards, he or she would give to each authorised visitor the particular appropriate badge: a green one for

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[111]   A video of the road to the inside, without being cut, is visible privately on demand. It is not authorised for publication in any form yet.

[112]   During fieldwork, participants hardly ever called the asylum ward in that way; instead they referred to it using wing; I will do the same therefore using wing to refer to any area where asylum patients' and prisoners' cells (or 'rooms') are located.

[113]   That gate has that English name. That's the only word used to refer to it.

those who are not allowed to proceed to the following gate and are therefore compelled to stay within the low security area; a red one for all others visitors that are authorised to enter the security areas. Those areas are secured by a twelve-meter-high concrete wall that could be controlled by both CCTV cameras and armed sentinels; yet, *de facto*, the camera did not work, and there was no personnel on the wall.

Normally, the visitor's role is clearly written on the badge (lawyer, magistrate, visitor, teacher, etc.); however, after a couple of weeks in the field, hardly ever was I given a badge; they all seemed to know me and would display either indifference or trust.

In Reggio Emilia only one entrance – the block-house – was available for all the people entering the custodial complex: keeper, kept, visitors, prisoners' visitors, and so on; normally, not so many visitors would enter or leave the institution on a daily basis there. On the contrary, in larger institutions such as the bigger ones in Rome, Milan and Turin, to recall but a few, different gates are provided to clearly separate at least those entering the prison as prisoners' visitors from all the others (staff, volunteers, politicians, journalists, etc.).

Three buildings are located within the minimum-security area between the white metal fence and the concrete wall that isolates the security areas; those three facilities are even visible from the outside of the institution through the fences. The first facility is an independent two-floor building built near the fence, just a few steps away from the main entrance (block-house); it is completely separated from the main custodial complex; it hosts two very different groups of persons: one is the prisoners kept in custody with a particular Italian probation measure called *semi liberty* (art. 48 of the Penitentiary Act)[114] that live in a low security wing in one side of the building;

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[114]   'The sentenced person can spend a part of the day out of prison in order to work or to carry out any activity that is useful for his social reinstatement; It can be granted after a

the other is the 'transferring and escorting' prison officers' team (in Italian, *Nucleo traduzioni e piantonamento*)[115] that has its offices on the other side of it. The two remaining buildings within that low-security area are leaning on the concrete wall and are situated just in front of the main entrance to prison: the block-house; yet, none of the two has any other privileged passage through the wall (to the best of my knowledge) to enter directly the secure areas. Only one gate in the concrete wall allows anybody with the appropriate security clearances and day permit to enter (and to exit) the security area beyond it; this is the second supervised gate called '*portineria centrale*'; in English it can be translated to *central gate*.

One of the remaining two buildings, a two-floor office facility, hosts the governor and all his staff, as well as other civil and custodial personnel who hardly ever have to work on the wing; rarely beyond the concrete wall. On the ground floor of that building, a quite-wide, shabby lobby is used both as a 'check in' point for prisoners' visitors who have previously booked a visit, and as a delivering point where visitors (and other persons such as volunteers) can leave any allowed goods to staff who would firstly check it out, and then would bring it inside (mainly, cloths and food items), and eventually would deliver it to the specific inmate who was the recipient of that particular good. The other facility is a three-floor building; the bar (there, in Italian, called '*spaccio*'), the canteen (in Italian, *mens*a), the unions' offices and the prison officers' meeting room (in Italian, *sala conferenza*) are all located at the ground level of that facility one next to the other. Above, on the two remaining upper floors of the facility, officers living in the barracks would share a double-room.

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certain period of the prison sentence, depending on the seriousness of the crime perpetrated' (http://www.euprobationproject.eu/national_detail.php?c=IT).

[115]   'Nucleo scorte e traduzioni' does also security service for the ministry of Justice's staff; yet, in this ethnography I only saw them work with prisoners.

If any person with a red badge or a staff member is heading towards, either the prison, or the asylum, he or she has to move forward to the central gate. All the prison officers and other enforcing agency officers must leave their fire-weapons there.[116] Officers' protective equipment, such as riot helmet and riot shields are hardly ever used and are stored in that same area. The emergency squad might exceptionally use them if authorised by either the general commander of the prison governor. All those equipment are stored at the Central gate as well; its use is strictly regulated and controlled. To be honest, some 'tools' are alleged 'secretly' hidden near the wing just in case; yet, they are very rarely used.

At this gate, the identity of each visitor should be double-checked, then the officer would scribble the person's name, surname, role or reason of the visit, and the entrance-time on an old paper register from the 1990s transformed ad hoc in a 'visitors book'. Eventually, the officer would let him or her enter the security area with or without escort depending on the level of the clearance of the particular person entering the facility.

Anybody intending to proceed through the internal gate, including visitors, could be electronically searched, and face new security checks. I have been often stopped at that gate to be controlled before being authorised to move further towards my destination.

The officer working at that gate is responsible to secure the gate by stopping those who are not allowed to cross it either in one direction or in the other by all means: even calling the emergency team is an option. He or she should also keep the records updated in the registers provided, and should also politely order to each and every visitor and staff to put all forbidden items not previously authorised into a locker provided; weapons, cell-phones, lap tops,

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[116]   Fire-weapons can only be brought inside under very exceptional circumstances clearly stated by the law.

cameras, hard disks, USB pen, medicines, umbrellas, knives, forks, spoons, chewing gums, and everything not expressly authorised cannot be taken beyond that gate. Each staff member would start his or her own shift there by sweeping the badge before the shift-start time.

Afterwards, simply walking straight-ahead through the only corridor available, one would arrive at a secured electric door that separated the corridor, that passes from one side of the concrete wall to the other, from the 'garden' in front of the entrance of the secure custodial areas of the facilities of the custodial complex; at that stage, the two *secure* detention facilities:[117] the asylum's and prison' secure detention wing of the *Istituti penitenziari di Reggio Emilia*, would only be just less then forty meters away. Vehicles are normally not allowed to proceed beyond that area; yet, some personnel or visitors might have some specific authorizations to do so.[118]

Police, Carabinieri and any other Italian law enforcing agencies bringing an arrestee inside or arriving to conduct a police interrogation would just park in front of that gate anywhere; in fact, parking signs are unavailable and officers would park their vehicles anywhere[119].

In order to continue the journey towards the detention wing, leaving the central gate behind, one would have to pass through a long corridor ending in a *rotonda.* The complex general commander's office and the administrative logistic team's offices (in Italian, *ufficio matricola*) were just a few steps away from there, between the entrance to the prison and the entrance to the asylum. The prisoners' kitchen was nearby as well. At this stage, those heading towards the asylums must turn left at the crossing following the self-printed-read sign

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[117]   Another less secure wing is in the area next to the governor's building.

[118]   Private or public company providing maintenance service, bringing food to the kitchen, and collecting the garbage with bin Lorries usually move on towards the back of those facilities.

[119]   In Italy, sentenced or defendant's prisoners that nust be escorted to the outside of custodial institutions, can only be escorted by the penitentiary police (prison officer).

on witch a black arrow and the text O.P.G are printed on. Instead, heading towards the prison (C.C.), one should follow the light-blue sign with the arrow pointing to the right. At the *rotonda* one officer might occasionally be in the 'security box' policing the area. However, nobody would normally be on duty there and, therefore, both the general commander's office and the prison would be accessed with no further security-check.

On the contrary, the asylum can be less easily accessed than the prison; in fact, other two doors controlled by CCTV cameras (among the very few cameras actually functioning in all the complex) must be passed to enter into the asylum. Above the door at the entrance of the facility a label reads 'Ospedale Psichiatrico Giudiziario'.

Entering each one of the two institutions, one would automatically arrive in two symmetrically designed buildings. In each of the two one must first walk upstairs (using a lift is possible on request) arriving at yet another long corridor. In each of the two corridors the local commander, the 'security manager' (in Italian, *ufficiale addetto alla sorveglianza generale*) and the officer supervising the men working on the wings, the 'all-wings manger' (in Italian, *capo posto* or *preposto*) would each have his or her own office; in the same corridor other particular offices and facilities were present in each one of the two facilities: i.e. some medical offices and infirmary. In the asylum, then, all the psychiatric offices were located around that corridor as well. In both institutions the gate to the detention wings' area was just in front of either the prison, or the asylum commander's office, and it was controlled in each particular institution by a particular prison officer in a security-box who would regulate the movement to and from the detention wing by opening and closing an electronically controlled barred door.

A label hanged next to that door in each facility; it read 'Detention area' (in Italian, *Area sezioni detentive)*. That was the third of the *three main supervised gates* we introduced at the beginning of this section[120]. In the asylum this gate was called 'First-block' gate (in Italian, *portineria primo blocco*); in prison, accordingly, it was called 'Second-block' gate (in Italian, *portineria secondo blocco*); in fact, the asylum's detention wings were technically named first block, and the prison's detention wings were called second block.

Each wing has one entrance barred door controlled by an officer. Moving from one wing to the other on the same floor is just a very short walk. To go upstairs or downstairs, a visitor must, in fact should, use the elevator; the prisoners instead must use the stairs, or if necessary be escorted by one, or more, officers in the lift – depending on the security level of each particular prisoner.

To go to the closed wing on which the ethnography was mainly based, one had to go upstairs and turn right at the first floor; normally the door was open and, therefore it was possible to enter the wing straight away if allowed to do so by both the security clearance and the 'wing manger'.

All detention were of course provided of CCTV surveillance; yet, neither CCTV camera were functioning (they stopped working just about twenty years ago said to the researchers different sources that justified it in very different ways: from budgetary reason, to guarantee unaccountability), nor automatic cells-doors were available there. Officers would supervise inmates, keeping an account of the ones in their charge and tried keeping order and security. They were doing so by gazing what was visible from a particular standpoint, in any particular time, and by face-to-face interactions on the wing with inmates. On that wing it was just like 'back then' but with sanitation in all cells and TV for all prisoners).

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[120] Of course they are two different ones, but each of the two would be the third for any visitor either entering the prison or the asylum.

From suspect to prisoner: a 'newcomer' path to the cell (and the labelling routine)

This section simply tries to reflect about what I have seen occurring each time I witnessed a new arrival of an arrestee – new arrestees were arriving on a daily basis there; yet I actually witnessed only about a dozen of those arrival; sometimes only partially – I always sensed a flood of raw emotion and felt completely uncomfortable; those have been crucial occasions in which it has been possible to observe the cultural and emotional gulf separating the keeper and the kept from one another and their interactive interactions; yet, it has often been emotionally too difficult to do it properly for me and, it was not in my research agenda. That particular situation would of course deserve an entire study of its own. Here, therefore, I will simply limit my narration to unpack some impressions I matured as a researcher on prison officers' side witnessing a newcomer's arrival.

A person under arrest arriving to Reggio Emilia complex would be either facing his or her first prison arrest, or be a returning prisoner; of course being in one or the other situation would influence his or her situation significantly. Normally the newcomer would enter the institution handcuffed inside a law enforcing agency's vehicle[121]– either a car or a bus – without any clear information or induction to actually understand either what would precisely happen to him or her in the near future, or where and for how long he or she will end up killing time over the next weeks, years or even decades.

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[121]   However, exceptionally, a person sentenced to a period of time of imprisonment can even reach the institution by his or her own, declaring his or her status to the officer at the Block house.

Each arrestee would be under the enforcing agency's authority that had put him or her under arrest – such as i.e. the police – until the officers and the kept arrived at the internal gate.

There, a prison officer would register the arrestee on the 'prison newcomer register'[122] thereby, transforming that particular arrestee into a prisoner (or a psychiatric-hospital-patient) – either a defendant or a convict. By enforcing that procedure prison officers embedding the institutional authority would transform a police suspect into a person in prison custody who is expected to 'spend time' there for either a predictable or an unpredictable amount of time[123].

A new person stands just a meter or two from the Central gate. The arrestee, the prison officers and police officers are all one in front of the other forming an irregular group of people. It looked like a seemly unorganised group of people: yet, one person was handcuffed and in civil cloths, all the others were wearing the prison officers' uniform or the police officers' one. On one side, both prison and police officers who displayed a detached and cold attitude imbued in their institutional bureaucratic day-to-day job of street-level civil servants in uniform. On the other, the person whose face would normally be a road map of emotion, travelling from traumatised, to exasperate and then on to frustrated. Few new prisoners displayed no emotions at all when escorted inside; others showed anger and frustration and would move back and forth as much as possible maybe trying to cope with the situation. On one side trauma was visible and embodied, on the other it was mainly indifference or 'just work as usual'.

During those encounters, in fact, officer situation was embedded in boring routine, day-to-day rules, regulations and procedures…' a lot of paper work' as one put it; on the contrary, new prisoners were trapped in a situation

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[122] That same officer would also register prisoners returning from a temporary exit in the 'prisoners register' and, lastly, visitors on a 'visitors register'.
[123] They would labelled defendant, sentenced, or patient.

characterised by uncertainty and powerlessness clearly affecting their life and the life of those close to them such as i.e. relatives and friends. This was particularly true for those who had been imprisoned for the first-time; yet, it was also true for others who had not yet been in that particular facility before or for those who had been there a few years before and remembered it all too well to 'take it easy' as sometimes suggested by officers.

Returning prisoners displayed negative emotions less frequently, and seemed to be more interested in saving their face and reassess or reinforce their previous internal reputation than to display their weakness and hopelessness (which was often described openly by prisoners in the interview when telling about their arrival).

Each time any new prisoners (both a newcomer or a returning one) is brought inside (asylum or prison does not really matter here) the prison officer working at the internal gate must take the prisoner and his or her documents, as well as records from the law enforcement officers who brought him or her there. Once the newcomer has been recorded on the register and is officially under the prison authority[124], the police would unlock the handcuffs still tightening the person's wrists until that moment, leaving the arrestee to the prison officer who would put him or her in an empty and unpleasant provisory *waiting cell* until the 'administrative and logistic office' (*ufficio matricola*) would allocate the prisoner to a cell in the appropriate wing or, in a *week with a high level of overcrowding*, temporarily in any wing where a bed would be available at that particular moment.

Using handcuffs with a prisoner inside the institution is strictly forbidden by law in Italy; the reason why seems to be unclear to all officers as well as to prisoners.

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[124]   Although, defendants are formally under the magistrate jurisdiction and are only 'stored' in prison (field note) all persons imprisoned are also under the prison officer's authority, in practice during their conviction.

Afterwards, for an unpredictable period of time normally lasting from about one hour to a few hours the inmate would be alone killing time in an anonymous waiting cell with nothing inside to avoid either lethal and non-lethal self-harm; over the period, the prisoner would be suddenly and without notice escorted time and again to take a picture, to check the fingerprint, to do the medical and psychiatric visit, to see the social worker and so on. Few prisoners presenting clear suicidal risk would be under continuous surveillance for their own safety.

Eventually, he will be escorted to his cell in a particular wing; he would experience leaving freedom behind and starting his new period of incarceration. Arriving at his final destination would require him to push a cheeky trolley carrying his few belonging packed into garbage bags to his wing where a dirty and stinking cell of a few squared meters, normally with someone else inside, would become in a way or another his new 'home' for some time.

In other words, from the very beginning of a person's incarceration, a contrast was clearly evident between, on one side, the officers who were just working as usual tracking those 'fresh and blood' inmates just as a new item to be tracked and worked through the system day-in-day-out; they were simply doing 'people-work' (Goffman 1961a: 74). On the other side, the particular singular emotional and often traumatic situation of those who were compelled in the *coercive* embodied process of incarceration and tragic loss of freedom. To be honest, however, I have also occasionally seen a very different picture as well. Few 'returning guests' had been treated particularly respectfully showing no indifference at all, but deference instead; in one occasion as a kind of friend. Those were treated normally; like one would expect to be treated entering a hospital or any public institution; there it seemed really special.

Why particular prisoners would deserve such a different treatment will be in part discussed below; yet, it showed me that a different way to treat newcomers was not only possible, but already existed and possibly should become the norm; which is far from the reality (this is of course only one normative opinion).

Closing this chapter, we must remember that this is a timid description of how the detached bureaucratic institution would welcome many prisoners entering their new 'rooms'. This description is not only based on the observation but on the narration collected in the almost one hundred interviews collected inside and some here of research experience inside.

However, it must be kept in mind that this work is mainly focussed on staff, and particularly on 'doing' coercion. Moreover, it is also crucial to remember that *staff must survive their uneasy situations* as well; something that Harkin called the pain of policing (2015). Working in such an environment is far from easy and often impact on prison officers' well-being and psychological condition as well. However, I am not of course suggesting that being a keeper is as traumatic as being a prisoner, because normally I would guess it is not; I am only saying that being a prison officer can be, and for some officers is, very traumatic indeed (*see* Crawley 2013; Gonnella 2014); it might also, according to officers, occasionally lead to prison officers' suicides; yet this is far from demonstrated.

Chapter 5

Implicit coercion on the wing

At the outset I want to make clear something very important to comprehend this chapter and the following ones. Since the last Italian Prison rule reform in 1975 and following laws, *the Italian prison officers are not only on duty to perform order and security but also to do or help others doing prisoners' rehabilitation*. Though, the rehabilitation/coercion dilemma is nothing new. It has been repeatedly explored in the literature as early as in the classic works Clemmer (1940) and Sykes (1958). *In Reggio Emilia prison officers had a large set of duties also focussing on rehabilitation in a way or another.* In other words, prison officers were not all mainly or exclusively doing coercion; yet, 'doing' coercion is a crucial and specific characteristic of officer's duty, and more importantly here, it is the focus of this particular work.

Drawing both from the international literature and the fieldwork, Chapters 2 and 3 show that coercion is surely one of the crucial characteristics of both prison bureaucracy as such and, more importantly here, of the interactions among the keepers and the kept and of their power relationships. Chapter 4 illustrates both how 'doing' coercion is formally organised in the particular local officers' chain of command at stake, and how some internal cleavages informally shape the relationships and interactions among the keepers and the kept. King et al. (1995) argue that 'whatever else prison [...] may also be about, [it is] certainly about keeping people in custody' (58), Indeed; therefore, prisons and custodial institutions more generally are clearly always also about coercion, either explicitly or implicitly. They are *coercive institutions* (Coyle 2005).

The implicit and explicit degree of the coercive 'nature' of each particular custodial institution may vary as well as the level of visibility and of rhetorical display of it; yet, coercion is often experienced, performed, resisted, and displayed between the keepers and the kept on daily bases; it is also clearly there when any person is locked up in any environment, let alone in a cell, without the possibility to do more than a few steps, or dozen of steps, freely without being physically blocked; even a researcher trying to exit the building would need the help of others to do it. Despite many other public institution (such as banks, airports, factories, hospitals) might seem to operate apparently in similar ways regulating access through security checks, CTTV cameras, and gates, in the custodial complex that aspect is extreme and many person must be kept in, if necessary forcibly. Moreover, in Reggio Emilia, there was not any emergency exit for those locked up in their own cell; nor was there anyone for prison officers working on the wing. Tragedy have already occurred in the past elsewhere (i.e. in the female Turing prison[125]) and will occur again in case of fire, despite the heroic attitudes of some officers who would probably risk their

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[125] Due to a fire, in the female facitity of the prison of Turin, 11 women died: 2 prison officers and 9 prisoners (Source, *La Stampa*, June, the 3rd 1989).

own life to safe any single person in danger of life, either a detainee, or officer.

The centrality of coercion and its more or less suffuse presence in almost any aspect of the everyday life inside has clearly emerged in different moment of the research. Not only in the ethnographic observation by which the ethnographer has perceived it bodily and psychologically and has often be affected by it (*infra*, Chapter 8); but also, yet in different ways, in the formal interviews with the prisoners and the staff, either custodial or medical ones that have been conducted during the ethnography.

One prison may offer more or less (un)comfortable 'rooms'[126], opportunities and 'services' than another; yet, each custodial institution – a prison, an asylum or an immigration removal centre – is, and remains, quintessentially a coercive institution hosted in a coercive facility in which each and every relationship between an officer and an inmate is at least implicitly imbued in coercion. The main goal of any custodial – or coercive – institution is after all keeping those in custody in custody to serve either a fixed or an indeterminate sentence (or a remand order) by (almost) any means. In other words, coercion is always in the picture inside.

Coercion imbued in domination

Inside the wall, interactions are clearly shaped by more or less dynamic structures of domination (Athens 2005; *infra*, Chapter 3) both between the keepers and the kept, and within each one of those two groups. Sykes put it clearly by writing that

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[126]   Nowadays, they tend to call cells in that way in formal document in Italy; yet, nobody inside uses that 'polished word' inside referring to any locked prison cell; neither keepers, nor the kept.

[t]he most striking factor about this bureaucracy of custodians is its unparalleled position of power – in formal terms, at least– vis-à-vis the body of men which it rules and from which it is supposed to extract compliance (Sykes 1958: 41; *emphasis added*).

Despite the vast and interesting literature on prison resistance and even on prisoners 'doing freedom' (Ugelvik 2014) within the wall, the blunt reality I observed in Reggio Emilia was also interesting from a completely different point of view.

Inmates and psychiatric patients, both Italian and foreign-nationals were locked in 'their' cells often with another prisoner for a certain amount of hours per day. Whenever each of them had the right of being out of his cell, for any reason, he would be still trapped into larger but still very limited coercive spaces (Jewkes and Johnston 2013) and compelled in the constrained available network of possible interactions, goods, and prison routines – and in the particular histories and chains of (previous) interactions that have already occurred in the past.

This chapter specifically deals with implicit coercion routinely in the picture in day-to-day 'non-conflictual interactions on the landing. Chapter 6 and 7, instead, will mainly focus on officers threatening and doing coercion after a so-called 'critical event'.

Despite the long-standing dilemma between coercion and rehabilitation introduced above, in Italy, de facto, despite all the managerial rules and regulations officers have always been (and some are still now) often busy with 'doing' coercion. Over the last two decades or so, the Italian Criminal Justice System's approach to detention has been changing significantly. During the last year a crucial re-thinking of the prison system is on its way (the Ministry of Justice has organized something that we might call a *Think tank* made of experts and professionals to reform the Prison rule and the Prison system

thoroughly)[127]; yet, due to organization constraints, budgetary limits and the particular local professional cultures, the situation within many Italian custodial facilities, and in particular the one studied here, is 'far from satisfactory and still show some criticality .

Officers patrolling the wing

Over the last thirty years, traditionally, only one officer has been present at any particular time on any wing in both institutions in which this research had been conducted. Normally, a closed-cell regime would be at stake; more recently, however[128]open-cell regime has (ri-) entered the picture as well as the new organizational approach of the 'dynamic security' regime (yet, on the closed-wing where observation was mainly conducted there was no dynamic security yet).

On the wing: wing manger officers doing proper police work versus officers just doing rehab

The previous chapter illustrated three divides that shaped the officers' interactions with one another and the formal and informal hierarchies that imbued both the asylum and the prison. However, specifically referring to the asylum (the forensic psychiatric hospital), there is still another crucial divide;

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[127]   See '*Gli stati Generali dell'azione penale*' (in Italian) https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_2_19.wp.

[128]   Some officer said that dynamic security was introduced in response to a new recent European sentences for inhuman treatments inflicted to Italy by ECHR (European Court of Human Rights) (*see*, Vianello 2013). The ECHR press release (ECHR 007 (2013) 08.01.2013) reads: 'In today's Chamber judgment in the case of Torreggiani and Others v. Italy (application no. 43517/09), which is not final1, the European Court of Human Rights held, unanimously, that there had been: A violation of Article 3 (prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment) of the European Convention on Human Rights. To be honest, the problem has now been reduced at the national level significantly and overcrowding is not an emergence in the national figures anymore (see: www.giustizia.it); yet, situations vary significantly from one facility to the other, and HR remains a crucial concern in Italian prisons.

this section will in fact focus on: 'officers 'doing' coercion (proper police work) versus officers just doing rehab' (already sketchy introduced in Chapter 4). In fact, in the asylum's wing two officers would work contemporarily on two-shift basis on the same wing. Each one would play a particular and clearly defined job performing a particular set of duties.

The divide between the two officers working concurrently on the wing can be described simplistically as the divide between 'doing proper police work', and officers *doing social worker job'*, as a few put it. The first would have the crucial duty of patrolling the wing mainly by either threatening or 'doing' coercion (*infra*, Chapter 6 and 7); the other officer would instead have the softer, 'feminine' duty of care. To put it clearly, he would have to help other non-uniformed staff or prisoners to perform rehabilitative activities, showers, tidying activities, support to doctors and psychiatrists, and so on.

Each role, either 'doing' rehabilitation or 'doing' coercion, was always performed by one (1st level grade) officers at a time, both belonging to the internal group. From Monday to Friday, there would usually be two officers working contemporarily on the same wing from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m.; the rehab one would have slightly more freedom of movement than the officer responsible of the wing, therefore they would not always be concurrently on the wing together in practice.

Observing the working practices of the officer 'doing' rehab and the other 'doing' coercion over a sufficient long period of time, as well as, concurrently, discussing with the staff about their experiences of working on the wing, helped to get at least the gist of the officers' different interpretations of each of the two roles.

Officer would be compelled to perform coercion or the rehab according to an official document (*Modulo 14A*). Usually, the same officer would display a quite different face and attitude when performing one role or the other, signalling, by doing so, his particular role in any particular moment both to staff and prisoners on the wing.

Officers would agree that the officer on duty as *wing manager* is *the* crucial one; one officer explained (and justified it) by saying that 'after all, this is still a prison!' clearly downsizing the role of 'doing' rehab. Another officer argued that 'order and security' was not only the role in which 'one does the proper police work, and not bullshitting', but also 'the reason why to be a prison officers or a police officer as such'. In that way, he claim what being a prison officer, the hard-core duty and the master identity, would be. Doing coercion also marked at least some officer's sense of belonging clearly, distinguishing those in blue uniform to all the others. Other comments would help to have a more complex picture; yet, a great deal of them would show how that particular local prison officer's culture was still heavily imbued in old officers' values and traditional practices. In other words how, those hegemonic local culture would be distant to the 'new' rehabilitation-duties and soft-power orientation of the official Ministerial policies and public discourses.

The big majority of 'rank and file' officer's interpretations were clearly biased toward a particular understanding of the prison grounded on order and security (Drake 2012). Officers' interpretations often addressed the well-known questions: 'what is prison?', and 'what is it for?' in two main particular ways that to a certain extent are related to one another and are often also found in the populist debate. The prison would often be interpreted firstly, in terms of public discourses about uncertainty, drugs-related criminality, *crimmigration* and security (*see* also Drake 2012); secondly, in terms of *either collective or selective incapacitation* before, during, or after detention (Mathiesen 1990: 85–103; Zimring and Hawkins 1995; Malsch and Duker 2012; *see also* Mathiesen

1965). Those two sets of ideas emerged and re-emerged time and again both in the 'natural' discussion occurring on the landing between one officer and another, as well as in formal interviews; that kind of populist penal culture was not only widespread, but also predictable in this particular historical moment in Italy. However, much less predictably other discourses sometimes emerged too. Of course there is not any fixed and unique prison officer's culture inside. Notwithstanding 'Doing' coercion was clearly considered to be the officer's core duty by the vast majority of staff, either custodial or not, inside. Some officers, less so the younger ones, showed interest in the complexity of the new-frontiers of their job that would include a much more complex attention to Human Rights and to the needs of those in custody and of their victims. However, some have also righteously stressed the prison officer's own needs for better safety, a better training, a better and newer equipment, a better hygiene, and so on.

Officers embedding a less masculine and military oriented cultures, however, would less openly display them in front of their fellow officers on the landing, being worried of jokes, retaliation, isolation, if not bullying. They would publicly display a low profile, instead, accepting the situation ritualistically (in Merton's sense).

This security-oriented hegemonic local officers' culture is hardly surprising taking into account that some officers have clearly stated that 'their' institution has long been considered being, and still would be, a punitive institution where at least some most difficult 'dangerous and difficult' inmates would be send to as a punishment from breaching the rules in more rehabilitative oriented institutions. Whether or not the reason to be sent to Reggio Emilia would also be punishment, something *explicitly and strongly denied only by a few senior officers and by the area manager*, in practice, prisoners arriving there, frequently, had been very difficult ones sometimes arriving by less 'hard' asylums or prisons (this was also happening because psychiatric assessment

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was frequently conducted in the Asylum and not elsewhere); those new 'difficult' prisoners were also very likely to create very serious problems shortly after arrival. Whether this was a consequence or the cause of the alleged punitive reputation of that facility it is still unclear.

However, some officers' interviews and many prisoners' ones disclosed that the 'normal' welcome to the prisoners for many years would have been to be tight to a constraint bed for a week or so for no reason (video recorded interview with a senior officer in which he explicitly asked to show his face to the reader).

The area manager completely contested this interpretation based on shared understanding from below by saying that '*punitive institutions do not exist in Italy*'; the formality and the institutional role of the manager might have informed his formal and lawful version of reality, while performing a public communication with a researcher. It is also likely that officers speaking to the researcher might instead have emphasised old legends and 'war stories' by telling their stories in a colourful and rhetorical way. However, I am not sure whether or not to dismiss the interpretation I got from below since it has been confirmed by many keeper and kept: I would at least consider it to be a possible representation of the shared perception of that situation from below.

The Ministry of Justice and in particular the D.A.P. (Department of the Penitentiary Administration) policies have been addressing and challenging this first-line officer culture straightforwardly for many years in different way (i.e. by recruiting the two higher level of the prison officer chain of command among people with an university degree, with better knowledge and sensibility about social issues and punishment); yet, paradoxically, most new rank-and-file officers, in order to become prison officers, must show in their CV to have served in the army for at least one or two year, possibly in peace-keeping

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international mission[129]. Therefore, governors, and high ranking officer would be much more sensible to many critical issues such as Human Right, personnel training, accountability, decency, prisoners' work and so no, than bas grade officers that, at the end, are those who live together with prisoners, day in day out.

That cultural gulf between the high ranking and low ranking officer, not to speak about those with no blue uniform, is something that prison have in common with other bureaucratic organization. That cultural gulf was neither fully challenged nor appreciated by either parties, in particular, not by low ranking officers who would often contest this new good-doers attitudes imbued in their superordinate (higher ranking officers, governors and area manager) contrasting them with the well-known hard reality of the wing officers would know all too well.

The wing manager: Prison officers' shifts

The asylum's wing, in which this ethnography is based, is still operating with a closed-cell regime in a traditional fashion; patients and inmates living on that wing are daily locked up for minimum twenty-one-hour a day; few *de facto* live in their own cell hardly ever exiting it by their own free will; few do not use their right to go to the yard or to do rehab due either to their mental condition or to another reason.

The role of 'wing manager officer' in that wing is organised in four shifts and is normally performed by a first level officer. Shifts are organised as follow: the first shift (7-13), the second (12-19), the third (18-24), and, lastly, the night

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[129]   However, paradoxically, it has been discovered during the interviews with officers that new base grade officers recruitment scheme (in Italian, *concorso pubblico*) then prescribed, in practice, that in order to have a chance to be admitted, one has first to do a period in the army and possibly have experienced at least a military missions abroad.

shift (0-7). Only the night shift is not overlapping with the previous and/or the following ones. The officers doing 'the second [shift]' in any particular wing, in fact, must arrive one hour before his or her colleague ends his or her own duty leaving the 'posto di servizio'. Of course no one could never be authorised to leave his own 'posto di servizio' unattended; doing so would result, a senior officer said, in a prison officer special crime.

A wing manager should not leave the wing even in case of an alarm; this is a personal decision, though...If I hear a nurse screaming...I will leave it...and will not consider the personal consequence. There are laws and there is logic (in Italian, *buon senso*). You always need to do what you feel more comfortable with, without thinking too much to the consequences (field note).

When the incoming officer starts his shift, however, he do not have to head directly towards the wing; rather, the officer is allowed to have lunch first, and this would normally happen at the *canteen* where two professional cook work full time making quite good food most of the time. Only after lunch officers should move on to the facility, pass by the superior's office, the all-wing manager, to start their new working shift on the landing. Similarly, before the second shift stops, those doing the third would arrive at the canteen, having their dinner, then moving on to their superior and eventually to the wing to actually start working. The role of the wing manger is clearly expressed by the asylum commander's quote below:

well...obviously we have our '*modello* 14 A' a document which specify each officer's role and shift in any area of the custodial institution [either asylum or prison]. Inside 'his' wing the officer is...for example the officer responsible of the security [the one we described doing coercion] ...first of all he has to guarantee order and security within his area, hasn't he? Then he has to guaranty the prisoner's life and safety; therefore, if any inmate is agitated, he has to call his boss who calls his other boss; then, eventually, if necessary, the security manager would go upstairs to understand why is the prisoner agitated [by agitated he seem to intend something like destroying a cell or fighting with a room-mate seriously] If anybody is unable to solve the issue talking with the person, he will climb the hierarchy until the [asylum or

prison local commander]… The main function of the prison officer who patrols the wing is to guarantee order and security insight the custodial facility as well as guaranteeing a safe access to everybody to the available activities.

(Video recorded semi-structured interview with local asylum commander).

In yet another conversation one officer clarifies that the role described by the commander, as it was previously remembered, is called 'wing manager' (*responsabile di sezione*): 'his duty is to watch over and observe the patients [and inmate more generally] on the ward [the wing name in the asylum] or wing.'[130]

The wing manager officer: Doing 'proper' work

The *officer doing 'proper work'* (the manager of the wing) starting his 'first [shift]' (7-13) would normally arrive upstairs just a couple of minutes before seven; he would be just in time to be updated by his fellow colleague who must give him the keys and tell him about how many prisoners are locked in, whether any particular order has been issued by the commander, any particular prisoner 's record has been updated by the doctors or any 'ticket' (in Italian, *rapporto disciplinare*) has been issued at all by the fellow officer during the night, and if any, for what reason it had occurred. Occasionally, these procedures might be time consuming; yet, they would often be over simplified even after 'a war nights', becoming a simple informal routinize exchange like the following.

It's eight to seven; I am sitting in the officers' box on the closed wing. The 'officers' box' is located just in front of the cell number 14 where the prisoner Ryan (not the real name), the 'officer's enemy', is smoking a cigarette hanging on his cell's barred door just wearing a light blue slip and white socks. The young green-eyed officer is now at the end of the wing entering into the infirmary. Suddenly a fellow officer arrives at the box and, a bit surprised about me

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[130]   By using the word 'ward' and 'patients' instead of those of wing and inmates, he subtly stressed the fact that the asylum should theoretically be, and work like, a hospital.

being alone in there so early in the morning, asked me whether or not I knew where was his colleague. I indicated him that his colleague was in the infirmary at the end of the wing; the officer sat down on a chair next to me and had a small talk with me waiting for his colleague to arrive. He suddenly stood up and checked whether all the keys where in the key locker next to the toilette where they were supposed to be, then he sat down again watching the morning news on TV. Eventually, the other officer arrived from the infirmary; the officer sitting next to me smiled to his colleagues; 'Ciao Marco, is everything fine here? Has anything happened tonight?' His fellow officer replied: 'It's all right Giorgio, no worries. They are thirty-five; I really need some sleep now! It has been a terrible night...please just read it [the register]'. 'Ok, have a good sleep then, and forget it all!". Marco exited the wing and went downstairs. Eventually, Giorgio became the 'boss' of the wing (field note).

Occasionally, however, a very formal officer would require all the formal procedures to occur ritualistically (he would say 'properly') and that may require more than ten minutes to occur properly. During my ethnography I never witnessed any officer arriving late on duty. Arriving late on the wing, not only creates organizational problem, but, more importantly, is one of the worst informal offences (in Italian, *sgarbo*) one could do to a fellow colleague finishing his shift and would not be tolerated by the fellow officer. Stories about officers arriving late are only told to denigrate someone explaining how little that person is.

I did only witness a prisoner justified late arrival, however. One night, at about eleven, I was with the *Capo posto* (all-wing manager) downstairs when the inmate phoned him. He was calling to say that the bus he was using to return to prison had a problem and that he was able to demonstrate it. I felt the stress that this unusual circumstance produced in those working downstairs – actually watching TV at that moment of the night (11 p.m.) – who immediately started to do paper work and to make some phone-calls required by the situation to inform the local police station.

Starting a working at the prison or at the asylum

Starting a new day at work on a prison's wing can be particularly heavy for those who are tired to do their job; it may mean starting a shift in which one would only or mainly be interacting with '*camosci*' (prisoners). At the asylum, however, the situation would be quite different and almost any officer starting his own shift would firstly go to meet and greet his colleague 'in white' working at the wing's infirmary; then, he would take a coffee with him or her and other staff from the wing (and beyond) in the infirmary while updating each other on work issues as well as doing small talk; lastly, he would return to his box starting his 'new day doing time', yet in company of other staff, not only of prisoners.

Before entering his 'box' the prison officer would probably neither answer, nor consider, any of the multiple requests prisoners would be whispering, asking, or screaming to him by saying to prisoners to wait until he would be 'ready to start [working]'. Once I heard an officer – smiling to me – saying to a prisoner he was still a 'ghost' and not actually on duty yet, requesting, in other words, that particular prisoner to wait a minute before to be considered.

The officer doing 'the first' shift could be told by his colleague finishing 'the night[shift]' that a few prisoners were already out of their own cells; that might have occurred for a bunch of different reasons and would also result on the wing register each officer must fill in continuously in which all prisoners' movements must be clearly reported dynamically: they would write, still on paper with a pen, something like 'exit: 6.30; name: Prisoner Giorgio Bianchi (not a real prisoner name there); [to work in the] kitchen' and all the other movement within the institution by which a prisoner is required to exit the wing; that register is also used to register the movement of any prisoner exiting the wing to go to the yard for exercise, to the lawyer downstairs, to the dentist on the ground floor and so on .

The 'wing manager' officer is in fact responsible for the movement of all inmates from the wing to the outside of the wing and must report it on the register accordingly any time each and any prisoner enters into or exits from the wing.

A '*wing's cells board*' instead hangs inside the officers box and visually represent the 'structural' situation *hic at nunc* in the wing: it particularly displays where any prisoner is 'housed', in which cell he must be locked in and is not changed as frequently as the dynamic register above. On the wing cell board, one or two names of prisoners are placed next to the corresponding cell (from Cell 1 to Cell 25). That is the structural configuration of the wing population at any particular time; it does not change any time any inmates enter or exit the wing to perform his normal routinary tasks. Its configuration only changes every time a newcomer enters a new cell, a prisoner from the wing is re-moved to another cell within or outside the wing, goes outside the institution temporarily (to the hospital or to court) or permanently (transferred to another institution, returns to liberty), in case of a prisoner is put on a restraint-bed (at least until one was yet there), or in case of a prisoner's death. Each inmates' label – with the prisoner's surname typed or hand-written on it – is positioned either, in one of the 25 cells numbered from 1 to 25, or in another position provided in the board (constraint-bed, hospital, process, and so on).

Filling in the board was a task performed without particular emphasis by the wing officer; it was just routine. Yet, occasionally problems have emerged when a new foreigner inmate with a 'strange' name was allocated in one of the cells. The decision of where to put him was a medical one, mainly based on organizational issues, suicidal risks, or on a judge order in case of judiciary isolation; usually, doctor would ask for an informal opinion to the officers as well. Once one doctor told me 'they really know how prisoners are; and

anyway, it is better to have on our side giving them some consideration' (field note).

The officer, however, had to write the name on their board and this was often difficult because the hand-writing process was frequently done without particular attention; normally officers would call the registration office (in Italian, *ufficio matricola*) to check the correct name spelling, particularly when foreign nationals were at stake; yet sometimes they did not care and sometimes names were simply written wrongly.

In few occasion the officer wrote the name wrongly and did not mind too much about it until someone else realised the mistake and corrected it accordingly; occasionally, after a new foreigner arrived officers and nurses started having fun of the name or creating a nickname for him joking either on his appearance or on the sound of his name, like it would occur in many other context among peers; particularly so whenever the foreign national's name could be sexualised in a way or another. Often, then, the nickname was used with the patient who would accept it docilely with a smile of circumstance. I saw only few prisoners resisting this process and their resistance was neither appreciated, nor understood by the staff. In a couple of occasions the nickname was put next to the cell's door, for a short period, as if it was true to joke with colleagues or other staff passing by.

One officer once even put the nickname in the name label next to the door and the psychiatrist laughed loudly when he realised it. Some stories were shared with me in different occasions about 'funny jokes' performed with inmate's name 'back then'.

Something completely different have occurred as well. One prisoner pretended to have a different identity than his real one. He did not accept his own identity pretending to be called differently instead. The institution accepted informally

his version of the story and allowed him to change his own name on his own cell's label accordingly and he really appreciated it. He was not the guy who killed both his parents like the sentence declared. He would simply pretend to be Joseph, a Turkish professor who, due to the condition of incarceration was unable to speak Turk any more, while speaking Italian perfectly though.

During the officers' morning meeting (in Italian, *conferenza di servizio*) starting at 7.15 - in the officer's meeting room next to the bar where two officers working as bar tenders would be making one espresso after the other – the officer in charge for rehabilitation would be announced (*see* below).

By then, the officer doing night shift on the wing could already have opened the cells' doors to the inmates working in the kitchen who were supposed to start their job just after 6.30.

Around 8.30 a.m., the officer working on the prison's wing let those inmates working as cleaner to enter the wing to clean the wing's floor, and controls the process from near-by. In the asylum, inmates would bring the breakfast trolleys from the kitchen to the *first-block* gate (the entrance of the detention wing) where paramedics would collect them to start, immediately after, the distribution on the wings: tea or coffee and milk and some biscuits with it are served only; there is no other option but the old-style Italian traditional breakfast[131].

The distribution of the other two daily meals, lunch and dinner (made of three dishes plus fruit), are organised and performed in a similar way. Inmates must repeatedly reused disposable plastic boards and cutlery before to have new

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[131]   Despite the fact that on Gennuary, 31st 2016, on a total Italian prison population of 52.475 persons (2.126 females), 17.526 are foreign nationals.
https://www.giustizia.it/giustizia/it/mg_1_14_1.wp?previsiousPage=mg_1_14&contentId=SST1211516.

ones for budgetary reasons. This is not strange knowing that in different occasions, for some days, toilet paper was unavailable either to inmate, or to staff. Being used to it, prisoners had not even protested.

Checking inmates' incompatibility with one another

At about nine O' clock in the morning, any inmates can be sent to the yard or to other recreational, working (if available) or educational activities. This is the first large scale routinary operation that the wing manager officer doing the first shift must organise, enforce and control in the morning. Inmates who do not intend to go to the yards (*andare all'aria*) are allowed to stay inside their own cells but there is a clear informal accord that they will not 'stress staff with unnecessary requests' over the next two hours. All non-urgent requests will be taken into consideration only afterwards, when all inmates would be back from the yard and in their cells again. It is an officer's responsibility, before sending any inmate to the yard, to check whether or not any particularly critical situation is known.

The worst critical situation for moving inmates together is any '*prisoners' incompatibility*' with one another; The officer must check, in other words, whether or not any inmate has a '*ban on meeting*' (*divieto d'incontro*) for whatsoever reason with any other inmate who is supposed to go to the same yard or who could be met on the way to the yard. Failing to consider this kind of ban seriously or avoiding to do the checks accordingly, could easily lead to a critical event. Normally, in fact, these ban are the disciplinary 'stick' of a previously occurred serious fight between two or more particular prisoners and are 'removed' as soon as possible whenever the situation gets even slightly better. If the ban is between one prisoner and another that could be likely found on the way to the yard (i.e. passing next to an open wing), one officer would move ahead to the group going to the yard and, if necessary, order the prisoner

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'in the way' to 'leave the area' temporarily. If the ban is between particular inmates that would go to the same yard, only one inmate would be allowed to go to the yard in the morning while another would remain in his cell and go to the yard later on. (Each prisoner who cannot go to the yard with other always has the possibility to go alone to a smaller yard). Each single time in which more 'bans' are contemporarily in the picture, it may cause an *organizational issue* or at least some extra work given the very few human resources available. In fact, the right to go to the yards must be guaranteed to any prisoner with only very limited and lawfully regulated exceptions.

Each prisoner has the right to go to the yard twice a day, if necessary, isolated from other fellow inmates. Yet, there is neither enough personnel to escort safely all these isolated inmates, nor enough individual yards in which to put those inmates that must do exercise alone. The results of the scarce resources available is the unintended but rational consequence of *reducing the ban of meeting to a minimum*. This clearly, to a lesser or greater extent jeopardize the prisoners' and officers' safety during transfer and recreation.

Checking and organising the transfer, negotiating with prisoners about who would go first and where, and preparing the groups of inmates to be escorted to the yards by fellow officers is the duty of the officer managing the wing and is not an easy task at all. Nor it comes without responsibilities.

Escorting particular prisoners to particular yards

All prisoners, as was mentioned above, have a right to do their recreation on the yard twice daily for about two hours each time; yet, different prisoners are allowed to do different types of recreation on the yard. There are three types of ways to be 'out there' on the yard. Firstly, prisoners in judiciary, sanitary or disciplinary isolation must stay alone on an empty concrete yard each,

theoretically, controlled by one officer. Secondly, prisoners on basic regime because of their critical and unpredictable behaviour, and decompensated patients must go to west-yard (*passeggio ovest*), a concrete empty standard 'big' yard where a small group of maximum eight to ten prisoners can 'mind their own business' as well as clarify disputes, often fighting with one another, more or less severely. I saw many fights occurring there; blood and broken teeth are business as usual down there. Normally, it is not granted to any inmates the right to go back to the wing before the yard time in the west-yard is finishes unless all agree to return to the wing before and the officer accept it; the officer escorting the group would clarify to the prisoners that *rule* each and every time before to go downstairs to the yard.

Returning back from the yard to the wing before the time is finished is usually granted any time the request is 'collectively decided by all prisoners on the yard and requested clearly to the officer without any singular complain'; in practice, this normally means that all prisoners must return to the wing whenever the prisoner higher in the prison hierarchy on the wing decides to go upstairs.

Pretending to go upstairs finishing prematurely the exercise at the yard can also be an occasion to test or publicly assert one's dominance on the fellow inmates on wing. At the closed wing, normally a well-known 'critical' prisoner or an alleged Mafia's boss is normally considered to be ruling the wing.

Lastly, the third usual way to do yard time is going to the recreational wing; a few prisoners kept in the forensic hospital closed wing are allowed to the recreational wing. There, a bar, an open library, theatre activities and another 'open' yard are freely accessible, normally to those inmates that have to be tested before to be transferred to an open wing ore who are already living on such open wings.

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*Coercive routines: counting, lock ups and checking lock bolts and bar**s***

At each shift change, a group of internal officers must count the inmates actually locked up in their cells or present in any particular wing or area of the facility. In fact, counting the inmates should be performed at least six time a day (3, 8, 12, 16, 22, and 24). This is done by each particular officer in a particular way. The majority, do it very professionally and are fully aware of the stress that this security procedure would repeatedly cause to those vulnerable inmates being counted (the stressfulness of this procedure was pointed out to me by both one senior officer and some inmates); others, do it using un-polite manners – or treat inmates unprofessionally indeed – while counting them causing sorrow and stress.

Normally, entering the wing the officer would shout: 'conta!' urging inmate either to be visible in the cell or to enter the cell temporarily for 'la conta'. Although, in principle, all inmates are required to move to the cell's door or to be visible, some officers are more flexible than others doing it. In the asylum, some inmates would do what they are required to; others would not even be aware of what's happening and would continue to mind their own business or acting-out like nothing happened. The officer would start from the cell 25 backwards to the cell 1 or vice versa, occasionally doing small talk with the kept but consistently refusing to give them any information or respond to any enquiry that might arise while counting. Any staff I escorted during counting took his duty very seriously and did not go to the next cell until he was really sure that the person was there, and more importantly, still alive. One officer explained me:

we are supposed to go back and forth continuously in the wing [to check inmates]. That's our duty; that was what we were told to do when I began working in prison. My boss would come to my 'box' suddenly checking my chair with his hand to feel if I had been working or sitting all the time. This work was taken very seriously years ago. Now, you saw it… how they work [the young officers] ...Now we have to check whether prisoners are alive at least at any shift

change [exaggerating to emphasise the difference and talking a bit rhetorically about the old good times]. Remember that for any officer, to find a cold dead body is a serious problem that any friendly doctor, nor any lovely nurse, could ever cover up!!!...It must be at least a bit warm still...otherwise it would be a big shit! (Field note).

This kind of conversations were quite normal on the wing; although initially chocking, by staying there I became quite anesthetised. Possibly, at the beginning of the ethnography, my presence might have effected those dialogues in a way or another. It was really difficult to comprehend how cynic officers could be talking about other persons' life and death in respect to their own accountability or, better, unaccountability and daily routines.

Checking the bars, is another security check that must be performed early in the morning and then time and again during the 24 hours; yet, only high security prisoners (in Italian, *alta sicurezza*; AS1, AS2 and AS3 and 41 bis) cells' and doors' bars must be checked at given times.

Each time any officer arrived at the wing to check bars, he would hold an iron 'baton' [not a real baton! An instrument only used to this purposes and locked up downstairs in a locker otherwise] on his hand and would occasionally joke about it with very low ranking convicts. 'Put your dirty hands off of me or I will break your head in two' could be an example of these 'jokes' an officer could do with a friendly docile inmates, smiling and often receiving a smile in return.

Checking the bars is the other operation – with counting – I saw performed consistently, almost in the same way by each officer and yet, again, with different levels of empathy. I observed during my ethnography, each and every time with no exception at all. Counting inmates and checking the bars were considered to be 'proper officers' job' by which officer avoided escapes and, more importantly, clearly signalled and enforced their own role on prisoners

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and prisoners' body while enforcing coercion, thereby concurrently, displaying their own authority.

In order to checking the bars, a prison officer would let the prisoner out of the cell with a colleagues of his escorting the 'free' prisoner, then enter the cell and start checking the bars with a precise set of seemingly-standard movement.

Firstly, he would bang his 'baton' vertically form the top to the bottom rattling three times to test all the horizontal bars; then he would check the vertical bars by banging the 'baton' from the left to the right and from the right to the left, time and again, for two times or so. Once '*la battitura*' was finished the officer would exit the cell, and tell the inmate that everything was ok and then move to the next cell. Sometimes a 'joke' on escaping would be performed by either the officer or the prisoner; sometimes a rhetoric docile smile exchange would occur; other times, some resentment was displayed by the prisoners to the officers doing it.

Some inmates told me that they hated that procedure (as well as counting) because they felt to be untrusted and humiliated by the officers doing it. It was clearly a strong symbolic way to enforce domination and coercion from one side to the other a few times a day. However, despite the terrible psychological effects that might have on prisoners, those inmates whose doors were checked, really had a very serious criminal curricula and that was simply a lawful standard control the institution must do by law. That duty was mandatory and was normally performed very professionally. One experienced officer told me in an interview that he knew very well how to hurt inmates 'without doing nothing wrong [meaning nothing unlawful] when closing the cell door or checking bars.

It all depends on how you do it; you can really make them suffer seriously…you can destroy them [psychologically] if you only wish to; you can do that simply by closing their barred door

in a way or another. You can closed it politely, normally, or you can bang it disrespectfully. They get it clearly; I know they do (video recorded interview with an officer).

The introduction of the 'rehab officer' and the Italian National Health Service

'One prison officer per wing has always been enough', stated a senior officer during an interview. In the 1990s, the National Health Service has enter the prison and has started to manage the prisons medical and paramedical service just like it has always been done with all other persons 'out there'. By doing so, the prison internal organization has been challenged significantly by the introduction of a plethora of profession 'that hardly ever existed before' mainly producing beneficial effects in prisoners' opinion; much less so in officers' one. Officers tended to be quite critical with the new situation, though. Their own 'freedom' had suddenly disappeared when 'those in white' entered the wing.

'This new organization had dramatically challenged the officer's job and authority over prisoners on the wing; therefore a complete reorganization of the wing became necessary', said the local commander in a video-recorded interview.

Officers working as wing's responsible started to complain and to resist this changes and did not accept to continue working as if nothing had happened with people entering and exiting the institution 'at their will'. Luckily enough, due to the entrance of the Italian National Health System (in Italian, *servizio sanitaria nazionale*) some personnel redundancy occurred. Therefore, some prison officers became available internally to be hired for other duties. As a consequence the prison work on the wing had been reorganised completely.

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Since the NHS is in the picture, two officers at a time, and not one any more, started to work on the wing concurrently during the 'busy hours' from eight O' clock in the morning to nine O' clock in the evening. One particular role description was introduced for each one of the two officers' role; this re-organization worked smoothly and efficiently said the commander.

In fact, one officer was the responsible of the wing; the other was the responsible of the rehabilitation: in officers' words, one would do 'proper police work', the other would not; yet, this double task has long theoretically been clearly part of the prison officer's duty already since the Penitentiary Rules (1975) that are now forty-year old.

However, rehabilitation is *not* clearly embedded in officers' cultures yet; the heavy working environment and prison environmental working condition probably do not help officer to develop and/or accept a new attitude that now definitely includes rehabilitation in the picture. At higher level in the hierarchy, however, a change has clearly occurred and I met a lot of senior officers (level 3 and above) – not to speak of area managers and governors – who showed a progressive attitude just like those displayed by other European Governors I have met in the Netherlands, Finland so far.

All this efforts at the top of the hierarchy do not seem to spill easily onto the day-to-day routines many officers enforce on the wing coercively, though. The wing manager officer was mainly busy, with, and focused on, the issue of order and security on the wing and, particularly, of controlling all prisoners' movement from the wing toward the outside or *vice versa*; the other officer, the responsible of rehabilitation, was instead responsible for rehabilitation and was mainly busy with escorting inmates from their locked cells to other areas on the wing such as the infirmary, the 'public' showers or any other location within the boundary of the wing always taking into account the wing manager officer's instructions.

Although, that rehabilitative task was paramount in the asylum, the agent still had to secure safety to medical and paramedical personnel working on the wing when helping them doing rehab. The security manager officer in the asylum also had to collaborate to the rehabilitation programs. In other words, there was at least both some proper police work and some 'rehab' in either roles.[132]

During the ethnography, it became clear that for 'first line' officers, each one of the two officer's roles on the wing had its pros and cons; although doing proper policing was regarded as a more respectable, 'powerful', and masculine position then 'doing' rehab by most of the internal officers, its cons were clearly stressed too. Doing proper work did come with more responsibility and much less freedom of movement; no one officer managing the wing was allowed by any means to exit the wing. No one officer responsible of the wing would dare to exit the wing 'informally', without asking authorization 'downstairs' [which would hardly ever be grated and only for very serious reason; a freedom that other officers in many another roles would perform much more easily.

Furthermore, rehabilitation was often regarded as feminine, not adapted to a male officers' role; some said something like 'it's for civilians, and not for a men in uniform, isn't it? '

Few officers would consistently prefer and ask to perform rehab, though, because they had ether started to dislike that masculine and powerful position, or started to appreciate the occasion to interact frequently with paramedical personnel and doing something different than 'just policing', thereby distancing them self for a moment from being a proper officer.

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[132]   However, in the local commander's words, the officer doing rehabilitation 'is there to help staff…medical and paramedical staff; he is the one who works, together with medical and paramedical staff, in all the activities occurring within the ward; to unlock a inmate to let him go to the [ward] infirmary is a rehabilitation officer's duty; to clean the cells...to let a prisoner out of the cell to let others to clean it, it's his duty in cooperation with medical and paramedical staff' (field note).

During field work I met a few officer on the wing that started to work more in the external team or preferred to do rehab later on. The common narrative among those last officers was that they had seen and 'done' too much and needed to calm down and take it easier for a while: a kind of the worrier's relax. One officer has displayed a very rehabilitative attitude and said he was enjoying 'doing' rehab very much; he then moved to the external group because by doing so, he thought to be able to better take distance from all the issues that usually occur inside, and by doing so, to better live his life outside forgetting, once at home, all those terrible prisoners' stories and scenes seen inside.

By the same token, policing the *prison* wing was considered by the majority of those doing it (I have talked to) as much more rewarding and 'proper policing' than doing it on the *asylum's* ward, doing rehab was perceived as something very different. As one clearly put it, 'if I wanted to be a nurse I would wear a white jacket, not a blue uniform, wouldn't I? ' Another, told me that doing rehab he felt frustrated. He had become a prison officer after two years in Iraq as soldier not to see and old men taking a shower (the duty he was busy with while he was talking to me). He clearly disliked the fact that, in his view, he was just asked to be a caregiver and not a prison officer forgetting the complexity of the role in which any prison officer is imbued continuously at any time day in day out. He could not stand it at all. Moreover, he did not get why prisoners should be treated so nicely, but this was his particular personal opinion which was in deep contrast with the opinion of others. He added that

'They are criminal after all', and should be treated accordingly'. Unfortunately, in that occasion as well as in the following days he has always refused to explain what he meant by 'treated accordingly'.

Officer doing 'rehab'

At eight O' clock in the morning one officer would start the first of the two shifts of 'rehabilitation' (8-15; 15-21). After breakfast, around 9 a.m., the prisoners' written form (in Italian, *domandina*) previously written and 'posted' in the wing's post box would be proceeded and sent downstairs for the authorization needed: almost any prisoner's request must be processed via a written form: first, any request of any 'special' item, kitchen tool or food ingredient excluded from the 'normal' availability on the wing (such as a cd player, a large plastic spoon or a particular kind of meat and so on); second, a request of a book from the library or the access permit to go to the same library; third, any request of an appointment with any staff from the officer chain of command, or the medical and paramedical staff, and so on.

Prisoners can almost ask nothing without filling in a request form properly: this deeply impact on prisoners' infantilisation process, a process widely known in the prison literature, as well as on the foreign national prisoners who cannot do it alone and therefore need the help of fellow Italian prisoners, and this impact on their position in the prisoners' power dynamic.

Inmate can also request to see the governor and the area managers if they wish to. Of course, requests to meet anyone at a high level of the hierarchy must be clearly motivated and, anyway, those requests are not likely to be successful; prisoners know that the best way to be heard is to 'create problems'; yet, that is costly.

At any time in the morning, unpredictably, one inmate working as *factotum* would suddenly appear on the wing to let inmate 'do the shopping' via the factotum prisoner requesting those extra products each prisoner may need for

his own personal care (soap, foam, creams, razors), the 'housekeeping', and more importantly, for the preparation of meals. Each inmate, in fact can buy a camping gas to cook his own food and to make coffee with his own *moka* machine. In Italy good food and good coffee are very well evaluated and play a crucial role in the 'underworld' informal economy, and are also used as a welcoming ritual to any new welcomed cell-mate.

The use of camping gas is often contested by a bunch of officer who consider it dangerous both for their own security and for the wing's order and security as such; in fact, that device is also often used as drug (breathing the butane gas contained in the gas bottle by putting the bottle and the head in a plastic bag is a common drug there) or as means to commit suicide. Occasionally, gas bottles has been used as a weapon to assault staff or fellow inmates by producing a flame to hit the victim thereby producing serious wounds and burns (by inflaming the high-pressure gas exiting the bottle once disconnected from the camping gas); this never occurred during the ethnography.

During the hours of exercise at 'yard' in which most prisoners are off the wings, there is a strangely calmer and quieter atmosphere than usual at the close wing, occasionally interspersed by people screaming, strange 'animal sounds' [as one officer called it], noisy requests or banging doors. During that period the rehabilitation officer is normally busy to escort those inmates cleaning some of the empty rooms and to open and close inmates going back and forth to the wing's infirmary. Sometimes, particularly when any 'good shift' would occur, the officer managing the wing would 'help' his colleague performing rehab with him without caring to much about his face and performing his own role properly; in other occasions, he would stay quiet, or 'invisible', inside his box minding his own business, pretending to be busy doing paperwork, while doing them, or reading a car weekly paper, *Famiglia cristiana* or simply watching TV. Now and then he would pass by the infirmary for a coffee or a chat, normally pretending being busy doing security (at least in my presence);

occasionally he would be ordered to help doing security during a medical visit of a particularly dangerous inmate.

Doing frustrating duties

'Officers' job is not always about actions like the officers' job shown on TV' said one rookie officers [meaning an unexperienced one] a bit disappointed while being busy doing something that could be described as the opposite of what they meant by doing proper police work: helping a nurse to take care of a psychiatric patient without legs on a wheel chair that should take a shower and did not cooperate that much. Other frustrating duties, that few officers would define rewarding were common inside, rehab officers would mainly perform those kind of neglected duties: patrolling prisoners cleaning a cell or another room, escorting prisoners to the doctor and so on.

These frustrating duties where more commonly required at the asylum than in prison for the particular severe psychiatric conditions of few patients. This could be predictable; at the asylum, in fact, due to their alleged or actual psychiatric condition, prisoners are more likely to behave unpredictably than in prison and, therefore, some prisoners need be escorted wherever they need to go.

Some prisoners are really difficultly manageable and seem to be neither reactive to any treatment, nor to any threat of the use-of-force. Some just want to be considered constantly and this is highly problematic indeed in an institution where there is an alleged shortage in personnel.

Occasionally, even the local commander has been required to be the personal escort to a patient that was considered to behave childishly and pretended the commander company. Once, I have seen for a few days one inmate repeatedly walking around the landing nearby the commander's officer just in front to the

first-block gate (*infra*, Chapter 4) hand in hand with the commander. I was really surprised by that scene that I had never seen before anywhere as yet; the commander told me that it became clear that with such a prisoners, that was supposed to stay there only for a few days, managing him in that way was the only and cheaper practicable way to deal with the situation efficiently.

He is really extremely difficult to manage...fortunately they are not all like that. It's so difficult when you have to deal with such a prisoner that you do not know what to do any more. At the end, you take away too much energy off from the other calmer prisoner...because you need to concentrate on him, calm him down, thereby avoiding greater problems; yet, that's completely unfair! It's unfair for the fit ones who behave properly (interview with senior officer).

Then, the commander explained me that after the second cell was completely destroyed by the childish prisoner, he started to put a lot of energy on that guy waiting for his transfer that fortunately arrived in just a few days. That prisoner was indifferent to any threat and the use of coercion and, on the contrary, was very prone to conflict indeed; in fact he was continually looking for trouble with both prison officers and fellow inmates. He just pretended too much attention and consideration in many officers' opinion. He was described to me as one among the 'worst nightmare' that the commander had experience as yet. By behaving like that, the prisoner had simply destroyed all routines and internal organization procedures, said the officer. During his short stay, that wing was ruled mainly to keep him calm. Furthermore, that situation had produced a set of unintended consequences and other critical events that were treated accordingly.

However, some 'different' officers who tried to avoid action as much as possible appreciated those frustrating duties and often performed them seriously and with humanity.

Prisoners 'helping' officers

It is interesting to note that one officer who explained me the organization of the asylum wing concluded by adding that along with the two officers, there existed three to four prisoners working daily to clean the wing, thereby, somehow almost describing those inmates as part of the staff: one was the so called generic worker of the wing (in Italian, *lavorante generale sezione*) whose duty was to clean the corridor and to do whatever he was told to by the any of the two officers on the wing, for example to clean the *prison officer's boot* (on the wing they called it with the English word 'box') or to empty the wing garbage bins. Other two to three prisoners would work simultaneously to clean the cells (in Italian, *lavoranti celle*), preferably of those inmates who were elsewhere at that particular time.

On daily basis, prisoners must clean their own cell alone. Some prisoners, however, must be helped to do it or are totally unable to do it for any reason or do not wish to. A few rarely accept their cell to be cleaned at all without using tools of influence, often the symbolic threat of the use-of-force (*infra*, Chapter 6). Whenever an inmate is either not allowed to exit the room, or is unwilling to do so, then, the prisoner is ordered by the officer to lay still on the bed and not to disturb his fellow inmates that, after all, are helping him to live in a better and healthier environment.

Each time officers and inmates are cleaning the wing and the cells crisis occurred very rarely; in these circumstances, prisoners working on the wing are often coming from other wings and are therefore a good channel of communication for inmates locked up in the closed wing; therefore, cleaners are always highly considered and respected among their peers, at least instrumentally. They are also those who are informally allowed by the

custodial staff to do things differently without following the normal path and procedures prescribed 'by the book' resolving 'little problems' to those locked in that theoretically would require a longer formal path; inmates, in fact, have to write a form for any little thing they would need and afterword the form would be processes and an official decision taken. Strangely enough, inmate also have to ask to get one of those paper forms any time they need it. The can only get one or exceptionally two at a time. The role of prisoners working as cleaner on the wing would deserve a study by itself. Three persons cleaning a room can take up to twenty minutes to do it properly. Yet, very few cleaning material is available; sometimes, even toilet paper is missing in the prison warehouse for budgetary reasons, I suppose, let alone professional cleaning products, tools or machines.

The rooms' condition were always very critical; like in many Italian prisons I have visited so far, the situation would need significant improvements to become quasi-decent. This problem should be urgently addressed, at least in the asylum, since that psychiatric 'hospital' cannot be called hospital at all and that emerged clearly also in the interview with the custodial and medical staff. In each cell, of the ex-prison transformed into an asylum, prisoners are obliged to sleep on an old iron orange bed, just an orange prison bed usually used in almost all Italian institutions, on rotten and worn-out mattresses that are terribly stinky and dirty.

No proper hospital bed, let alone a cell designed for persons with particular physical invalidity, was given to any inmate. One super clean and new one was put instead in front of the infirmary downstairs where some outsider might be allowed to enter for a reason or another.

During my stay, I met one person who had been there for few years; he had no legs anymore because he had lost them trying to commit suicide under a train without succeeding. Another prisoner lived on a wheel chair and died in

custody (or just outside going to the hospital); yet, another one had a semi paralysis and could hardly walk and often fell down on the floor because his stinking cell was totally inadequate for his (as well for many others) health problem.

Concerning the maintenance, I personally witnessed that during almost three long years nothing was done against the unbelievable level of mouldy walls and ceiling in any of cell's toilet and in the showers which condition had already publicly been denounced by a parliamentary commission with a well-known video that can still be found on YouTube[133]. Bleach was never used, let alone paint. Staff did their very best to have a healthier environment and paid personally for this unfavourable working environment occasionally even buying products at least for their own use. The issue of a *decency agenda* should be sooner or later be addressed in Italy too.

Wing manager officer's strategy: Remarking the 'old times autonomy' versus displaying deference

After the reform that introduced the National Health Care staff into the custodial institutions – as said above – officers stopped being alone on the wing and begun having medical staff with them day in day out night and day. Medical staff depended from the Ministry of Health and its regional department and local authorities and have introduced some form of accountability; in fact, being independent from the Ministry of justice, they have been less prone to cover ups wrongdoings or unprofessional officers; yet, this has in practice hardly ever happened.

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[133] The so-calle Marino Commission (in Italian, *Commissione Marino*) (Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sull'efficacia e l'efficienza del servizio sanitario nazionale: Relazione sulle condizioni di vita e di cura all'interno degli ospedali psichiatrici giudiziari; Relatori: sen. Michelle Saccomanno and sen. Daniele Bosone, approved by the commissione on the 20-7-2011).

A wing manager, particularly at the asylum where medical staff is also on duty 24/7, lost at least part of his authority on the wing: at least one nurse was also always there. Officers working on the landing neither have they appreciated this innovation very much at that time, nor do they seem to appreciate it nowadays: by not being alone anymore on the wing, officers had to stop ruling the wing by 'their own free will' as one officer told me bluntly. They had to start to negotiate their own authority with other embedding the medical power.

During their shift, I have observed one main strategy to symbolically balance their loss of authority and publicly claiming their pretended power. This would happen by referring to a mythical old time autonomy (or free will) that would characterise a previous time in the past in which they were the 'boss' of the wing.

During almost all interactions among the wing manager (the officer patrolling the wing) and either custodial or non-custodial staff, the wing manager would display his independence and remark autonomy from all other staff on the wing and even, to a certain degree, from his superordinate. Either, his direct superior based downstairs with whom the officer would normally speak on the phone, or the paramedical personnel with whom he would continuously interact face to face on the wing, would have to wait to get a service done by the wing manager, if not *really* urgent (in the officer own understanding).

By doing so, he would perform theatrically his pretended 'old time autonomy' and free will, every time the occasion would occur. He did it, mainly by organising his duties 'freely', 'independently' and moving back and forth authoritatively on the wing following his own schedule often unknown to other staff on the wing; he would 'legitimately' resist external requests coming from

his 'boss' or from the medical staff by saying or showing that 'I have something more important to do first; I am busy, I will come ASAP'.

With some particular officers this happened more frequently than with other; yet, it was a recurrent behaviour among staff performing that particular role. Some officers, more masculine than others, used this strategy of remarking the 'old time autonomy' more often or more openly if in company of the female nurses: hyper masculinity there was sometimes emphasised by some hyper feminine nurses and workers who did engage in some kind of rhetorical flirtation with one-another.

By doing so, resisting orders and delaying colleagues requests, officers would theatrically emphasise their own authority and power to rule the wing and to manage their own time thereby showing their possibility to do their own time nicely, 'minding their own business' and at the same time, taking their time to be a gentleman with those female colleagues who showed to appreciate it and 'play the flirting game'. To be honest, though, remarking the 'old times autonomy' was never performed completely unfairly, delaying crucial activities or obstructing others' duties significantly, at least in my own perception, and it is not clear to what extent the researcher's presence influenced the officers doing so. It is also not clear to what extent it was performed strategically or somehow traditionally; it simply seemed to be a symbolic game; afterwards, of course, things must go on.

It goes without saying, that by doing so, minor delayed were caused unnecessarily; occasionally, even when the duty requested were said to be 'urgent!' If the officer on duty would not agree with the definition of urgency at stake, any request could be delayed a bit accordingly, just to show one's own power and play his own masculinity in front of his public on the landing. By shaping his own time schedule at his will, mainly following his own needs, he

would symbolically maintain the 'old autonomy' and exert power that allegedly existed before the National Health Care entered into the picture.

Officers can resist orders or particular situation also by 'becoming sick'; this is a particularly critical point as Pietro Buffa argued in *Prigioni: Amministrare la sofferenza* (2013b). In the particular occasion just described above, in fact, in which that particularly heavy prisoner was asking a lot of energy to be treated. As one officer told the researcher,

nine over fifteen officer were contemporarily 'sick' blocking by doing so all the prisoners activities. Afterwards, one day later, the psychiatric assessment was prematurely closed attesting that the prisoner could stay in prison [and the prisoner was sent back to his previous institution from where he came from] (ethnographic interview with one officer).

Writing a report or filling in a register were always an easily justifiable duty that any officer could employ symbolically to perform his own 'old times autonomy' publicly on the wing. By doing so, showing attachment to his own duties, one officer could both, publicly resist his display of subordination to his superior, to fellow staff and inmates on the wing, and, concurrently, avoiding to be formally disrespectful – or worst insubordinate – to those above him in the chain of command and/or to the medical staff thereby avoiding disciplinary consequences. Neither, all prison officers would perform the 'old times autonomy', nor would they perform it anytime they were on duty; yet, this was a recurrent characteristic that distinguished officers who did manage the wing from those who did rehab who were not in the position of doing so.

Normally, officer doing rehabilitation, on the other hand, showed a completely different approach to their duties and interacted with colleagues differently. The officer in that role would not perform any 'proper' police work anyway; only rarely would he intervene during a dispute, usually calling the emergency squad. He would not even pretend to defend his own masculine public face in that role and just give up completely by constructing a very different face on

the wing or simply acting ritualistically (in Robert Merton's sense) 'by simply doing his job'. Unlocking an inmate's cell barred-door to let one inmate to reach the infirmary to do an enema or to have a shower; helping inmates to clean each other's cell, or 'doing security' during a 'dog-therapy' session could not be easily translated rhetorically into a somewhat typical officer's 'war story' imbued with risk and excitement; rather, it could be easily understood like an everyday caregiver experience with geriatric patients on a hospital ward. One officers doing rehabilitation (one who was often managing the wing) expressed this efficaciously by saying with a smiling face and some humour:

Luigi, look at me now! Look at what I am doing on the landing... helping a patient to take a shower...ah, ah. I am supposed to be a police officer[134], am I? I am a prison police men … after all. While some of my fellow colleagues from the Polizia [*di Stato*] are risking their own lives patrolling the streets, and other colleagues of them, just now, entered a bank during a robbery and arrested a bunch of dangerous criminals (laughing for his own ridiculous exaggeration), and yet others are looking for Mafia boss around Italy... I am here watching a naked-dirty-fat sad man taking a shower. It is so exciting being a prison officer, isn't it? Ah, ah! (Field note).

However, the rehab officer duty was also to do security in a way or another. The duty of any officer doing rehabilitation, in practice, is doing security for both medical and paramedical staff as well as, concurrently, organizing and implementing the movement of prisoners from their own cell to the infirmary on the wing and backwards. The infirmary, located in front of the cell 21, is the room where prisoners would be visited by doctors, specialists, psychiatrists and nurses quite regularly, depending on the type of treatments prescribed and recorded on the medical records. Those in T.S.I. (intensive sanitary treatment) would see at least a paramedic, often a doctor, on daily bases; others, could be left 'in peace' for weeks and would simply be approached at their cell door through the gate by the nurse twice a day for regular therapy and by medical

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[134] In Italian 'prison officers' are calle 'Prison policeperson' and can perform the same duty police officers performs also in the free community. The Police is called *Polizia di Stato*, in Italy.

and paramedical staff passing by.

There was a striking contrast between the different ways in which particular officers performed the rehabilitation role. Many officers would perform that role seriously and their job would therefore be seriously regarded by their colleagues in white. Yet, they would always display some distance from medical staff to mark their being officers in uniform. Some officer would understand and agree with the idea of rehabilitation at least theoretically; yet, almost no one would trust that rehabilitation could actually occur in the given condition and with those kind of persons in custody there; 'they all come back…sooner or later' was a common refrain.

Furthermore, many officers stressed during both ethnographic and formal interviews that they were not given decent working standards or human right and consequently those rights were also not available to prisoners neither.

It is important to stress that the big majority of base grade staff working in the internal group would in turn perform both roles adopting most of the time a different face when performing one role or the others. Each officer working in wing management or rehab would behave accordingly, at least to a certain extend.

Rookie officers would be more likely to change their 'face' while performing one role or the other than experienced ones. Experienced officers would instead be more likely to behave in their own way almost independently from the particular role performed on duty in each particular shift.

The time frame: Doing routine work on the wing from officers' perspective

The physical space – the architecture and the interior design – is a crucial coercive characteristic of any custodial institution; yet, another crucial aspect of it is the time-frame organisation of life and work inside (Foucault 1979, 1980 a, b; Goffman 1961a) in which all activities are split and interspersed at precise and predictable intervals of time over a certain period of time. A set of fixed day-to-day routines continuously structures the life of those working and living inside as well as the institutional organisation as such; of course, this structural time constraint can be either followed consistently, or resisted and challenged in different ways by all parties involved; on the one side inmates may try to delay the return from any activity (i.e. from the yard, or from the workshops) by simulating a small fight with one-another producing a time-consuming mediation that would realise their goal to delay the return to the wing; on the other, officers might retard the opening of the cell due to any *ad hoc* pretended organizational problem. Since this cause serious protests, it is not likely to occur frequently.

More staff on the wing: pros and cons

All prisoners locked up at the closed wing agreed that the situation got better when more staff, and professional medical staff entered into the picture due to the Sanitary reform that introduce National Health Care staff; it is reasonable to agree with that interpretation.

One consequence many officers denounced of the presence of more staff on the wing was that it produced more requests; prisoners would become requesters thereby producing an increasingly bustling activity on the wing. These frantic

time would only calm down twice during 'yard' and, after three o' clock when all inmates would be locked up and 'forgotten' by officers until the next 'serious request' or more probably the following crisis occurring either because a patience was acting out for psychiatric reason, or because their request were not taken into account seriously (in prisoners' opinion), if at all.

To be honest, however, all paramedic staff declared that working there was very light in terms of work if compared to real hospital were you have to work all day long.

At about three O'clock, from Monday to Friday, all prisoners' activities would stop, and all inmates would be locked in again creating a much more relaxed atmosphere among staff that did not have to move inmate, lock and unlock doors and so on. Until later in the evening, however, no significant reduction of the high level of noise would occur on the wing; on the contrary, people locked up in their cells would start to get anxious and nervous and would desire to have a chat with other than their fellow inmate, if they had one in the same cell. Custodial staff, at this time, would finally desire to relax occasionally expecting a psychiatric announced visit to start later on. Prisoners, resisting boredom and their deprived condition would frequently start to ask for help, to request anything they though they needed, to ask for information, and of course for a cigarette.

This kind of continue requests was not much appreciated by either custodial or medical staff who resisted it in different ways. Only a few request would be even considered or taken into account properly. Others would be left completely unnoticed or unattended, unless the prisoners started to resist urging quick *emergency squad* intervention. Often, prisoners started to resist loudly, screaming, shouting, banging toilet doors, throwing thing outside their cell, etc. Yet, this attitude is costly for the prisoners in a way or another would later 'pay the bill' for their behaviour, at least with symbolic retaliation, such

as an even less degree of attention.

At the evening, the last medication was provided by the nurse directly cell-to-cell. She or he would go from one cell to the next one with a trolley packed with psychiatric and generic drugs; the nurse would follow the prescription written on the prisoners medications register proposing to the prisoners the particular cure he needed.

Some inmates were obliged by law to take psychiatric drugs; they would either take their pills spontaneously in front of the nurse, or be urged by the threat of the use-of-force or the actual use of it (*infra*, Chapter 6, 7), to accept an injection. However, many patients would be free to decide whether to take medication or not; a refusal of the prescribed medication would be written in the register and could influence the psychiatric opinion on the patient resulting, either in an appointment to evaluate the cure again, or in a different path to liberty[135].

After each and every inmate has received the cure, eventually a strange quiet would invade the wing; yet, unpredictably, single protests or requests would break the silence and the background noise produced by TVs coming from both the prisoners' cells, the infirmary or 'elsewhere'.

Requests during late evening, just like it happens in many hospitals, would not be appreciated and would be treated accordingly. Late in the evenings, 'calling for no reason' is considered as a disrespectful behaviour towards staff both by nurses and officers on duty on the wing. Normally inmates would respect this informal 'hidden' rule; however, really decompensated patients would continue to 'disturb' unwillingly causing a 'shit night' to those staff who would try to change the situation for the better by medication (on demand), placebo or other

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[135]   Within the asylum, not all patients can be obliged to take psychiatric drugs. Often, other formal authorisations from other bodies are needed just like it would normally happens to any other free citizen who goes berserk beyond the wall.

tools of influence (*infra*, Chapter 2) available, including the use of the threaten of force (*infra*, Chapter 6) if necessary or when exasperated by the heavy situation on the wing.

Officers and nurses able to 'produce' a calm wing by any means were highly considered by their fellow colleagues; those working 'by the book' thereby creating problems were frequently publicly criticised and avoided if possible. Each time any particularly 'rigid' person was on duty, a very nervous feeling among staff emerged.

'The Devil', a so-called very ritualistic and disciplined worker, whom was given such a heavy nickname, was even considered to bring bad luck to those working with him or her; people were laughing behind his or her back; some officers have even told me a few stories to support their opinion to convince me. The night shifts I observed looked very normal and all staff – one officer and one nurse– seemed to be busy and moved around the cell to observe inmates. However, I have been told more than once that I would have not done a proper night shift until I had not properly slept some hour on the wing, either in the officer's closed office next to the wing glassed box (where there were both a desk with a computer and a hospital stretcher).

Chapter 6

The 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence'[136]:
Symbolic and credible threat on the landing

This chapter is an attempt to investigate some aspects of the dynamic of officers doing soft-coercion mainly by observation and ethnographic interviews – and also by visual methods (Rose 2011).

By providing both a *model* (see, Image 6.1; 6.2) describing the general traits of the recurrent particular situations and at the same time offering few *thick descriptions* of actual occurrences of doing soft-coercion, this chapter will provide some empirical knowledge about what doing soft-coercion in practice is trying to overcome the difficulty to translate actual life and interactions between particular human-beings into a verbal (and partially visual) narration. By doing so this chapter intends to shed some light on how those interaction chains between the keeper and the kept are performed bodily and emotionally time and again, through the ethnographer observation, witnessing (Kaufman 2015: 53–78) and verbal and visual narration

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[136]   The 'Cycle of the-use-of-force and violence' is also called the 'Cycle of doing coercion' here. The two expression are interchangeble and refer to exactly the same 'model'.
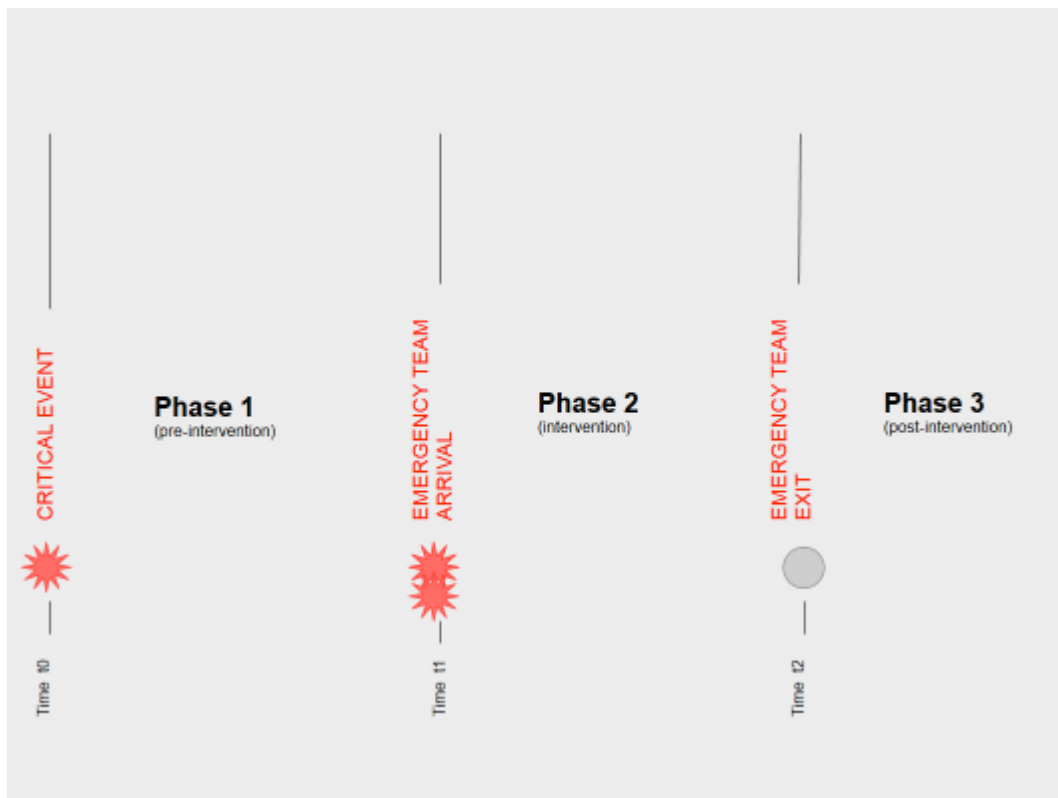
Image 6.1 The phases of the 'cycle of the use of force.'

Image 5. The 'cycle of the use of force.'
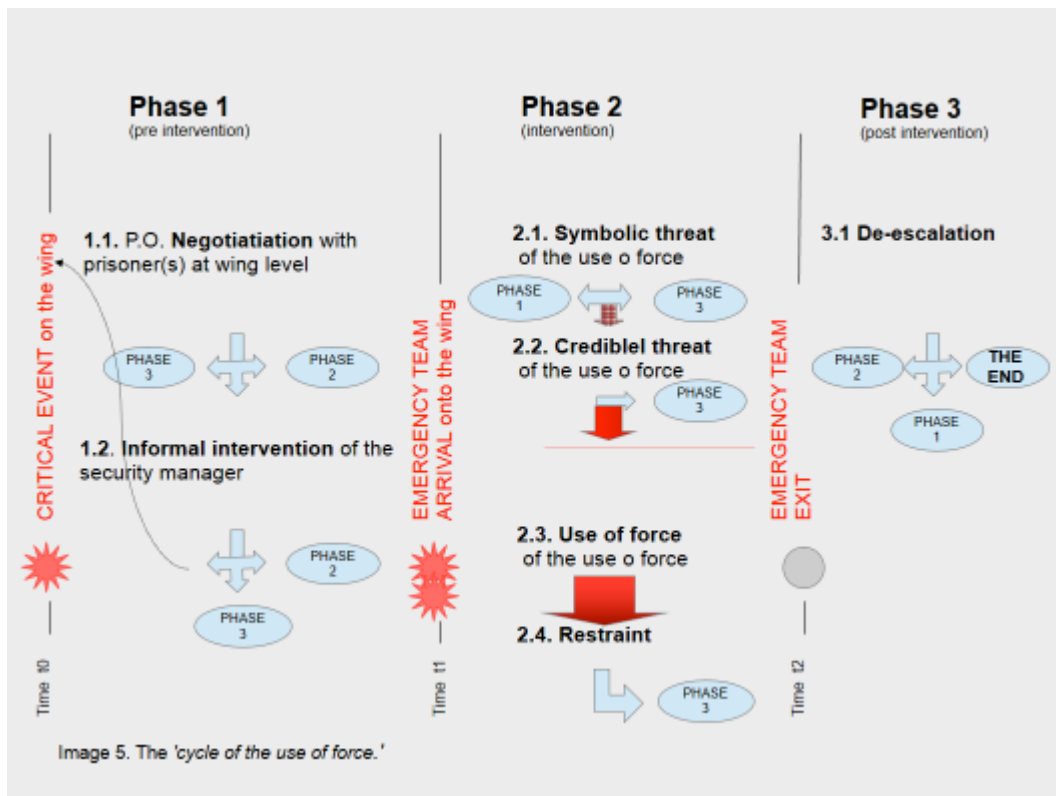
Image 6.2 The 'Cycle of the use of force and violence' (or the 'Cycle of doing coercion')

Of course, once again, it goes without saying that officers were doing much more than 'doing' coercion inside: one could write about pet-therapy, theatre, dress codes, and the incredible figure of the chaplain and so on. However, this work is focused on 'doing' coercion and pushes in the background all other aspects with no intention to hide them or to over-emphasise coercion, but simply to address it head on.

Prison officers' job, as we said above, is in fact certainly intrinsically about coercion, either a 'soft' or a 'hard' one (meaning threatening or actually using force). The relevance of the issue of coercion was once again recently stated also by Crewe in his book *The Prisoner Society* (2009) in which he argued that '[a]ll prisons are, in the last instance, coercive institutions, even if naked power is not immediately visible [to all ethnographers] in their everyday operation' (Crewe 2009: 80). Yet, Crewe and others have also clearly argued –at least in

my interpretation– that doing policing (Liebling 2000; Liebling et al. 2011) on the landing is not only, or mainly, about doing coercion; instead soft-power and psychological power (Crewe 2009: 115–137) are discretionary at stake inside. Officers use both formal and informal sanctions; either soft or hard ones; in the day-to-day staff-prisoners relationships and interactions officers often relay 'on informal 'tactics of talk'…to achieve compliance' (Liebling and Tait 2006: 104). Unfortunately, though, those 'tactics of talk' (or *tools of influence*; *infra*, Chapter 2) compliance is not always achieved and often the implicit or explicit threat or actual use-of-force would be needed instead.

Although I support both Crewe's and Liebling's interpretation about soft-power and the 'tactics of talk', I would stress that *the use-of-force* is always at least implicitly, some might say even unconsciously, in the picture inside; it was surely so in the ethnographic field observed (*infra*, Chapter 5). Yet, this chapter shall empirically focus in particular on *'doing' soft-coercion*: in other words, *threatening the use-of-force* either *symbolically* or *credibly* (*also see* Campana and Varese 2013).

In the particularly 'problematic' male forensic psychiatric hospital wing with twenty-five cells hosting usually about thirty-three to thirty eight persons in a close-cell regime in which the crucial part of this ethnography was mainly conducted – as well as in the nearby prison wings of that custodial complex– coercion would imbue a long-lasting chain of interactions routinely occurring (Collins 2004) within the facility between the keepers and the kept. Reggio Emilia custodial complex is a particularly secure facility that had been designed to be a maximum security prison; by its very physical nature, it was already enforcing and constituting by and of itself a constrained coercive environment (Jewkes and Johnston 2013; Foucault 1979; Anastasia et al. 2011) in which the prisoner-officer relationships and power dynamic were particularly unbalanced.

Forward panic and credible threats: unpacking soft-coercion

Chapter 3 highlights some features of Collins' micro-sociological framework on violence (2008; 2012). In that work Collins has also put law enforcement officers doing coercion under his lens systematically; primarily police, yet some prison officers as well[137]. Following Collins (2008), this paper will consider officers 'doing' or 'threatening' coercion as a particular type of violence without applying to the word violence any particular negative moral connotation (*see* Chapter 3).

Writing about the police and about the popular perception of violence, Collins argues that:

[o]ur image of violence is based on the most dramatic instances [mainly from the media images] …violence is not an easy or automatic process, and it takes a lot to trigger it. Police violence [here, read police coercion more broadly] in this respect is like other kinds of violence. Whenever we are able to look across a range of situations … we find that most of the time most people avoid [physical] violence (Collins 2008:375).

Collins then further states the particular situational nature of violence claiming that '[p]hysical resistance is by far the most likely factor to lead to police violence' (375), and this ethnography inside a male custodial institution clearly supports it (yet, *see infra,* Chapter 8 for a less un-critical statement). He reinforced the relevance of his micro-sociological approach, drawing selectively on the 'police and policing' literature, stating that,

the situational nature of police violence is underscored by the fact that a variety of background and attitudinal differences among police are uncorrelated with who is high or low in violence [I would add, though, as reported on official records] (Collins 2008:375).

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[137] It mainly referred to police officers and military soldiers; yet, it did also write some pages addressing bullying in prison (2008: 165–174).

Although, here, the main theoretical framework is based on Collins 'radical microsociology' (2004; *see also* Collins 1981: 998–1002), it has been necessary to slightly calibrate Collins' approach to the custodial setting taking into account both the observations performed and collected during the ethnography, and the prison literature on officers' (and prisoners') heterophobia and racism (Phillips 2012: 168–204; Earle 2016) as well as that on masculinities (Jewkes 2005; Sabo 2001; Sim 1994 and Ricciardelli et al. 2015; Earle 2013, 2014, 2016); heterophobia, racism and masculinity were in fact three dimensions that imbued the officers' cultures, to a different degree in a case or another, influencing at least some officers particularly attentive to doing coercion, and more generally the 'wing atmosphere' thereby influencing, in a way or another also the interactions between the keeper and the kept in the custodial complex (as well as their relationship with the ethnographer).

In the theoretical framework adopted here, particularly relevant is Collins' newer elaboration of his 'Interaction Ritual Chains'; he proposed it in his last book, Violence (2008), in which the concept of 'Forward panic' and 'Emotional field of tension and fear' were first presented exhaustively.

Collins, just like others in the interactionist tradition, has dealt with emotion throughout his career; in his micro-sociology of violence (2008, 20012) he has also focused on emotion straightforwardly. He has defined 'Forward panic' and has explicitly argued that 'Violent interactions are difficult because they go against the grain of normal interaction rituals' (2008: 20). *Interactional Ritual Chains* (2004), in fact, was mainly dealing with cooperative or at least non-violent interactions. Therefore, Collins introduced new conceptual tools in his most recent book to address violence (2008) within that same interactionist framework. 'Confrontational tension' would be

[t]he tendency to become entrained in each other's rhythms and emotions [… It] means that when the interaction is at cross purposes – an antagonistic interaction – people experience a pervasive feeling of tension. (Collins 2008: 20).

He continued by saying that: 'at higher level of intensity [confrontational tension] shades over into fear. For this reason, violence is difficult to carry out, not easy' (20).

A barrier of confrontational tension and fear makes violent intercourses less likely to occur frequently. 'For violence to happen there must be situational conditions which allow at least one side to circumvent the barrier' (Collins 2012: 135)[138]. Despite being fear a recurrent topic in many prison officers' interviews performed and video-recorded in the field during the ethnography in Reggio Emilia, the observation showed a very different picture regarding the public display of tension and fear. Usually, officers masculinities and 'propensity for action' would result in officers displaying tension but, concurrently, hiding their fear almost completely when being on stage 'doing' coercion. Fear would only be discussed, with anonymity safeguards in place, in one-to-one formal interviews performed outside the public and fellow officers' gaze, and this regarded the majority of the participants interviewed. On the contrary, both tension and fear were quite often visible and audible in prisoners' conducts and interactions especially when the Cycle was at stake. In other words, prisoners' fear was much more likely to be on display than officers'.

Despite Collins' theory of violence (2008) high level of generality, the debates and the critics it prompted (*inter alia*, Felson 2009; Cooney 2009; Wieviorka 2011; Kalyvas 2011; Weenink 2014), it often fits quite well with the observations performed inside. Officers would normally use their necessary capacity 'to circumvent confrontational tension/fear' on a daily basis. The researcher had to learn how to display that ability as well, in order to save his face and build his own reputation among officers (*infra*, Chapter 8). Although,

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[138]   In prison then, according to Collins 'most fights occur in the presence of guards (Edgard and O'Donnell 1998): this is a mechanism by which fights are kept short' (Collins 2008: 18).

fear was more likely to be visible on the prisoners' side rather than on the officers' one, red faces and nervous movements displaying a clear tension were visible on both sides in many occasions. In front of emergency squad, however, some prisoners would almost faint, show trembling and sweating bodies, cry, and make some very nervously-uncontrolled movements, and so on. Instead, officers would usually display a militaristic 'cold' or bored face; particularly so when doing soft-coercion.

That capacity of facing violence described by Collins might also be interpreted at the light of the conceptual tools of 'emotional shields' and 'anger boundaries' introduced by Hochschild (1983) discussing the ways in which violent behaviours would be managed by emotional labour in the constrained place of an airplane cabin by hostess and stewards (*infra*, Chapter 3).

Prison officer, boxing and wrestling

Another useful interpretation could also highlight the similarities between prison officers and boxers; Prison officers and boxers might share some similar emotional tensions[139]. In fact, both the prison officer and the boxer must learn to be able to fight without fear with their own body and suppress pain in order to perform their violent interactions competently and effectively[140]. In particular, the notion of sparring (Wacquant 2004) is significant here. Sparring is the practice by which a boxer performs a simulated fight with a fellow boxer that must be adequate to him or her: not too weak, nor too strong in order to avoid losing the face with the peers. Just like sparring, yet with a very different power balance in the picture, strongly in favour to the officers in a prison setting, both sparring and doing coercion are

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[139]   Here I want to explicitly thank Roberta Sassatelli for suggesting me to develop this point.

[140]   More over, in Reggio Emilia, one officer was a box teacher and others would train with him privately.

[a] redoubtable and perpetually renewed test of strength, cunning and courage, if only because the possibility of serious injury can never be completely eliminated, in spite of all precautions…Black eyes, bruised cheek- bones and swollen lips, bloody noses, and battered hands and ribs are the habitual lot of those who put on the gloves on a regular basis (Wacquant 2004: 79).

Not only are those physical damages the protagonist of war stories told to novices, to nurses and to the researcher by senior staff inside. They have also been the everyday bodily signs of the coercive relationships observable throughout the entire course of the ethnography.

Despite the similarities, one crucial difference separates the sparring performed by boxers to the officers doing coercion, though. In Boxing,

[t]he principle of reciprocity … dictates that the stronger boxer not profit from his superiority, but also that the weaker fighter not take undue advantage of his partner's wilful restraint (Wacquant 2004: 84).

Boxing is a sport. Instead, in officer's intervention there was no space for a '*principle of reciprocity'* at all. Inside, officers dominate prisoners who must follow officers' order by law; in order to obtain compliance, officers are requested by law 'to do' coercion (using force) if necessary; prisoners, instead, are never allowed in practice to do so and are forced to be docile (*also see* Gonnella 2013a, b).

Of course, some times, interactions are not performed by law, but this is an entirely different question to which, however, ethnographers, and not only critical ones, should not continue to turn a blind eye to (*infra*, Chapter 8).

Police officers and prison police-men (prison officers) on patrol

As already said above, adopting Collins' framework on violence to grasp what occurs in prison, one needs to take into account the differences between the police officer's and the prison officer's working environments and contexts in general. Afterwards, doing ethnography, one also needs to focus on the particular characteristics of the particular context observed, trying to untangle the particular ways in which the ethnographer characterizes, facilitates and constrains the particular coercive interactions that are performed the particular coercive interactions that are performed by officers inside (*infra*, Chapter 7). Police officers' and prison officers' job differ quite significantly to one another (Liebling 2000).

In Reggio Emilia, *firstly*, prison officer and prisoners were constrained in daily face-to-face interactions with each other, eventually becoming acquainted with one another (Goffman 1961a). That would not usually happen 'on the street' in Italy; police officers on patrol usually walk among people they do not necessarily know that well, if at all (*see also*; Alpert and Dunham 2004). Moreover, prisoners-to-prisoners (Edgar 2012) violence would occur regularly between people constrained coercively to share the same limited spaces with one another. Often, the perpetrator would live or work side by side on the same wing with the victim (even though particularly risky situations are treated accordingly and one particular prisoner might be relocated to a so-called safe wing); sometimes, a perpetrator and a victim could even live together in the same cell. Again, this is not necessarily true 'outside the wall' all the time[141]; yet, it is almost always true in the 'prisoner society'.

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[141]   On the street perpetrators and victims do not necessarily know each other. However, violence on women often occurs within the domestic world; yet, also in that context the degree of freedom of movement and the time in which the partners are physically constrained together is significantly less than what usually occurs within the wall.

Secondly, the quality and quantity of weaponry and social ties that are available inside a custodial institution, or outside of it, vary significantly both for the officer and for the person in custody and this impinges in the capacity each one has to threaten and/or to use violence towards one another effectively.

Lastly, custodial institutions in Italy are usually still characterised by invisibility and unaccountability (Gonnella 2013b; Manconi et al. 2015; *see also* Pratt 2002 and Sim 2008). This is, if possible, even truer regarding the forensic asylum (O.P.G.) (Miravalle 2015).

Police officers patrolling the streets are obviously much more visible and more accountable than prison officers secretly working behind the wall. This is particularly true in Italy where prison officer's accountability is a chimera (*see*, Palidda 2000; Alpert and Dunham 2004).

Officers in the emergency squad

The prison officer emergency squad (*infra*, Chapter 4) was the crucial actor 'doing' either soft or hard coercion. No single officer worked exclusively in the squad. However, some officers would be more frequently likely to be part of it than others. Yet others would refuse to be part of the squad as much as possible, and in case of intervention would remain at the rear of the front line, far away from 'where the action is'. Some clearly enjoyed the action and might resemble those police officers Collins called 'cowboy cops' (Collins 2008: 378); others would instead try avoiding intervention and violence most of the times.

Officers who actively and regularly participated to the emergency squad interventions had a much better reputation than those who tended to avoid participating in it (yet, this 'data' should be analysed more carefully at a micro

level). This is also consistent with Collins arguing that:

[t]he most violent police … are well-liked by other cops. This is not only because they are often high-energy extroverts ... they are the informal leaders of the police. This fits a basic principle of small-group research: the popular members of the group are those who most closely express its values and are best at what the group is attempting to do (Collins 2008: 376).

The emergency squad was not usually operating, nor was it based, on any of the wings. The emergency squad would never enter a wing in any day-to-day not-particularly-critical situation. Its role was limited to perform either soft or hard coercion only. By arriving on the wing if and only when a critical event had occurred, the squad was able to perform a symbolic threat simply by appearing.

Soft-coercion

'Soft-coercion' was defined above as twofold; it includes either 1) the *symbolic threat of coercion* or 2) the *credible threat of coercion* as well as both of them one after the other.

The *Phenomenology of Power* (Popitz 1990) has directly explored theoretically 'threatening and being threatened' (65–84); yet that book is not available in English yet[142]. Popitz (1990) showed the intersubjective and interactive relationships implied in each 'threatening structure' (66) that would be by and of itself, in Popitz' interpretation, a form of power. According to him, during the interaction there is a shifting and ongoing power dynamic that depends on how any of the actors involved in the interaction participates in it. Importantly, Popitz argued that, not only the victim who is threatened depends on his

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[142]   Poggi is currently busy translating the entire volume from Germany to English for the Columbia University Press (personal communication).

perpetrator's acts or threats, but also the perpetrator depends on – and becomes constrained by– the following decisions and actions of his or her victim (68). Popitz also showed that even 'threatening' coercion is costly and strongly influences the credibility and reputation of the 'perpetrator'. A perpetrator who has not the capacity to enact efficiently his or her threat whenever necessary would lose his or her reputation and credibility accordingly; the victim will treat his or her next threat consequently. In other words, during the ethnography clearly emerged that any threats constrained not only the victim, but also and more interestingly the perpetrator. Probably, this empirical observation, Popitz (1986) theoretical interpretation of the threatening process, as well as Campana and Varese (2013) particular interpretations of the credible ones, might also help to shed some light as to why officers *often turned a blind eye facing a problematic event* avoiding by doing so to put their own credibility at risk (as well as avoiding to be harmed). Performing credible threats is costly and can result in 'doing' coercion bodily necessarily, even as an unintended consequence.

The 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence'

This section will first outline the three main phases of the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence' (Image 6.1) adopting the interactionist perspective and toolbox presented in Chapter 3 and other just discussed above. The Cycle is intended as a map to show the configuration of the dynamic and routines of 'doing' coercion (or using force) that would be usually adopted by the different actors on the landing, that have been observed during the ethnography. A Cycle that would normally start after a formal or informal definition of a so-called *critical event*; just a problematic event that is labelled as critical event. In particular, it will highlight on one side, the recurrent sequence of events and the cyclic chains of interactions routinely performed by the wing officer, the security manager, and the emergency squad when dealing with institutionally

labelled 'critical events' to reinforce soft-power (Crewe 2009) adopting hard-power by threatening or doing coercion bodily. On the other side, it will also provide thick descriptions of few exemplary interventions observed during fieldwork to return to the flesh-and-blood reality of all those involved in these violent episodes.

The complexity and peculiar characteristics of any particular squad's intervention can of course only be sketchily represented by any short ethnographic narration of whatever sort; let alone by an *abstract map* (Image 6.2) such as the 'Cycle of doing coercion'. The Cycle's goal in fact is limited to outlining the basic and recurrent structure of the situations observed modelling the possible sequence of actions that would usually occur (describing it in very general terms) in any particular critical event time and again – and at the same time constructing it in an analytic and synthetic way.

Each descriptive ethnographic account, on the other side, can instead try to describe thickly only some very particular aspects of any particular event it attempts to describe and concurrently (re)construct. The description will of course necessarily only be a 'partial truth' (Clifford 1986) from a particular standpoint (*infra*, Chapter 8). Following Clifford, in fact, '[e]thnography is a hybrid textual activity: it traverses genres and disciplines [Although e]thnography is [not] "only literature"… it is always writing. (Clifford 1986: 26).

An ethnographic description, such as a field note, an image, a transcript, or a vignette, will not even attempt to produce any kind of generalisation; it simply attempts to describe more or less accurately one particular chain of interactions observed in one particular situation by a particular observer. On the contrary, the Cycle's *raison d'être* is attempting to construct some forms of generalization strongly grounded on the previously observed particular situations.

By thickly describing a few particular interventions taking into account the prisoners' social position in terms of status, race, mental health, as well as the more or less authoritarian officer's attitude, few narrations will also briefly show an example of how some particular agent's characteristic might have influenced a particular course of action in a way or another.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the situation of 'doing' coercion does not allow the ethnographer to downplay the relevance of each prisoner's social position– such as race, mental health, sexuality, and so on. Nor, does it allow the researcher to skip considering the social capital, in terms of power, that each prisoner and officer involved in critical event embedded in his particular biography.

In fact, despite the usually conflictual and sometimes violent relationships between many 'ordinary' prisoners and officers observed on the wing, the relationships between officers and 'mafia boss' of one organized-crime organization or another (Varese 2010) – a prisoner who had served time in a hard-prison-regime wing (a special regime for organised crime related convicts called '41 bis') – would usually be characterised by a Goffmanian presentation of self in which *facework*, on both sides, would display the maintenance of civility, deference, formal respect and interactive accommodation in each and every circumstance (1958). As one officer put it,

[mafia] bosses are gentlemen; they respect me as a worker and never disturb me without a good reason [like other prisoners usually do]; therefore I respect them and treat them accordingly. Usually, I try to respond each and every time they call me...they always say 'please' ...and thank you (field note).

Officers had never used hard-coercion (*infra,* Chapter 7), nor the credible use of coercion with a 'boss' in front of me. Some officers would justify it by saying that *'I boss sanno farsi la galera*' (a boss knows how to behave properly

doing time). However, there is more than that in the picture; Italian prison officers also fear boss' retaliation and the bosses' capacity, even when incarcerated, to perform 'credible threats' (*see also*, Campana and Varese 2013).

The 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence' in Reggio Emilia

In Reggio Emilia, doing coercion was always implicitly in the picture (*infra*, Chapter 5) just like, possibly, in many other custodial institutions, both in Italy and elsewhere. Problematic and violent events would occur continuously in the particular Italian facilities at stake; yet, a complex set of routine, habits, idiosyncrasies and discriminatory practices would influence more or less significantly the discretionary possibility of an emergency squad intervention. The intervention would only rarely be performed already at the beginning of the Cycle (Phase 1 in Image 6.1). Usually, the Cycle would start more softly by the informal arrival of the security manager from 'downstairs' (1.2 in Image 6.2) where his or her office and those of other senior managers are. The security manager would intervene in the day-to-day wing routine, more likely than not, when asked to do so by a subordinate, after all other negotiations performed at the wing level (1.1 in Image 6.2) and the relative 'tools of influence' had failed. Entering the wing and escorted directly by the wing officer towards the 'problematic inmate', the manager would try to close the dispute by using 'tactics of talk'…to achieve compliance' (Liebling and Tait 2006: 104) just like others described in the Anglophone literature.

The arrival of the security manager would start the Cycle. The security manager entering the wing was a clearly observable *turning-point* that usually shifted the situation significantly from one that would be managed locally –and that would be labelled 'ordinary' by all those working and living on the wing – to another that could or could not start a particular configuration of the

interaction chain described in the 'Cycle of doing coercion' or quickly move to de-escalation. In other words, the entrance of the security manager starts *de facto* the Cycle.

Each particular interaction chain, depending on the particular social characteristics of the actors involved could or could not escalate more or less quickly to the level of soft-coercion and threats and even to that of hard-coercion before, eventually, deescalate to the 'ordinary' level of conflict (other would probably call it order) again until the next critical event would re-start.

The 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence' would usually occur in three phases interrupting for a larger or shorter period of time the regular regime of the wing in which coercion is only there implicitly and all issues, critical one included, are dealt with locally by the officer on duty patrolling the wing and if necessary by other wing medical staff such as the wing nurse or the psychiatrists.

The Cycle can be divided into three parts (Image 6.1). *Firstly*, the pre-intervention phase in which the emergency squad intervention would not be at stake; during that phase the wing officer –and medical staff –would pursue the goal to constrain the critical event locally on the wing simply asking the informal intervention of the security manager.

Secondly, the next phase (Phase 2, *Intervention*, in Image 6.1) would start with the call and the following entrance of the emergency squad on the wing; that would regularly occur whenever the previous phase failed in managing the crisis. The entrance of the squad would clearly start soft-coercion (2.1. in Image 6.2) as the next section will describe. Then, doing soft-coercion would eventually lead either to the end of the crisis – with or without doing credible threats (2.2 in Image 6.2) – or to the squad doing hard-coercion (2.3 and 2.4 in

Image 6.2) (*infra*, Chapter 7).

Lastly, at any point of the Cycle the situation could escalate entering the third and last phase and by doing so getting back to 'business as usual' on the wing. The intervention phase would start by the turning-point of the entrance of the emergency squad; the exit of the emergency squad, on the other side, would clearly mark the end of the second phase and the start of the last one: the de-escalation phase[143].

Before moving to the next section it is important to stress the discretion involved in the *labelling process* that constructs *any usual problematic situation into a critical event* justifying the wing manger's arrival and possibly the squad's intervention thereafter. In another situation, i.e. if another prisoner or officer would be in the picture, the officer might have turned a blind eye instead; this is what discretion is all about.

This process is not power-neutral and the particular social and power positions of the prisoners (and the officers) as well as the particular attitudes of both the keeper and the kept to each other would play a role in that process influencing its course; particularly so at the extreme of those stratifications. It has been observed that being very powerful or powerless, or having a very high or a very low reputation strongly influence on the particular enactment of the Cycle and even on the discretional decision either to start it or not.

Once the labelling process performed by both the wing officers and others in the chain of command or in the medical hierarchy had defined and constructed any occurrence into a critical event, the structure of the situation would then

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[143]   To be clear, though, the critical situation could also move from Phase 1 directly to Phase 3, thereby completely skipping the phase 2: the intervention phase; yet, if the intervention was in the picture, then its start and end would correspond to two clearly visible and audible turning points: the first turning point would be the emergency squad entering the wing in a platoon; the second one, instead, would be the officers of the emergency squad exiting the wing.

follow a similar path: the 'Cycle of doing coercion'. It would be performed in quite similar ways in many circumstances that appeared to be quite different from one another if observed closely; yet, also during the particular performance of the Cycle, discretion, and discrimination are also at stake. However, *ceteris paribus*, the Collins' toolbox and the Cycle can together help describe the sequence of actions and attempt to unpack the dynamic of the Cycle in many particular situations.

Threatening coercion symbolically by bodily presence and face-to-face interactions

The emergency squad's arrival on the wing would start soft-coercion beginning the Phase 2 of the Cycle (Phase 2 in Image 6.1); it would only begin after the informal (or formal) definition of a particular event as 'critical event' and, usually, only after the medical approval (which de facto might also occur ex-post). The Emergency squad would mainly enter the wing as a consequence of one of three situations.

Firstly, by an explicit verbal face-to-face command of the superordinate responsible for security: the security manager who started the Cycle by his arrival on the wing. *Then*, in response to a sudden loud security alarm (Image 6.3) on one particular wing or another. *Next*, as a reinforcement to an officer's (or staff) self-defence after an alleged officers' (or staff's) assault (independently of the source of the information and the availability of a formal command to intervene by a superordinate). *Lastly*, to enforce a forensic psychiatric order of compulsory psychiatric medication (in Italian, *T.S.O. Trattamento sanitario obbligatorio*).

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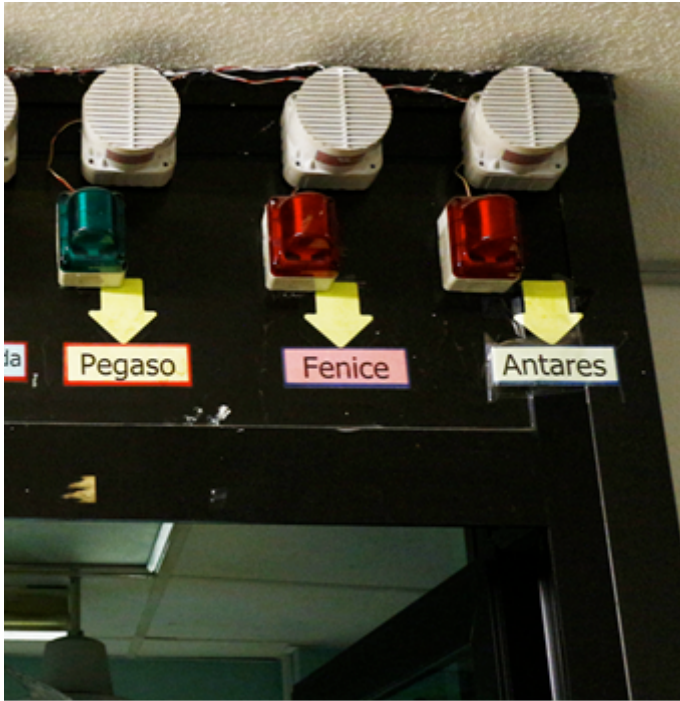
Image 6.3 Emergency alarms (ethnographic image, detail: Luigi Gariglio).

The physical entrance of the emergency squad onto the wing would visibly introduce the issue of coercion (*see*, Image 6.4) for all the prisoners observing it either from within their cell or from the outside, as well as, concurrently, for all other staff on the wing at that moment (and, of course, for the researcher too).

Usually, prisoners and other staff on the wing (such as i.e. nurses, doctors, psychiatrists, chaplains and so on) would only deal with one (wing manager) or maximum two (also rehab) officers at a time (*infra*, Chapter 4); often those prison officers would be 'invisible' because they would be working in their office or as prisoners would say they would be 'minding their own business'.

The squad would include at least four officers, normally a minimum of six and seven up to ten or more, marching like a military platoon; the arrival would be a visible and audible bodily presence that would produce a remarkable turning

point on the wing atmosphere, suddenly changing the situation for all parties involved in a way or another.

Image 6.4: The emergency squad entering onto the wing (ethnographic image, detail: Luigi Gariglio)

Usually, soft-coercion would occur between custodial staff and prisoners when the first and the second would still be physically separated from each other: prisoners would typically be locked up in their own cell. In fact, whenever a real crisis would suddenly explode with prisoners moving freely on the wing, the soft-coercion phase would often be skipped and hard-coercion would instead immediately enter the picture.

Threatening coercion symbolically

The symbolic threat of coercion is here defined as an embodied symbolic display of authority and, concurrently, physical force – a kind of reinforced 'authority maintenance ritual' (Alpert and Dunham 2004: 172) – by which a group of officers, often headed by a security manager would intervene in a critical situation to try to solve it efficaciously.

> Its eight o'clock in the morning. A group of officers
> is entering the detention area after attending the
> morning meeting with the commander and having an
> espresso with colleagues at the prison cafeteria,
> situated downstairs of the rooms where some officers
> live.
>
> Just now, three to four officers were 'put' into, or
> ordered to form the emergency squad; yet they all
> know that they are available for any other duty
> directly required by the commander or the security
> manager until the next unpredictable emergency occurs
> on the landing. They also know that in case of
> emergency, particularly so when an alarm rings, there
> is no time to lose. They will stop doing whatsoever
> they were doing and run toward the crisis which
> characteristics at that stage are still unknown to
> them. Before arriving on the emergency scene they
> usually have no previous knowledge about what has
> occurred.
>
> 'When the alarms ring you just have to run upstairs
> [the detention wings] and solve the problem in a way
> or another; it doesn't matter whether one prisoner's
> doing self-harm, is fighting with his cell-mate or
> whatsoever; you just go, see what's up and move head

on'. Once on duty in the squad, officers stick with one another most of the time being ready for an unpredictable intervention. In fact, they all know that, here, it is very likely that something will happen, sooner or later. Minimum, they will have to perform one soft intervention to try solving one dispute or another; it is their routine job and they seem ready for it; yet, one not so young prison officer that had just come back from Sardinia [one Italian island] where his woman still lives looks really tired; he had a very nice week with her and is now yawning repeatedly. 'It's time for a coffee, let's go and get one!' he says. The three of them go to have a coffee, one waits at the office just in case of an emergency call.

Just now two other officers escorted the prisoners coming from the yard back to their own wing. One of the most routinary, yet dangerous, activities occurring inside performed twice a day, day in and day out.

Suddenly the phone rings. Francesco, the officer patrolling the closed wing is calling from upstairs in the wing. He is urging the intervention of the security manager: a prisoner is refusing to enter his cell and behaves 'childishly'; he lays on the floor with his arms open wide like as if he was crucified. He is a guy who has done it before time and again. They say he is simply asking for attention. The security manager, and then the commander come upstairs. One after the other each of them tries to convince him to enter into his cell; no way!

After ten minutes or so the commander goes back to his duty leaving the problem to his security manager.

Jup (not his real name), an Italian-Nigerian very heavy, muscular and tall black guy once again does not seem to intend to cooperate at all. He is really gentle though. He speaks softly and calmly just reiterating that 'I do not want to be locked up now. Just leave me a couple of minutes more and I'll do it'. Jup's 'trick' lasts for more than twenty minutes. The security managers know Jup is completely unpredictable, and that an intervention might easily turn out to be a really violent confrontation. And Jup had been behaving better lately; he had not caused any problems for the last month or so. That's why the manager is waiting for so long (of course my presence strongly influences the manager's and possibly also the inmate's decisions. In Collins' terms in fact there was a spectator of violence; the so-called *research effect* was in the picture. Furthermore Jup could have intended to show me one of his performances by which he was attempting 'doing freedom' in a way or another (Ugelvik 2014).

The manager is trying kindly to 'help him stand up' and also offers him a way out of the situation that is now becoming embarrassing for all parties. A way out with no consequence for any of the two of them: a win-win solution. In fact, he asks Jup whether or not he needs to see a doctor or a psychiatrist thereby offering the prisoner the opportunity to lawfully stay for some extra-time out of his cell waiting for a visit.

Jup does not accept the deal and continues what to me seems like theatre performance, yet a very costly one to him. The situation is suddenly becoming serious.

The manager orders the officer to call 'the guys', meaning the squad. The officer's dialling on his wireless phone; he calls for the squad intervention. Downstairs the guy who waited in the office runs to the coffee-point just at the end of the corridor, where the others were still chatting after the coffee, to inform them. The guys, understanding what's happening start walking towards him.

He says 'let's go, Jup is behaving stupidly as usual' one replies sarcastically 'he did not learn the lesson last month…ah ah…or he forgot ah ah'. Knowing him, they imagine that nothing really urgent is at stake. However, they just walk through the corridor, pass by the commander's officer and tell him 'we rush upstairs!' He replies 'Again? *Basta*! I had enough!'

They enter the detention wings area through the Block 1 gate (the entrance to the asylum wings; *infra,* Chapter 4) turn left, walk upstairs and enter the wing at the first floor where the closed wing is.

The wing's atmosphere is quite calm; some prisoners, though, are also complaining shouting to Jup to stop behaving silly. One prisoner shouted from a few cells away. 'Don't be fool! You should know all too well what to expect acting like this again'. Another even yelled racist words urging Jup to go back to Africa, even though *Kunta Kinte — as the yelling prisoner and some officers usually call him for the colour of his skin (and he usually docilely accept it)—* is Italian, born in Italy and had never even been to Africa as yet.

It's raining. It's really cold inside, because wing officers leave all the corridor windows open because 'it stinks so much here' and therefore the heating

has almost no effect; staff use an electric heater
for their box; at the infirmary they do the same;
prisoners try to cope with it in a way or another.

The morning started badly. There is a lot of tension
and I am waiting for the team to start a fight. Their
intention seems clear to me, yet, they are still
quiet.

The officer heading the squad firmly says 'just rush
in Jup! Now!' Jup was clearly unsure of what to do.
He hesitates for a couple of seconds and then he
stands up, and enters his cell with a smile on his
face. The officers displayed a very annoyed face and
the other officer who ordered him to enter the cell
banged Jup's barred door as hard as I had heard so
far.

The team walked downstairs and the wing officer
finally went back to his box to watch some TV and
finish some paper work (Vignette 6.1).

That group of officers forming the squad would first head towards the wing where their action is needed. Next, they would enter into the particular wing where one particular episode had 'occurred'.

They would enter the wing hierarchically displaying and performing their authority constituting and re-constituting by their very simple presence a symbolic threat of the possibility of an imminent use of physical coercion. Once on the wing, the squad would be ready to begin its theatrical display of power on the landing heading towards the particular cell – or place – where one particular prisoner (or a group of prisoners) had 'produced' the event previously institutionally labelled as critical. This symbolic intervention would last up to maximum thirty, forty minutes; the shortest lasted less than five minutes or so.

During that period of time, one or more of the officers in the squad would try to calm down the 'agitated prisoners' pursuing a negotiation and, afterwards would return to their base waiting for the next intervention or any other duty to perform in the meanwhile.

Some officers are having lunch together at the canteen watching the News on TV. A newly arrived prisoner—starts to threaten the wing staff lunching objects and insulting; moreover, he makes so much noise to be audible from the security manager downstairs. Downstairs, due to the prisoner's record arrived with the prisoners, the prisoner is already 'well-known' as provoker and completely unreasonable (in prison officers' opinion by reading the documents other fellow officer somewhere else had filled in).

The security manager and the commander decide to go upstairs together to explain him 'how it works here'. Once the commander is in front of the prisoner's cell, the newcomer starts to complain about everything: 'the room is dirty; the mattress is stinky, here it's too noisy, and so on' [which, by the way, it was all true indeed].

The commander calmly listens to the prisoners for a couple of minutes, then, he suddenly asks gently but firmly: 'where do you think you are? In a hotel? We are all working for you…don't worry, everything will be alright', and disappears downstairs.

Fortunately for the prisoner, the wing officer on duty is Carlo (not the real name), a very calm and understandable one; he is an '*accamosciato*' (an officer considered to be on the prisoner's side by his peers and referred to accordingly). Trying to be polite he goes to the prisoner's cell and keeping a safety distance from him, he tells Carlo to keep in mind all the times that

'if you respect us we will respect you. If you do not, we shall behave accordingly'. And then, the officer adds 'just for your information, you started really badly, indeed!'

The situation escalates and the prisoner starts to urinate in a bottle and tries to hit a nurse who understands his intentions and goes back to the infirmary promptly informing the wing officer with the wire-less phone of Carlo's behaviour and of Carlo's cell condition. Immediately, the officer calls the commander who calls the squad and other two guys from the canteen ordering them to go upstairs immediately and 'explain the new guy how it works here'.

The squad waits for a couple of minutes for their fellow officers to arrive and promptly march upstairs quite noisily. They walk through the corridor, then to the stairs and arrive upstairs. Once at the wing gate, they enter the wing and the last officer bangs the wing barred door behind them loudly, thereby not only locking it safely, but clearly signalling their arrival and intentions.

They march like automata towards the prisoner's cell that is at the end of the wing: Cell 23. The wing is very noisy and some prisoners were banging their bathrooms metal doors to protest against the new prisoner who is not able to behave properly just after a few moments from his arrival on the wing. Others, however, say (to me later) that he is right because that cell is in a particularly indecent condition and he has just arrived; he is probably shocked not only for the arrest but also for his new detention environment and the fellow prisoners he sees around him; he must be really traumatised.

Anyway, the reinforced squad arrives in front of him

without particularly bad intentions yet displaying thuggishness. They hardly ever do coercion for such a 'stupid' reason to someone just arrested; yet, the must give him a symbolic lesson to explain his new environment.

They know that new arrestee can show some problems coping with the new situation. The officers' faces are very severe, their body very strong, their appearance not soft at all; some look more annoyed, others more bored, yet others simply doing their routine job. The head of the squad, however, is more nicely mannered and tries being polite and displays an understanding behaviour open to a negotiation.

The head of the squad, with a smile that could also be interpreted as sarcastic, said something like 'What's up? Have a problem?'

The new prisoner, possibly overwhelmed by the unexpected situation, suddenly calms down, goes towards his stinking matrass walking on his own urine on the floor, lays down and says with a very low tone of voice: 'no problem, I am tired. I'll try to sleep'.

'Can we go now? Is it ok with you now? Can we do anything more for you? Please, don't stress; it is better for you... Wait calmly and, if you behave properly, today or maximum tomorrow you'll see the chaplain, the social worker and if you want it, even the psychotherapist.

In a particularly funny way (for his colleagues and to be honest for me too), yet in this case not so professional, the officers before leaving added 'if you need it we can also call Father Christmas for you...ah

ah'.

The prisoner replays with a hardly audible tone of voice 'just do what you want to do'.

I go downstairs with the squad and have a coffee with three of them. One officer says kind of confidentially (yet, he later on, said it in detail in a video recorded interview).

'It has not always been like this Luigi... A few years ago he would have been directly taken in a way or another and forcibly tied to the bed for some days; that was normally our welcome; a new comer behaving like that...No way! Now it's different. We work and act more like social workers, rather than like proper officers; in fact, we are almost not officers anymore. Some complain for this. I am happy, though. I have really had enough of continuous fighting and prefer to solve the situation peacefully if possible, or at least try to doing so. We are not all the same here, as they think out-there' (Vignette 6.2).

Normally, the symbolic threaten of coercion would not occur abruptly; instead, it would be the outcome of the failure of two chains of interactions which had occurred beforehand on the wing, one directly after the other; firstly, a series of (failed) negotiations – or only one – would have occurred repeatedly at the local level of the wing directly involving both the particular prisoners and the wing staff alone (1.1 in Image 6.2); no security manager's informal intervention is in the picture at that stage. Secondly, a following series of negotiations, or just one, would have included the participation of a supra-ordinated officer (1.2 in Image 6.2) such as the security manager or an officer sent by him or her on the wing to try negotiating a solution to the issue at stake or to what had already happened. In other words, before the squad arrives, all other sorts of soft-power (Crewe 2011, 2009) would have probably been in the

picture in a way or another.

It should be clear, though, that usually, the majority of the dozens of critical issues emerging daily on the asylum's wing would either turn to a positive end – to the de-escalation phase (Phase 3 in Image 6.1) without further need of any explicit symbolic threat by the emergency squad – or would be left 'unnoticed' by officers turning a blind eye, avoiding, by doing so to construct a new critical event. This ethnography clearly support Crewe's (2011) interpretation of the relevance of soft-power even in such a violent custodial setting.

However, not only were new crisis exploding frequently, but also, 'finished' ones, could suddenly re-explode time and again in an interactional-chain. The situation was very dynamic; others would describe it as a battleground. Soft-power would be always in the picture; soft-coercion and the threats implied in it, particularly the symbolic threat, would also very often reinforce it.

The symbolic threat of coercion as 'interaction ritual': the squad marching in

The symbolic threat of coercion was clearly an 'interaction ritual' (Goffman 1967). It would be performed by the arrival of the 'rank and files' emergency squad on the wing (2.1 in Image 6.2). Depending on the configuration of each particular critical event, the reputation of the prisoner(s) involved, the particular officer and head of the local chain of command on duty, as well as the presence or the absence of the researcher on the wing, the 'squad' would consequently enter the wing more or less rapidly, orderly and aggressively; it would be organised in one particular configuration or another, and would display one 'face' or another towards the prisoners.

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Some inmates really look for trouble here...they insist, they call, and call again … they continuously call me or my colleague for no reason, or for fucking reasons ...they never have enough...they do not know what the verb 'to wait' means. Do they think they are in a hotel [the metaphor of the hotel is frequently used by officers]? Or what? Some start banging the toilet doors; others threaten us continuously...we do not even hear them anymore. Do they want a lesson? They seem to be looking for it intensively now. No problem, we are here ready to please them whenever they wish to (field note).

The practice of the symbolic threaten of coercion was, each time, performed in one particular way and with a particular squad's organization. The ethnographic picture (image 6.2) – here simply used as an illustration (just as a visual field note; *see*, Appendix) – shows one example of the squad arrival on the wing during a critical event.

Each time the squad would arrive on the wing, the wing's atmosphere would change accordingly; often becoming more quite; occasionally becoming more explosive instead; hardly ever the situation would remain the same. The squad would enter into the wing ritualistically and, more often than not, would firstly approach the prisoner(s) paternalistically (when the ethnographer is in the picture), like an old grandfather would try to explain to his grand-son to change his attitude before something else more serious would follow as a punishment. Despite the officers' slow movement and low tone of voice, the quasi-military hierarchy characterising the chain of command (*infra*, Chapter 4) would be properly displayed by both the configuration of the squad, and the proxemics of its members.

The local commander would be heading the squad authoritatively; while in his absence, either the responsible of the security, or any other senior officer in charge would substitute him; then the other officers would follow directly afterwards. The position of each officer within the squad's configuration would often be related to the grade, seniority or even the greater or less desire 'to be

part' of the action actively. At that stage, no real physical confrontation, nor assault, could happen yet; the officers would be on one side of the gate, and the prisoner(s) on the other.[144] In these circumstances, all activities on the wing would be immediately suspended. Medical staff would also stop their activity with inmates, without any formal invitation by the squad.

In such a situation there would be a momentum for a negotiation to start. At least some tools of negotiation, either symbolic ones like a quite long chat, or material ones such as a cigarette or, more rarely, a cup of coffee would be employed by the head of the squad in an effort to open a dialogue and resolve the dispute. Sometimes, different solutions would be discussed time and again between the head of the squad and the kept; seldom, however, the situation would quickly turn to a very conflictual one. Usually, the situation would slowly calm down and come to an end becoming, in officers' words 'just another boring *Deja vu'*, or 'a kind of social worker's job' at least temporarily; yet occasionally, the situation would not ameliorate quickly enough – if at all – and it would suddenly move to the next phase of the credible threat (2.2 in Image 6.2) or directly to bodily coercion (*infra,* Chapter 7).

The prisoners' reactions to the squad arrival on the wing

Occasionally, the squad arrival was followed by a sharply increasing level of protest; some prisoners – both with or without a psychiatric condition – might have been disturbed in a way or another by the arrival of the emergency squad and would start shouting and yelling all kind of insults towards the officers.

Some prisoners might have felt humiliated, others provoked; yet, others might have felt powerless, desperate, annihilated, and so on by such a strong

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[144] Here, we refer to issue occurring when prisoners are locked uo in their cells, either alone or with a fellow prisoner.

symbolic presence on the wing; some might have remembered their previous 'fight' with them, their arrest, or just simply 'hate any guy with a blue uniform'.

Sometimes, a sharply increase of the level of protest after the arrival of the squad occurred because of the previous potentially critical event performed by a different prisoner had not been taken seriously enough into account – the squad had not arrived on the wing in that previous occasion. By feeling not to be seriously acknowledged – not as much as his fellow colleague that caused the arrival of the squad just now – that particular prisoners(s) might feel his (their) reputation at risk with his (their) fellow inmates.

In order to *save the face* and regain or enhance one's reputation, one particular inmate might consider to retaliate the squad by giving them serious trouble in return; serious repetitive troubles observed have been, *inter alia*, inmates barricading inside their own cell, destroying it completely and/or flooding it with water, 'staging'[145] a suicide or other 'minor' kind of self-harm thereby trying to stimulate the squad's (or medical staff) immediate intervention or respond to a personal need of any kind, not necessarily and/or only limited to resistance.

In one occasion I observed (and photographed the aftermath) of one chain of interaction in which one inmate would repeatedly destroy one cell after another for three times in less than one hour and a half; and his justification with the guards was that they had to start taking him seriously at least responding to his requests promptly. As he said 'at the end, it is your fucking job, isn't it?' It is hard not to think he was at least partly right in his resistance; yet about the method, they were surely completely illegal. It was in another way a strongly physical and violent interactional chain, yet, it had a particularly strongly

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[145] Most of the suicidal attempts where described by officers as mise en scene by which prisoners called for attention. Yet, I knew at least one of those who would frequently just call for attention. Eventually, he committed suicide in his cell at night.

communicative meaning as well, at least in his actor expressed intentions with which he communicated and at the same time, threatened the officers dealing with him.

That particular situation, however, occurred at the beginning of my fieldwork and nothing happened to the prisoners, at least until I was sent off the wing by the squad. At a certain point in fact, the head of the squad told me that the situation was too dangerous for me to stay there and urged (not to say ordered) me to move away quickly. Afterwards, until the end of the fieldwork, I have hardly ever been sent away from the scene – only if new officers who did not know me were heading the squad which happened but a couple of times – nor did I experience such a 'lazy and relaxed' response to a violent and threatening behaviour again. Usually, in fact, in those cases, officers would react to such a provocative violence accordingly by moving the situation to doing coercion bodily at least to constrain the prisoners.

The outnumbering force of the squad (Crewe 2009) was indeed a symbolic display of physical power that normally properly worked to direct the dispute to a reasonable outcome without the necessity to move the interaction to the next stage of a violent physical confrontation (psychological violence was already there). However, in many occasions, the situation would relapse or would not calm down quickly enough again, thereby evolving at least to the next stage: the credible threat of coercion (2.2 in Image 6.2); or directly to hard-coercion (2.3 in Image 6.2).

Threatening coercion credibly: 'Wearing gloves' and/or 'moving fingers'

It took me more than one year and the observation of many emergency squad's interventions to start comprehending the crucial importance of the distinction between the officers' symbolic threat of doing coercion just discussed in the

previous section, and the officers' credible threat (Campana and Varese 2013 would call it credible commitment) of doing coercion in focus here. This distinction is relevant theoretically because it helps shed some light on a crucial hidden dimension of officers' jobs; a dimension often denied in public discourses if not in legal documents[146]; moreover, and more importantly, it is relevant for the keeper and the kept for the implication it has on their own lives, as well as, concurrently, for the relevance of the issue on the keeper-kept communication with one another.

The discovery of a set of scripts (Wieder 1974) used by officers to transform their symbolic threat on the wing to a credible one have been crucial and occurred unpredictably. Before, addressing those scripts and explaining the peculiarities of credible threats, however, I now briefly return to some relevant ideas on the issue of threat and commitment by briefly surfing the field of ration choice. It is important however to bear in mind that, neither Popitz, nor rational choice theorists or prison ethnographers have focused their attention towards prison officers 'doing' threats; usually, they instead address threads produced by 'criminals' or by inmates in the 'underworld'.

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[146] Although the definition of violence in the POA 1600 reads: 'Any incident in which a person is abused, threatened, or assaulted. This includes an explicit or implicit challenge to their safety, well-being or health. The resulting harm may be physical, emotional or psychological.' (Home Office 2005: 30). It is usually implied that prisoners threat officers; officers ought not to threaten inmates. More explicitly it reads, about *defusion startegies* that 'staff should adopt a non-threatening body posture: [...] Use a calm, open posture (sitting or standing) […] Reduce direct eye contact (as it may be taken as a confrontation) […] Allow the prisoner adequate personal space […] Keep both hands visible […] Avoid sudden movements that may startle or be perceived as an attack […] void audiences – as an audience may escalate the situation. More importantly, it readsnever threaten: Once you have made a threat or given an ultimatum you have ceased all negotiations and put yourself in a potential win lose situation (Home Office 2005: 32; *emphasis and bold eliminated*).

Understanding threats through the rational choice lens: a short note

Chapter 3 introduced Popitz (1986) phenomenological perspective on threats which was used in this thesis, yet ex-post, to frame the theoretical concept adopted to analyse the observations of officers threatening and 'doing' coercion on the landing. Here, before continuing, it is useful to briefly consider the work of few scholars – more or less situated in the rational choice theoretical framework – who also addressed the issue of 'doing' threats in a useful way (*inter alia* Schelling 1960; 2006; Gambetta 2009; Campana e Varese 2013); that theoretical perspective can be useful not only for those embedding it in their own research agenda, but also for any ethnographer dealing with observational data of interaction chains dealing with 'doing' threats in a way or another[147].

According to Schelling (1960) and to Gambetta (2009), the threat is by its nature first of all a communicative act. Following Schelling '[i]t is no more than a communication of one's own incentives, designed to impress on the other the *automatic consequence* of his act' (1960: 35; *emphasis added*). He then enriched the issue by saying that a threat is *not* only communication; particularly so, 'when one threatens an act that he [or she] would have no incentive to perform but that is designed to deter through its *promise of mutual harm*' (35; *emphasis added*). Despite being imbued in rational theoretical thinking and vocabulary – which differs greatly from the one adopted here based on observation and an ethnographic micro-sociological approach – Schelling's section on threat (35–43) is indeed a very useful tool that ought to be taken into account seriously.

Schelling also introduced the very ideas of *credibility* and *commitment* – as Campana and Varese (2013) showed – writing about threads, already in 1960

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[147]   Although it is true that Schelling addresses threat already in 1960 as is shown in what follows, it is true that in his last work (2006) a direct or indirect influence of Popitz work appears between the lines.

by arguing that 'the threat's efficacy depends on the credulity of the other party' (36). Schelling showed some theoretically grounded options about possible commitment during a threat interaction:

One can of course bluff…the one making the threat may pretend that he erroneously believe his own cost [i.e. the consequence of the fight] to be small….he can pretend a revenge motivation so strong as to overcome the prospect of self-damage…One may try to stake his reputation on fulfilment, in a manner that impresses the threatened person. One may even stake his *reputation with the threatened person himself*, on grounds that it would be worth the costs and pains to give a lesson to the latter if he fails to heed the threat (Schelling 1960: 36; *emphasis in the original*).

Most importantly, however, Schelling also stated that a *threat intercourse is a field of uncertainty* in which, it can be implied, both intended and unintended consequences are at stake; 'in threat situations…commitments are not altogether clear; each party cannot exactly estimate the costs and values to the other side of the two related actions involved in the threat' (Schelling 1960: 39). He then continued, that 'the process of commitment may be a progressive one, the commitments acquiring their firmness by a *sequence of actions'* (Schelling 1960: 39; *emphasis added*); and that is particularly interesting here.

Before concluding his section on threat, Schelling reinforces the role of the idea of credibility stating that

[i]t is essential, therefore, for maximum credibility [of the threat], to leave as little room as possible for judgment or discretion in carrying out the threat. If one is committed to punish a certain type of behaviour when it reaches certain limits, but the limits are not carefully and objectively defined, the party threatened will realize that when the party comes to decide whether the threat must be enforced or not, his interest and that of the threatening party will coincide in an attempt to avoid the mutually unpleasant consequences. (Schelling 1960: 40).

Avoiding 'the mutually unpleasant consequences' is something that may be in the picture or not, depending on the particular actors involved, their commitment, their social position, the personal idiosyncrasies at stake; yet, it resonates well with Collins' idea of the difficulty to enact violence (Collins 2008).

Although these aspects can be denied and neutralized in public discourses and official documents such as the British Prison *Officers Order 1600* on The *Use of Force* (Home Office 2005) and the Italian equivalent[148], those particular aspects influencing any particular interaction based on threat have been clearly observed on the field.

Despite the theoretical relevance of rational choice, adopting ethnography and observation here, rational choice insights must be considered with caution. Popitz's (1986) phenomenological work, instead, remains the crucial theoretical work to shed light on the empirical data within our framework grounded in the interactionist, micro-sociological tradition (*infra*, Chapter 3).

Observing officers doing credible threat: unpacking officers' scripts

Over a long period of observation, two scripts appeared to be particularly relevant *inter alia* to transform what I just now called a symbolic threat into a credible one. The first script would be that in which one or more officers of the emergency squad would start to *wear gloves* while being in front of the prisoner(s) already performing a symbolic threat.

The other, with a very similar meaning, would be that in which those same officers, or others, would start to *move fingers* instead.

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[148] See the Italian Prison Officers' Rules (Law December, 15th 1990, n. 395: '*Ordinamento del Corpo di polizia penitenziaria.*'

By adopting those two scripts officers would communicate and 'signal' (Gambetta 2009) with one another, as well as, interactively with prisoners that the situation was approaching a violent turning point: the use of bodily hard-coercion and the entrance in something similar to what Collins described as 'the tunnel of Violence' (2012).

By starting to perform one of those two scripts, each officer would propose to his own fellow colleagues – without necessarily saying anything verbally – to follow him and move on to the next level of the intervention (from 2.1 to 2.2 in Image 6.2), thereby 'finally stopping bullshitting' (field note), or as another officer told me, just before the intervention:

Now let's stop it! Who do you think we are? Social workers, or what? Should I waste my time discussing endlessly with him? Do you think I am crazy? Should I become crazy too? It's simply too much...you see it by yourself...do you?' (Field note).

Eventually, in that particular occasion, 'tactics of talk' achieve[d] compliance' (Liebling and Tait 2006: 104) and the situation deescalated accordingly. That situation could be simply read as one possible outcome of the Cycle; yet, fleshy human being with their own emotions, cultures, and idiosyncrasies interacted face-to-face and more or less efforts were made on either side to come up with a solution or head on to a physic confrontation. Depending on the particular situation and the particular actors involved in it, more or less favourable conditions would be in the picture turning the situation more likely in one direction or another.

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Pino is a young man in his twenties sitting at his clean
light-brown wooden little desk in his quite dirty cell
one morning in September 2013; he is Italian, proudly
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coming from the North-East of the country, quite tall, muscular, usually quite deferent with officers and well-known to be very stubborn and not that friendly with his fellow inmates. He is bald, blue eyed, with a small scar on his face under his left eye and some small hand-made greenish prison tattoo both on his head and on his hands. He is wearing a grey Nike jumper, a white singlet, red underwear, no trousers, and slippers.

Sitting on his chair at his desk situated near the barred door facing the wing's corridor, he is calmly having breakfast: coffee and milk, biscuits and one fresh orange he has kept from the previous dinner of the day before.

Once he finishes eating his orange, he stands up, as usual, and lights up a cigarette smoking it slowly while resting his elbow on the barred door. He shows (or better, displays) a smiley face and a relaxed attitude to me. He definitely seems to be calm; the wing is not that noisy either in that particular moment. Just, occasionally, some staff moving back and forth with their metal carts creaking loudly. Just the usual routine. Prisoners screaming, others calling; yet others laying on the bed and seemingly watching the roof or the outside world. A lot of cigarette's smoke is in the air, as usual.

The telephone rings at the prison officer box at the closed wing; the security manager alerts the wing officer that a newcomer is arriving soon on the wing and that a place, any place, was therefore needed to allocate him. The newcomer will be entering the institution coming from another one where he had created too much trouble; yet, they already know him in the facility and the wing officer does not show any particular apprehension for his arrival.

The officer had already silently told me before about

the arrival of the 'troublemaker'; he knew it already. The officer had defined him an 'old friend of mine [of his]' using a sarcastic voice. A new prisoner's arrival or departure is nothing new in the facility; nobody would either display any particular attention, or curiosity, for such a mundane occurrence; yet it was very different for me. It was one of my first days on the wing and, at that stage, I still felt both excited and overwhelmed by the idea of seeing a new prisoner being escorted into the wing and afterwards locked up into a cell in front of me.

I was concurrently 'kind of' worried and feeling strange for the prisoner's arrival: I was experiencing it first-hand and for the first time. The officer Giuseppe (not his real name), was instead worried simply because he said there was 'no fucking place to put this new one; he'll give us lots of trouble...he surely will! I know him very well, believe me.'

He bluntly tells me that all 'easy' prisoners have already one or more fellow prisoners with them in their cells. Those that are still alone 'should better stay alone...they are left alone for a reason... they've already created enough trouble each and every time they have put someone else with them in their cell.'

About three hours have passed quickly. Only ordinary problems are in the picture on the wing. The same usual smell of the combination of encrusted dirt, sweat and food is in the air. Before lunch, I have stayed for quite some times downstairs, where most of the senior officers' and psychiatrists' offices are, following the new prisoner's 'welcome' procedures, medical and psychiatric visits, and social worker's interview, just staying together with the officer escorting the prisoner from one place to the next one.

The security manager share his idea with the wing

psychiatrist, the wing nurse, and one wing officer as to where to *put* the new prisoner. Eventually, they agree on the decision to throw the newcomer into Pino's cell. Giuseppe tells me about that decision explaining me the two reasons that justify that decision.

'Today, Pino is the only really calm prisoner still living in his cell alone...let's say. Not too agitated'. Then, the officer adds the second reason. 'Pino is under psychiatric assessment; he's very close to be relocated to the open wing just upstairs'. Having been committed to reach that goal thereby gaining some freedom, he is not likely to behave badly with the newcomer.

The Staff quickly agree with this decision which is the outcome of less than ten minutes dialogue in front of me. The psychiatrist says 'Luigi, I am sure he will cooperate. If he creates too much trouble, then, tomorrow, we see what to do. Pino is a criminal [meaning not a psychiatric patient or someone with psychiatric issues], he sometimes behaves like a criminal, but he is definitely not so stupid to misunderstand the chance we are giving him to gain his promotion to the open regime'. The psychiatrist then adds: 'do you think it is really a problem to pass a couple of nights with someone in your room?' [I do not think it is as irrelevant to the human being locked in as the psychiatrist pretend it to be, but I do not respond to the question].

'He's an experienced prisoner and he knows we do what we can do. There is no other possibility now...tomorrow we'll see and, if possible we will reallocate the newcomer to a new wing. By now, it's simply like this and he has to accept it whether he likes it or not... I am confident he will be cooperative, though.'

In the past Pino had some minor psychiatric problems; at the moment, however, he is ok. He is 'well compensated' as the psychiatrist, and consequently almost all the

other medical and custodial staff would put it. Yet, he usually shows aggressive attitudes and becomes violent time and again for 'minor reasons'.

'It's not strange here in prison, is it? Don't forget that Pino is a criminal, just like many others on the landing. He has always been like that on the outside as well, it's his nature, and he is used to do like that' concludes the officer Giuseppe.

Suddenly, the phone rang again. The officer emphatically told me: '*arriva!*' (He is arriving!). The officer then adds that the new prisoner will arrive at the wing's entrance in a moment, escorted by a group of his fellow officers.

At that stage, the decision was taken; the moment arrives in which the newcomer would be urged to enter Pino's cell in a way or another.

As soon as Pino meets the newcomer's gaze, he starts to yell to him *'Bastardooo!!!Bastardooo!!!Se entri ti ammazzoooo!!!'* (Mutherfucker, mutherfucker, if you step in I will kill you). The newcomer stays still, saying nothing, looking towards Pino aloof; Pino's face turns red and his attitude, as well as visible emotion, escalates quickly. He screams as loud as he can, possibly in order to display his anger and toughness to the new guy who is going to enter his cell anyways, sooner or later.

Now, a decision is taken. The wing's officer calls the security manager who already knows the guy and simply decides to skip the talk and directly send the emergency squad, instead; they arrive on the wing in front of the cell in less than three minutes; there are only four of them, plus the two escorting the prisoner and the wing officer: seven in total.

The little squad had arrived slowly, simply walking, displaying a very annoyed attitude because, once again, Pino resulted to be untrustworthy despite all efforts they had put over the last months 'to help him in all the ways permitted by the Prison rules and beyond, and all the times they forgave him'. They arrived, just now.

The newcomer is quickly pushed out of sight of the wing by the two officers escorting him. Pino is really behaving unreasonably despite all officers' efforts to convince him by talking calmly and with a soft tone of voice; he accepts no reason, no justifications, and he pretends with his behaviour and screaming to be committed to kill the guy. 'I don't give a fuck if I will have to stay stuck in this fucking shitty wing all my life. That shit will not enter in my room! No way!'

The arrival of the squad does not help to deescalate the situation. Yet, knowing the particular officers at stake in that particular occasion, I feel they are trying to do their best; well, one is showing to be in 'the mood for an intervention'; the other three are doing their best and suddenly, Pino starts to dismount his metal mountable bed in an attempt to destroy the ceramic washbasin or to barricade himself inside the cell just like he has done a few times before the previous days. The four officers are just a few steps from me and less than one meter of the cell's barred door. One of the officers starts cracking his fingers, another just a couple of seconds afterwards put his brown leather gloves on and take the cell's key in his hands.

Suddenly, to me unpredictably, the situation turns up-side-down. 'Pino starts saying 'no, no, no, please no, ok, ok, call that shit! And make me talk to him.' In the meanwhile all four officers have put the gloves on, either dark-brown leather or light-blue plastic disposal

ones.

The tension is very high, the officers show no patience anymore; fortunately for Pino I am there, and they do not trust me at all, yet. I step backwards a couple of meters. One officer screams to me 'move backwards!'. I step backwards towards the entrance/exit of the wing. Just a few seconds afterwards, the wing officer shows me, with a sign of his, that I was welcome again on the scene and everything was alright again.

Giuseppe, the wing officer tells me that 'Pino has surrendered' (*si è arreso*). I do not quite get the details of what's going on; yet, the big picture is more or less clear. The head of the squad is explaining to Pino that '*è finita bene*' (eventually, it's all right) and that he must be calm and talk to his new room-mate. He then adds that they had already met him the previous year. They tell him that he is a quiet and clean boy, there is nothing to be worried about. Pino answers that they [the officers] should be worried for his new room-mate, not for him. By doing so he displays his usual masculine attitude ad thuggishness.

The head of the squad promises Pino he would put all efforts to try to relocate the new prisoner as soon as possible, possibly already the day afterword if and only if everything would be ok the following night.

If not 'you know what we are talking about'. Then, he asks his colleagues to bring the new prisoner. Pino meets him and accepts the bargain in change of the promise to be left alone as soon as possible and, eventually, to be moved to the open wing. Giorgio has no choice but to do what he is ordered to do, and consequently, he enters the cell leaving all his belonging outside.

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The emergency squad left just now. Giorgio is together
with his new cell-mate in their cell. One of the agents
is not happy with the floppy end of the intervention
because, he tells me later on, in front of a cup of
coffee, that he cannot stand anymore that guy and his
childish behaviour; he tells me bluntly that today they
have lost a good occasion to teach him something.

Giorgio's trolley with the few belonging of his wrapped
up in two supermarket white plastic bags is still
outside the cell.

The situation is calm now; Pino is preparing a coffee
with a moka¹⁴⁹ on his light-blue butane camping gas; in
Italian prisons that's one of the usual welcomes to a
fellow inmate into a new cell.

One hour later, Giorgio lies down on his bed and sleeps
silently. Pino exercises in the cell as if he were alone
and looks quite relaxed again. The situation is back to
normal, yet, hard coercion has almost been performed;
yet coercion is clearly there; in fact, both of them are
locked up together against their will in the same cage,
you can either decide to called cell or room (Vignette
6.3).
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Simply by accepting or refusing the scripts and, consequently, wearing the gloves *versus* not wearing them, moving hands versus not moving hands, or cracking fingers versus non cracking them, officers would be able to coordinate their next move with each other. Eventually, they would follow all together the strategy decided by the head of the squad, either continuing to perform soft-coercion (symbolic or credible threat) or to jumping to exert hard-coercion by opening the barred door and start fighting.

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[149] A moka is the metallic machine usually used by Italians to prepare coffee at home.

Mario is a thirty-two-year-old man; he now lives only four cells away from where Pino lived only a few months before. He is also Italian; in that wing most prisoners are; Mario comes from the capital, Rome, but he is a Lazio fan [and not a Roma soccer team's fan]; I should better say a Lazio hooligan, using his own words.

He is middle-aged, white-haired and quite thin. He has been on drugs for many years and spent all his adult life going in and out prison for both petty, and not-so-petty crimes. Being addicted to cocaine, a substance hardly available on that wing, he is now using any *escamotage* available to get high, such as inhaling butane gas or heavily misusing psychiatric drugs he is able to obtain through informal trade in a way or another either on the wing or at the yard.

A market of such drugs is clearly at stake in the psychiatric hospital, they say; (yet I have not witnessed anything like that). Mario is slightly racist and does not hide it at all; he seems pride to be racist. Therefore he has a formal ban to encounter black and North African prisoners. He can neither walk free if any prisoner with such characteristics is there and *vice-versa*; nor, can he go to the yard to do exercise with them.

A *Ban Service Order* is issued daily listing all the inmates who must not encounter a particular group of person or a particular individual(s) and is available in all posts and in the wing officer's box.

Mario is small and thin but has got a reputation of being a good street-fighter anyway. He lives in a cell with another guy from Rome. He once told me that he does not like his cell-mate that much, but that guy is rich and generous offering cigarettes and coffee to Mario for nothing in return but company: he is very talkative and

cannot stand to stay alone.

His cell is a few steps away from the prison officer 'box' where I often sit with the agent on duty who should be walking back and forth all the time 'like we did before' as one senior prison officer put it.

Mario had been living there for more than four months; his cell-mate a few months longer than that. Mario sarcastically calls that room 'my home'. The cell is quite dark inside, the walls are light-yellow like in many Italian prisons, particularly dirty though, with lots of drawings and phrases written on it, as well as, some visible blood spots of previous fights or self-harm that remained there during all the ethnography.

Reggio Emilia custodial institution has no always the money for the prisoners' toilet paper [I experience three days in which toilet paper was not available to prisoners and they were told to cope with it as they could], let alone to buy the wall-paint.

Following these issues, such as that of the missing toilet paper would take us far away from the topic and I return to the point.

The barred window is in fact almost all covered by weekly paper's spreads, mainly catholic ones taken and distributed freely by the chaplain to both the keeper and the kept, and few porno images that circulate in not such a high proportion as normally is the case in other facilities. The remaining part of the window is clear; yet, a worn-out small linen dark-purple tissue is pretended to be a curtain to completely obscure that barred window in order to sleep better at night. That is only exceptionally allowed because both prisoners apparently present no sign of any suicidal risk. In Mario's cell, images were directly taped on the glass,

one next to the other forming a quite colourful collage when the sun hit the wing from behind. Most of other cells' windows are clean; instead, images are usually taped on the room's walls. Every now and then, images are removed off the wall by officers and the dirty and old fading yellow paint remains visible with all sorts of spots on it.

Today Mario is agitated, 'for no reason' a nurse tells me. Just now, he was not allowed to go to the yard with the others fellow prisoner of the wing because it was John's turn, a Senegalese guy who cannot encounter Mario for the reasons said above. Mario can go to the isolation yard alone, if he wishes to; but he doesn't.

This afternoon Mario is allowed to go to exercise with his fellow prisoners and John must stays in the cell accordingly.

Only one officer escorts all seven very dangerous inmates to the yard with no handcuffs or any other restrain tool: they, strangely enough, cannot be used inside in any normal critical event; in fact all prisoners must move freely inside during escort all the time independently to the situation. If it became necessary, as much as ten officer can come to block him and to re-put him where they have to.

This is what seems to be prescribed in Italy by law; at least what they have told me and what I have seen time and again.

However, to be honest, by law many officers should be escorting such a group of dangerous prisoners any time they are out of their cells; yet personnel is missing and some officers show off their masculinity doing such dangerous duties alone. Usually, they are maximum in two or three, anyway; without baton, shields, protections or anything to defend themselves the possible confrontation

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is very likely to become a very violent one.

However, all those tools and weapons are forbidden inside the wall and 'can only be used in exceptional circumstances after the governor's order to do so, at least theoretically', one senior officer told me. Then, if any crisis arises, the emergency squad arrives accordingly.

I am at the rear of the group of prisoners when the officers is escorting them to the yard. The officer is at the head of the group.

The officer let the prisoner enter the yard and he and I move into the officer room from where the officer is supposed to monitor the yard.

There are seven prisoners 'out there' in the yard. Two of them are sitting on one of the benches on the other side of the yard facing the glassed room in which we observe them.

Some prisoners are chatting with one another, while others are sitting alone or running. Afterwards, Mario and other three of them are walking watch-wise circles around the perimeter of the yard, just like in any prison-film's scene of the kind. The last prisoner is running back and forth following a straight line approximately at the centre of the yard. I am observing them, and I am trying to sketch their movements in the yards sketching some kind of drawings of their movements on my paper small notebook and my pen. Something I have been doing for some time.

Suddenly, I see Mario behaving strangely. He is smoking, and at the same time he is shouting to another guy in his group who is also behaving visibly abusively, apparently for no evident reason. Just a minute or so afterwards, the second prisoner unpredictably punches

Mario repeatedly very strongly on his face. After three punches or so Mario fells down on the floor and starts bleeding heavily but shows no reaction. In the meantime, the officer continues to read '*I ragazzi di Salò*' which has been there during the entire ethnography with a couple of weekly magazine.

Mario is on the floor with both his hands holding his own face. He is bleeding very intensively (at least in my understanding). The guy who punched him just now, picks up Mario's cigarette from the floor and starts smoking it like if nothing had happened, finally looking relaxed and is walking around.

After a moment Mario is again on his feet visibly traumatised; his nose and mouth are covered with blood. He is moving slowly towards us (the officer and me) on the other side of the bullet-proof glass, screaming something we cannot not hear clearly because the bulletproof glass interrupts any audible sound making communication almost impossible.

Reading his lips and simply seeing his face almost completely covered with blood, though, I clearly get he is calling for us to help him. To me the situation looks like an extreme severe one. However, there is neither a system of microphones, nor video surveillance working over there. No doubt he is shocked and needs immediate help; moreover he needs medical care. I tell the officer that something is going on out there. Apparently annoyed by my interruption, the officer is looking calmly to the scene and suddenly asks me if I had seen anything of what had occurred. I reply telling him the scene I had observed. Now, he is walking to the blue yard gate asking 'What's up? What's up? Who has started? Why can you not stay quiet and enjoy some fresh air?' and so on.

On the other side of the yard, one young blonde prisoner with a red and white Ajax T-shirt stops running and is now crying sitting on the floor at one corner of the yard; he is a first-timer and possibly is not yet accustomed to these kind of 'usual', yet shocking, situations; or, maybe, he cannot get used to these situations and he is simply traumatised and psychologically damaged by all that.

The guy who just now punched Mario has long dark hair and seems to be emotionless. He is now walking around the yard with no clear direction; he watches severely anybody trying to approach him in any way. One older prisoner, a mafia convict with a life sentence who is usually well respected inside by his peer, tries to calm the perpetrator down as well; yet, unsuccessfully this time.

The situation continues to be critical because in the meantime two other prisoners are pushing each other about fifteen meters away from us. The officer who had already asked for a colleague intervention to escort the bleeding prisoner to the infirmary, must now phone the security manager to ask the squad to come ASAP. He cannot do anything alone, but waiting for the squad to arrive.

They are here in a moment and all of them already have their gloves on; buy doing so they are signalling to the prisoners they do not intend to joke. They ask the officer 'patrolling' the yards what happened'. He answers that 'Aziz punched Mario'. They looked through the glass 'kind of' studying the situation for a short while. Mario is already nearby the barred gate to the yard waiting for anybody to help him, crying out his emotion and pain. The emergency team considers Mario's situation not serious enough and makes him wait. Some prisoners are in fact pushing one another; others are

looking from a distance with anger. The guy who had punched Mario is still nervous indeed and does not show any intention to go back to the wing before creating some new troubles.

The situation looks very serious, at least to me. The head of the squad does not seem to agree with me, though. The squad runs to the gate and stopped just a moment before opening the barred gate and entering the yard. Anyways, the head of the squad decides to go head on to a confrontation after initially showing a formal intention to try to open a dialogue with the recalcitrant violent prisoner. The guy who assaulted Mario for a cigarette that Mario did not intend to share with him, takes out a rudimental razor blade and displays it bluntly to the officers. Some officers become really nervous for what they read as a provocation; yet, others are visibly urging their commander to allow them to 'stop bullshitting' and jump on him. A four-meter-high, blue, barred gate still separates the one from the others. Officers are still outside the yard and the principal officer continues to look for a dialogue. The guy is very furious and continues to yell pretending to control the situation violently. Suddenly, the principal officer starts to move his fingers continuously opening and closing both hands repeatedly; from that moment it was clear both to me and all the ones observing the scene that there wasn't any time left for dialogue. The officers start to step on toes quasi-synchronously and continue to move their hands watching with a threatening gaze the guy who seems to be indifferent both to the officers' dialogue and threats. All other prisoners are kind of blocked and quite slowly move backward from the scene. No one else is moving anymore. Only the guy who hit his fellow prisoner continues wandering around.

Suddenly, the head of the squad watches his fellow officers and, holding the key in his left hand clearly

displays that 'it is now time for action' by inserting the key in the lock. The tension is very high; even the prisoner who had been crying most of the time, stops doing so. There is a strange silence there, and everybody is apparently minding his own business showing either indifference or deference to the authorities.

As soon as all the seven officers, few of whom visibly nervous (maybe also due to my presence) crossed the gate and enter the yard running toward the guy who had punched Mario and who had been holding the weapon for at least ten minutes or so, pretending to control the situation, immediately throws the blade on the floor towards the officers. Then, screaming 'stooooppp!' he raises his hands in surrender; yet, his face remains completely emotionless.

Two officers escorted him upstairs to his room. Afterwards, all the other prisoners are escorted together upstairs to the wing and, then, Mario is allowed to walk to the infirmary to be visited and to be medicated. The doctor diagnosed that Mario had lost two teeth in the aggression, and that his nose was broken and that he also had some small wounds. In doctors' words 'nothing serious'. Afterwards, the security manager 'issued a ticket'; Mario did not sue the aggressor; he was too afraid to do it. Despite being keen yard attendees, Mario stopped going to the yard for some time; eventually, his aggressor was transferred and Mario started to attend the yard regularly again.(Vignette 6.4).

Those officers' scripts observed on the field were seemingly comprehended by almost all prisoners who normally changed their behaviour accordingly, if they intended to timely stop the escalation of the situation. At that stage, in fact, there was not so much time left for the prisoner to decide whether to stop the fight or accept the challenge and get ready for it. By accepting the fight,

prisoners would oblige the squad to act accordingly. The situation would evolve quickly, minute by minute. It would be characterised by a very high tension (Collins 2008); if the prisoner would not take the 'right choice' suggested by the officers' threat (Popitz 1990) the officers might feel obliged to behave accordingly not to lose their *face* (Goffman 1958, 1961b, 1967) and or reputation (Popitz 1990); the escalation could also occur due to the growing tension and excitement escalating either among officers or prisoner(s). A very high level of tension would, more or less slowly, move towards a non-negotiable end: the decision to open the gate and doing hard-coercion.

At that stage, the situation would be developing quickly and any act could easily produce unintended consequences on both sides of the barred door; particularly so with particular prisoners and or officers. Hard-coercion might enter the picture because the prisoner, interpreting 'the gloves' as an act of hostility toward him and his reputation or as a provocation, might start to insult, threaten, and to display the intention to punch the officers through the gate. Consequently, the barred door could be opened at any time afterwards, thereby starting the fight.

Untrained officers; just doing coercion as usual

At this point it is useful to note that only few, if any, Italian prison officers have ever had any training on de-escalation tactics, let alone psychological training or human rights 'bullshit' (none of the ones I interviewed or met had had any at all). This is of course particularly problematic in situations in which emotions can easily turn the situation out of control. Among base grade officers, sometimes governing all the wings in practice, even the old and basic de-escalation tactics used in England and Wales back in the 1970s – the Minimum Use of Force Tactical Intervention – are completely un-known; Many of those base grade officer regularly play box, Thai-box and karate for

'self-defence' or 'for fun' instead.

One senior officer explained me:

we [prison officers] are prepared and instructed to do something else. A long time ago I did a
course on becoming a prison officer, a very short one, lasting only three months. In those few
months the only thing they taught me properly was to defend myself and beat others in combat
with no pity. Ok? My teacher told us that the best form of self-defence was to attack, then
(laughing)... [W]hy should they [psychiatrists, doctors and nurses] call me [to help them]
whenever a madman goes berserk? I intervene to procure pain [on those occasions] and not to
cure the patient. I am not interested whether he is forced to gasp for air, bang his head [against
the wall or the bars], or whatever... From my point of view, though, I just try to take him by the
neck; in fact, I try to decelerate his breath, but I do not know what I should do. I simply learned
by doing that whenever I take him by his neck he stops resisting (video-recorded interview
with a senior officer).

'Wearing gloves', 'putting them on theatrically', moving fingers, or cracking
them were the most common ways officers used to clearly mark the near
escalation of the situation from the symbolic threaten of coercion to the
credible and nearby use of it. Of course, even what I called credible threat is
symbolic; after all it is only a communicative act of violence, and not an actual
form of physical violence; yet, it might well be interpreted as a symbolic
violence, or as psychological violence (Cohen and Taylor 1972; Crewe 2009).

Conclusions

During violent encounters, the unfolding chain of the emotionally charged
interactions are often the key factor to determine the outcome of a potentially
violent confrontation (Collins 2008, 2012).

In this chapter, I have stressed the role of soft-coercion in ruling a problematic
wing and its relation to soft-power; an issue often only sketchy considered in
prison literature so far. I have shown the two main phases in which soft-

coercion would usually be displayed and bodily enacted in practice on the wing, unpacking the ways in which both the symbolic threat and the credible threat of coercion would usually sequentially unfold in actual interactions. On one hand doing either symbolical or credible threats would effectively help minimise the actual emergency squad bodily hard interventions; on the other it would strongly impact on prisoners' day-to-day life, emotions, fears, and trauma, as well as to some officers' ones.

By doing so, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate the crucial role that 'threatening and being threatened' played at a wing level on a daily basis. It was clearly crucial there in Reggio Emilia, Italy, and probably far beyond; yet, this is an empirical issue that should be addressed empirically. The issue is noteworthy and prison researchers and Governments cannot simply continue to turn a blind eye or to deny it completely.

However, this field work shows that the micro-sociology of violence cannot be blind and focus only on the interaction as such without taking into account other sociological dimensions already studied by fellow colleagues. Inside, at least, the particular subjective prisoner's social and power position, not only strongly influenced the probability that coercion would be threatened or used in practice against that particular prisoner, but it would also strongly influence whether or not one particular event 'caused' by a particular prisoner would be defined critical or not, and even if it would deserve any consideration. This last issue about labelling deserves a much closer attention, and a specific research because it also influences who, how and how often, is more likely to be the target of the next intervention, quite independently to the facts by which the same intervention will be justified either formally or informally.

Prisoners were consistently treated differently from one another; it is what the literature call discretion. Two extreme examples I repeatedly observed in the field were, on one side one young man who grew up in a Rome camp that was

hardly ever taken into account, and, on the other a mafia 'boss' who, as one senior officer, probably exaggerating put it, 'he is at home here; he can do whatever he likes...he is a gentlemen and we all like him'.

These were extreme examples indeed, yet, many other less extreme ones would also support the same point.

Discretion is a structural dimension of the situation as is clear in the prison literature almost from the outset; yet it is very problematic and could introduce racism, homophobia and trauma in the picture, and therefore still deserve close attention.

It is important to claim that *not only the officers-prisoner* interaction, *but also the prisoner's social position more or less strongly influences the course of all potentially threat of coercion and of bodily violent encounters.* This became clear observing the intervention as well as the non-intervention of the emergency squad symbolically and credibly threatening coercion in a wing of an Italian asylum time and again over a period of one year and a half.

Chapter 7

The bodily use-of-force[150]

The Police ideal is to dominate in every phase of confrontation. But in fact only a small number of them reach a high level of violence with any frequency (Collins 2008: 378).

In prison, as in all coercive institutions, there is always a danger that violence will be met with violence, that the response to individual assault will be institutional assault (Coyle 2005: 150).

Physical violence and punishment of the body did not, and has not, disappeared but retains a central place in the repertoire of responses mobilized by the state inside prison (Sim 1990: 178).

Chapters 5 shows that bodily coercion is usually implicitly in the picture during day-to-day interactions between the keepers and the kept on the wing also when it is not clearly visible to the researcher. Chapter 6 shows that, more often than not,

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[150]   Here I explicitly state that I have decided to tell the truth only partially. I acknowledge that I will not tell all the truth, hiding facts that I saw (or that I have been told) that I do not think to be relevant, appropriate or convenient to write about in here. Reflexivity has long been considered a crucial feature of ethnography. Unfortunately, however, prison research has very rarely addressed the issue of self-censorships straightforwardly. And I do intend to do it here.

officer's symbolic and credible threats suffice to solve disputes or other issues occurring on the wing. Despite the fact that bodily coercion is not often there in practice, it does occur more or less regularly within the custodial complex under study.

Using force coercion bodily is the focus of this chapter. However I directly observed bodily coercion only less than a couple of dozen times; in few occasions I also saw prisoners manually constrained on the floor by a group of officers for as long as three hours. During the ethnography, then, I also observed a guy tied to a bed. Eventually, the constraint-bed was removed from the facility as an indirect consequence of the O.P.G. scandal that resulted after the publication of the Parliamentary inquiry commission report and the circulation both online and offline of video documentary pictures produced by the Parliamentary inquiry commission that unveiled a situation of alleged abuse and institutional violence. This chapter will therefore draw on available observation data that might be considered insufficient or too anecdotal. However, for the exceptional nature of those data and for their uniqueness in the international literature, despite the scarcity of the actual observation of bodily interventions, they will be taken into account seriously anyway. Nevertheless, in order to partially overcome that scarcity of observations writing the vignettes also photo-elicitation interview's transcripts will enter into the picture (*infra*, Chapter 8)[151].

Chapter 3 shows that Interactionist scholars suggest that, violent-bodily interactions between actors are possibly avoided by any actor either within or beyond the wall most of the time: violence is rare and acting violently it is also not easy at all (Collins 2008)[152]. Most people, in fact, according to Collins and

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[151]   However, due to the thickness and sensible contents of those interviews, they will not be discussed here and will thoroughly be analysed in a forthcoming publication.
[152]   Once again, following Collins, '[v]iolence is so difficult because it goes against our propensity to attune our nervous systems to those with whom we establish intersubjectivity. Quite literally, persons in a conflictual situation, who are close enough to send and receive *signals from each other's face and body*, feel the tension of simultaneously becoming highly attuned to each other, while trying to force the other to submit to one's will' (2012: 136;

others tend to prefer to simply threaten each-other implicitly, avoiding by doing so, both risking their own reputation, and forcing themselves into an unpredictable difficult situation that might be the unintended consequence of a credible threat. According to Collins this would probably be true both 'out there', as well as inside the wall; yet, he calls for more research on the topic inside; this research, in part, is an attempt to contribute in that direction. However, regarding the easiness and difficulty of practicing violence this research suggests that the situation inside and outside prison might be quite different from one another, in particular if prisoners' violent behaviours and interactions are at stake.

Inside the wall, in fact, a particular configuration of the balance of contemporarily 'civilizing' and 'decivilizing' trends (Dunning and Mennell 1998) would characterize the penal institution; violence in some institutions, surely in Reggio Emilia, still remains a day-to-day occurrence as Sim argued about twenty-five years ago (Sim 1990; Drake 2015); in Italy and not only there, violence and coercion are usually hidden from the public gaze outside the wall (Pratt 2002) and often ethnographers tend not to report the already limited aspects that they are allowed to observe for a reason or another (Drake 2015). Following Pratt (2002), over much of the nineteenth and twentieth century '[a] system of punishment was established which on the face of it conforms to these values and expectations [of the civilized world] and which covered over its more distasteful, debasing features' (7) such as using force.

Following Garland:

[i]n the development of manner and cultural rituals, a key feature which Elias identifies is the process of privatization whereby certain aspects of life disappear from the public arena to become hidden behind the scene of social life. Sex, violence, bodily functions, illness, suffering, and death gradually become a source of embarrassment and distaste and are more removed to various private domains. Such as the domesticated nuclear family, private lavatories and bedrooms, *prison cells and hospital wards* (1990: 222; *emphasis added*).

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emphasis added).

Violence and police coercion are among the 'disturbing events' (Garland 1990: 222) that the penal justice hides from the public gaze. '[T]he sight of violence, pain, or physical suffering has become highly disturbing and distasteful to modern sensibilities (Garland 1990: 223). Becoming the monopoly of the state, violence can only be performed by those authorised to do so: *inter alia*, the police and the prison staff: both custodial and psychiatric ones.

In the particular custodial facility under study, crises have frequently occurred and violence has been a much more normal occurrence than in other either custodial or non-custodial contexts I had ever experienced beforehand. Usually, in Reggio Emilia's custodial complex, crisis would happen time and again in which violence would clearly be in the picture as previous chapters show; i.e. in self-harm and prisoner-to-prisoner violence and abuses (*see also* Edgar et al. 2012). However, the situation would normally only escalate until the symbolically threatening point of the arrival of the emergency squad on the particular place in which a particular critical event had occurred (*infra*, Chapter 6); usually, after the arrival of the squad the crisis would start de-escalating more or less quickly (Phase 3 in Image 6.2) thereby avoiding the danger of a violent officers' intervention. The symbolic threat of violence performed by the arrival of the squad on the scene, a squad of well-known officers militarily organized in a platoon, would in fact suffice to temporarily end the crisis for a larger or shorter period of time.

Occasionally, however, the situation would anyway escalate until the point in which the emergency squad as a whole, or one or more of its members, would start to credibly threaten the prisoner effectively about the possibility of an imminent bodily violent intervention (*infra*, Chapter 6).

In other words, the escalation of the squad would be likely, more often than not, to de-escalate the conflict before a credible threat is performed. Whenever an interaction had already escalated to a credible threat, the situation would become quite unpredictable and even visibly unstable for the ethnographer experiencing it; the reputation of all parties involved would be at risk on the wing; at that stage any new officer's threat could cause another new prisoner's one in return, and vice versa. Particularly so in Italy, a country in which officers receive little serious training on de-escalation techniques, if any at all.

Furthermore, in order to be ready for the intervention, officers working on the squad, in their free-time, often practice sports such as box, Thai box, karate, and so on for recreational purposes and for getting rid of all the stress accumulated on duty.

Prison officers boxing as amateurs, however, do not show the discipline and commitment brilliantly described by Wacquant in his ethnography *Body & Soul: Notebooks of an apprentice boxer (2004)*; nor do they necessarily follow the moral commitment implied in that sport in which, following Wacquant '[t]he brutality of the exchanges between the ropes is a function of the balance of forces between partners (the more uneven this balance, the more limited the brutality' (Wacquant 2004: 82–83).

Prison officers' bodily intervention only slightly resemble the boxer's fights. Not only, because in those interventions there is a numerical disproportion between the parties while boxers fight one-to-one, but also because, according to Wacquant,

[d]uring a session [of sparring in a boxing training session], the level of violence fluctuates in cycles according to a dialectic of challenge and response, within moving limits set by the sense of equity that founds the original agreement between sparring partners— which is neither a norm nor a contract but what Erving Goffman calls a "working consensus." If one of the fighters picks up his pace and "gets off," the other automatically reacts by immediately hardening his response; there

follows a sudden burst of violence that can escalate to the point where the two partners are hitting each other full force, before they step back and jointly agree …to resume their pugilistic dialogue a notch or two lower (Wacquant 2004: 83).

Officers control violence differently. On the ring boxers used a 'controlled violence' governed by a principle of reciprocity (84). '[T]he level of violence in the ring dictates that the stronger boxer not profit from his superiority, but also that the weaker fighter not take undue advantage of his partner's wilful restraint' (Wacquant 2004: 84).

In the fieldwork bodily interventions were also controlled, in a way or another, by those involved in it most of the time; yet, the power relationships between the parties was of a completely different type. Boxers do fight with each other on the principle of reciprocity; officers do fight against inmates (in case of bodily intervention) on the ground of their dominant position and their monopoly of the lawful use-of-force or coercion (Terrill 2014). Officers' use-of-force is often likely to be lawful (or to be considered to be so by those exerting it); prisoners' use-of-force is much less likely to be lawful; even much less so to be considered to be so.

Moreover, quite unsurprisingly, in the field, I have never heard of any officer practising yoga; some yet, did confess me that they have personally experienced some mental health problems but cannot disclose it publicly because, simply by doing so, they would risk losing not only their reputation among their fellow officers, but also their job.

Writing about police and violence – but it may apply to prison officers and violence as well – Collins argued '[t]he inner culture of the police comes from the centrality of confrontation in their work' (Collins 2008: 377). He then added that '[t]he most proactive police are not necessarily seeking violence, but they are seeking action, and they think positively about using violence if it comes to that' (Collins 2008: 379). This is surely not true for all officers I met in the fieldwork

observed; yet, it describes quite well some of those willing to be part of the emergency squad.

The aftermath of the emergency squad's credible threat

We return now to a situation escalated to a point in which the squad had performed a credible threat. At that stage, any action from either side could produce unintended consequence. Any further threat or any defensive reaction performed by a person on one side could be interpreted from the person on the other side as a provocation. As the previous chapter shows, the threatening phase, in particular the credible threat phase, would usually last shortly; such an unstable situation would quickly evolve either to a sudden de-escalation, or to a point of no return: officers doing coercion bodily.

The reputation of credibility is crucially and publicly at stake when performing a new threat on the wing. Interventions are usually discussed and commented upon, both among prisoners and among officers. More importantly, for this chapter, the reputation is mainly linked to the enforcement of coercive violent practices rather than to the use of violent symbolic language and behaviour.

Collins writes:

[t]he most violent police receive good administrative reports; they are well-liked by other cops. This is not only because they are often high-energy extroverts (although that appears to be true too); they are the informal leaders of the police. This fits a basic principle of small-group research: the popular members of the group are those who most closely express its values and are best at what the group is attempting to do (2008: 376).

He then adds: 'Like being a good soldier, being a good cop is tested in combat-like confrontation' (Collins 2008: 376). Collins quote is quite consistent with the research experience. Moreover, officers expressed an 'us *versus* them' opinion

distancing their courage from prisoners' cowardliness. In different occasions, in fact, officers say times and again, speaking about prisoners, that 'each prisoner is a lion behind the bars, to become a sheep afterwards, when the cell's door is open'.

Following Popitz (1990), anyone involved in a conflictual relationship would be more likely to threat violence when actual violence is *not* yet at stake, than when it is credibly or actually in the picture. The reputation of being credible when threatening the use of coercion is not something gained once and forever by neither any particular officer nor by any particular inmate. In order to maintain and possibly reinforce one's own reputation on the wing officers and prisoners need to manage accurately any face-to-face interaction accordingly (Goffman 1967); any new threat or any new fight on either side would be taken seriously by the other; any such kind of interaction might lead to the display and enforcement of one's actual capacity and strength to head on the dispute violently in a bodily fight with the opponent.

The paradox emerging from the observation of the Cycle seems to be that enacting actual violence appears to be necessary to make future threats credible avoiding future violence; 'doing' and displaying coercion would be, in other words, a mean to potentially avoiding new coercion simply by credibly threatening it.

On one side, the officers' reputation is at risk whenever a prisoner threatening him is not punished accordingly after refusing to obey the officers' order. The officer might be ridiculed by the prisoner who would challenge his courage and thuggishness (and we may read it also as a masculine test).

On the other, any particular prisoner cannot be too cooperative either; by doing so he would possibly risk his face in front of his fellow inmates becoming a 'rat' (Johnson 1961: 153), thereby putting his previous reputation at risk; eventually risking possible violent retaliations[154]. These unintended consequences might help explain why credible threats are not overused on either sides: credible threats are simply too costly because they might imply performing actual violence (*see also* Popitz 1990); however it must be stressed that in the custodial complex (*contra* Kaminski 2004: 1) 'hyperrationality' was hardly ever in the picture in the observed interactions occurring inside the wall. Normative, value-driven and traditional thinking were also very common on both sides of the gate; Reggio Emilia could not be easily interpreted simply drawing from game theory.

Turning a blind eye to 'rule' the wing, thereby avoiding doing coercion

In the beginning of the ethnography it was really surprising how rarely the officer on the wing would react to any 'problematic situation' by calling for a squad intervention [thereby constructing it as a 'critical event'], and how often, instead, he would apparently not notice any problems or 'turn a blind eye' to them. That 'blind' way of doing was not only a consequence of the ethnographer's presence on the wing which might have suggested the officer to avoid to enforce violence; yet in the beginning it was evident, and one officer even told me bluntly that they would try to avoid performing any squad intervention in front of any outsider.

Turning a blind eye was a common strategy used by officers to rule the wing. This point is not new at all in prison literature almost from its outset, nor is it in the Sociology of work and organization literatures more generally; yet, this point has

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[153]   'Rats' were […] prisoners who were at odds with their fellow inmates, usually because of a willingness to give information to prison officials in return for personal advantage' (Johnson 1961: 528).
[154]   Kaminski (2004) stated that in the Polish context he studies squealing and reporting to officers can lead to 'severe beating, rape, or even a death sentence [by fellow prisoners]' (64).

rarely been discussed concerning the officers' decisions of whether or not to use force 'doing' coercion in any particular occasions. This ethnography shows that turning a blind eye was a common strategy adopted in different degrees by officers ruling the landing also in really critical situations that might be dangerous for the prisoners' safety and wellbeing. One officer put it in the following way.

Here we only take into account really serious critical events. We do not pay too much attention on anyone lightly cutting himself, just to seek attention. That's just normal and happens regularly here, so we do not bother too much about it. Nor do we bother if they fight with each other. They do it continuously anyway. We only need to rush if we see blood running on the pavements (with a sarcastic smile) or when life is *really* at risk... If we took all critical events happening here seriously... we would also go crazy, wouldn't we? (Field note).

Another officer said that:

situations are only critical for us when we actually see with our eyes that they are critical indeed; we do not normally consider a situation critical any time they [the inmates] start fighting with each other or start screaming and yelling towards us calling for our attention'; that's just our routine, in here (field note).

Yet another argued that they would only respond to really urgent needs and that someone shouting to save his life uses a tone, which is easily recognizable.

Despite the discretion implied in most officers' decisions largely recognized in the literature from the outset of Prison sociology (Sykes 1958), a credible threat normally would be a point of no return pushing the situation to a new phase. It would be a move binding the perpetrator and the victim of the threat together (Popitz 1990); they would both (or all) be obliged to seriously take into account the other's next move before strategically deciding one's own accordingly.

Doing coercion bodily during an intervention (except during mechanical or manual restraint) would last shortly, just like most other violence do (*see also* Collins 2008). Most prison regimes, yet to different degree, are characterised by

both a very unusual level of prisoners-officers proximity and unbalanced domination. In fact this are among the typical characteristic of the social world of the prisoner (Goffman 1961a). Officers' decisions, at the end, are hardly ever negotiable. Prisoners sooner or later must follow the rules enforced by the custodial staff. They will be urged to do it or forced to do it in a way or another. As last resort, officers would use force bodily.

However, soft-power (Crewe 2009) and soft 'means of influence' would, soon after the end of the intervention, usually replace bodily coercion re-entering the picture again. After any critical event, a new temporary fragile status quo (some call it order but that word has such a functionalistic taste I resist using it) would be re-constituted once again, to be sooner or later re-challenged once more.

Officers using force bodily

Usually, coercion would only be used after following more or less precisely the 'Cycle of doing coercion'; in particular it would normally be introduced by a stage in which coercion is threatened rather than performed like Chapter 6 shows; however, as it has been observed more than once by the ethnographer, *an officer's assault would directly lead to officers using force bodily*, rather than less hard intervention independently from the ways in which the prisoner would behave after the assault[155].

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[155] This section, not only will discuss what the ethnographer has observed on the wing, but will also disclose few anecdotes from officer's video-recorded interviews in which they provide their descriptions and interpretations of doing coercion bodily.

Separated or not by a barred door: intervening bodily in different contexts

When a critical event 'occurs', two different types of officers-prisoners physical relationships with one another might be at stake, eventually influencing both the start and the dynamics of the intervention. *Firstly*, the prisoners, on one side, and the officer(s) and the emergency squad, on the other, could be physically separated from one another i.e. by a barred door, a glass or a wall: in these situations neither violence between the keeper and the kept, nor the use-of-force (or 'doing' coercion) by the kept on the keeper are yet in the picture; the most common situations like these would be prisoners locked in their own cell alone or with another inmate, or inside a recreation yard with fellow inmates without any staff physically present within the same confined space. According to the ethnographic observation, each time officers and prisoners were physically separated from one another, the Cycle would be more likely to develop slowly, yet in different ways, its sequential stages one after the other: pre-intervention, intervention and post-intervention (Image 6.1). In particular, it would be unlikely that the emergency squad would directly start the intervention doing hard-coercion bodily without first starting to do it symbolically (*infra*, Chapter 6).

Any particular intervention would then vary depending on which particular officer or particular prisoner were in the picture and their personal positions in the vectors of inequality (race, religion, class, language, physical and mental health, being part of an organised crime group, and so on).

Secondly, the officer (s) or the emergency squad, on one side, and the prisoner(s), on the other, could be sharing the same physical space without any physical barrier between them. In the particular facility under study this situation would usually occur when the prisoners were escorted to go anywhere from their cell passing through the corridors or through the stairs, or when prisoners were moving freely at the recreation wing, or in any of the wings characterised by an open wing regime.

Doing coercion bodily with prisoners moving freely

When prisoners and officers shared the same environment without any physical barrier between each other, intervention would be likely to escalate more quickly and easily than in the opposite situation to an actual bodily confrontation.

Critical events occurring within spaces in which officers and prisoners would be co-present in one particular space would much less likely include self-harm and the destruction of furniture or other goods. Those kind of events had never been observed by the researcher, nor have they been heard during ethnographic interviews; prisoner-prisoner violence was instead occurring regularly more or less heavily not only on the yard where, often, quite heavy episodes occurred, but also on the stairway and in the wing with an open cell regime.

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Winter 2014. Charlie (not his real name) and eight of his
fellow prisoners are at the yard; it's very cold and wet
outside and they do not seem to enjoy exercising that much.
I am with Mariano (not his real name), the officer on duty
there: we are talking with each other while we are both
observing the prisoners through the bullet-proof glass
separating the officer's observation 'box' to the
prisoners' exercise yard. Being an ethnographer in prison
one cannot be neutral about the Foucaudian issue of
observation and surveillance (Foucault 1979, 1980 a, b). At
that particular moment, I am there observing inmates for my
reason; the officer was also there observing them for his
own goal: doing so it is his duty.  This kind of similarity
between the researcher's job and the officer's job, makes
'doing' observation in prison particularly problematic
indeed (infra, Chapter 8).


Anyway, prisoners are now walking in circles; some of them
clock-wise, others in the opposite direction moving in the
empty and hostile grey-concrete yard in which even a ball
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for playing football is forbidden. There, prisoners play with few empty plastic bottles instead; something that they, or others before them, had previously thrown out from a cells' window before being escorted there.

Two prisoners in the yard are calling for attention by waving their hands back and forth repeatedly. They are clearly trying to communicate with the officer signalling him they all intend to go back to the wing now. The officer asks all other prisoners to confirm their free intention to go back to their rooms much before recreation time is finished. One by one they all confirm it by nodding. Therefore the officer and I move to the blue-high barred-gate at the yard. The officer asks once again if all prisoners voluntarily agreed indeed [were not forced by a fellow prisoner] to 'go inside' and opens the door consequently.

All enter the corridor and wait in a row to be escorted to the wing upstairs. There is — once again — only one officer escorting the group and, as usual, I remain at the rear of the group holding my tripod in my hand, this time with my photographic camera in my black-woollen jacket's pocket. The situation seems normal; I just had a very interesting and nice conversation for about an hour with the officer; he seems really relaxed to me. Prisoners, looked bored and almost sleepy though.

The officer is escorting the group through the corridor; then, he turns left to the stairs, walks upstairs for two floors and stops in front of the closed barred door blocking the entrance to the wing from the stairway.

The officer looks through the glass to ask his colleague to open the door without receiving any answer; in the meanwhile he pulls out his keys from his right trousers' pocket turning his back to the prisoners and to me. He puts the key into the locker and looks backwards. Suddenly and

unpredictably, one young tall prisoner punches the officer's face. I am totally astonished; it's the first time I see this with my own eyes; I have always been told about it, but had never experienced it face-to-face yet. It is shocking indeed to me! I am trembling but trying to keep calm and reach one sidewall. I try to be in a position in which I observe the scene from aside; yet, a couple of prisoners move around me and I feel very worried. Mariano had just told me in the interview that he is so proud of being a quite senior officer and had never been assaulted yet: well I witnessed his 'first time' just now. The officer is not that tall and quite heavy, not too talkative, nor cold either. Yet, the punch — not such a strong one though — forces the officer Mariano to step back not to lose his equilibrium. His nose is bleeding a lot. He says: 'matherfucker! You punched me! Did you?' says the officer before trying to constraint the prisoner who looks very excited and somehow happy for his 'strike'. I cannot move towards the officer because I have got my tripod in my hand and I am always aware that it can easily become a weapon. Therefore I step backwards, kind of traumatised and worried.

The situation is totally out of control. The prisoner is smiling, the officer displays tension and his face turns red; he looks angry. There is no alarm to be rang, nor enough officers escorting the prisoners. Only prisoners' self-discipline and understanding avoid what could easily become something really serious and unmanageable neither for the officer, nor for me. The officer starts to scream 'collega! ...collega! In less than two minutes one colleague arrives. Before, passing right on my feet and pushing me aside one prisoner rushes from the end of the group to the officer only to shield the prisoner from the officer's reaction or vice versa. It is the first horrible experience, emotionally very daunting indeed. I think someone wants to beat me...but I am totally wrong. The prisoner who passes on me, in fact, simply wants to interrupt the confrontation from escalating. Suddenly,

another officer arrives: a real tough and muscular one: an almost-professional boxer. Once on the scene he starts screaming. 'What the fuck have you done to my colleague? Bastard! Who the fuck do you think you are?'

The prisoner who hit the escorting officer, is hiding behind the fellow inmate who is protecting him from the officer who is trying to kick back the prisoner's legs with his boots. The officer arrives and firstly starts to open a dialogue, yet yelling, with the prisoner who had punched his fellow officer, eventually receiving a kick in his face in return.

He can simply not imagine that someone like that young-blonde prisoner, a thin-little-young man could attack him the way he did. The officer is aware to be considered a well-known fighter and his reputation is not that of a very relaxed officer either.

Yet, he also receives a punch on his face just now. Taking all into account, to be honest, I am deeply astonished as to how such two episodes are occurring one after the other...and the 'little' reaction that prompted (of course, the researcher effect has been in the picture).

The second officer takes the prisoner in between him and the guy who assaulted them with his hands and pushes him to the side loudly screaming to the prisoner 'fuck off! Fuck off!' The prisoner is now in front of the two officers who just give him some symbolic kicks with their boots, block him and take him forcefully to the wing and literally throw him into his cell.

The psychiatrist says he is 'a bit de-compensated and needs some medication'. Both the psychiatrist and the nurse try for half an hour to convince him to be injected with psychiatric medication but not only does he refuse it but he also goes completely berserk. Eventually, they need to call the emergency squad.

The squad arrives but probably he does not even see them
or, being de-compensating into psychosis, he feels to be at
risk of his own life and does not negotiate at all and
barricades into his cell instead. The squad must open the
door. They open the barred door and enter the cell, fight
with him 'with no pity' to get him and block him. Then,
they take the person, constrain him tightly with their
hands on the floor. Only then, the female nurse is
eventually able to inject the prisoner; eventually, the
prisoner is then re-thrown into his cell.

The intervention of the squad is finished (for the
officers) just now. We are all moving downstairs to report
what happened to the security manager who does not seem
neither to appreciate my presence, nor to be happy to write
a report. As a consequence of the assault one of the
officers has a quite serious injury and must be taken to
the hospital; the other only goes with him to be checked
and receive one day off duty. The first officer assaulted
has some serious permanent consequences and will not show
up for a while. One image shot just after another similar
episode had been crucial for the photo-elicitation
interview's phase helping me to start unpacking what doing
coercion is in from participants' voices (*infra*, Chapter
8)(Vignette 7.1).

Having been on the scene time and again this overuse of force might be
tentatively explained also in part by officers' fear of the situation and by the
officers' necessity to stop the situation from escalating further. Of course
theoretically they should have acted differently, simply blocking the prisoner and
nothing more than that. However, being there with them and experiencing their
emotion and fear (at least I did) helped me greatly not to be too judgemental and
try to comprehend the situation instead.

To be honest, however, only one prisoner has ever intervened to help his fellow

prisoner in the critical events observed. Usually, prisoners not directly involved would stay quiet, or would simply intervene verbally, thereby trying at the same time to save their face with their own fellow prisoners and concurrently avoid further problems with officers afterwards.

Moreover, the bodily intervention would usually last only a few seconds or maximum a couple of minutes. By doing so the emergency squad's coercive violence would quickly overdue any resistance in a way or another. This would reinforce the officers' credibility of doing coercion effectively both to the prisoner(s) involved and to those prisoners nearby for the future. At the same time the hard intervention would also enhance the squad's macho reputation on the wing. Yet, prisoners assaulting an officer would also enhance their own reputation at least with some of their fellow inmates, yet at the cost of officer's future discrimination, retaliation, and even, yet rarely double jeopardy (Sarzotti 2012; Buffa 2013a).

Using force bodily with prisoners locked in

Critical events occurring within a secured environment in which prisoners were physically separated from the officers could be of two different types. Within a closed cell the ones frequently occurring were self-harm, a cell destruction, a prisoner barricading inside his cell, a violent interaction between fellow inmates sharing the same cell, or a prisoner violently threatening to harm a custodial or medical staff member outside the cell with a blade or by throwing objects. Doing coercion was also regularly used as last resort to urge a prisoner to comply with the psychiatric compulsory treatment, just like the vignette above shows[156].

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[156]   This situation is similar to the T.S.O. (in Italian: *trattamento sanitario obbligatorio*) compulsory sanitary treatment that can be enforced to all free persons by a law enforcement agency officer following a medical prescription occurring only after softer forms of negotiation.

At the recreation yard, critical events would mainly happen involving two or more prisoners fighting violently with one-another for any possible reason: from a refused request of sharing a cigarette to a forcibly request or resistance to a 'sexual service'. No self-harm, barricading, or destructions (there was nothing to be destroyed) were observed at the recreation yard during fieldwork. Of course this is not to say that they have never happened.

Usually, when any critical event had occurred inside a cell during fieldwork, the wing officer would firstly have tried to de-escalate the situation adopting soft 'means of influence' (*infra*, Chapter 2) for a sufficient period of time; yet, not always so kindly or softly. Time and again, such soft means of influence as a chat between the prisoner and the officer, an officer's promise to seriously consider the prisoner's request of changing a cell, or to move the new 'difficult' room-mate to another cell, or even simply a cigarette or a few words exchange, had helped de-escalate the situation completely to a level manageable by the prison wing staff alone; without the need of the emergency squad. Sometimes, however, the conflict did escalate and the squad did coercion bodily. Eventually, the commander of the squad would order one officer to open the barred door and start fighting just like one of the vignette in Chapter 6 shows.

Hardly ever, officers are allowed to use the protection gears such as helms and shields (they have never been used in front of me). In order to use those hard-coercion tools a governor's order must be issued. Usually, officers open the door simply wearing gloves. The same gloves that had previously been used to threaten the use of coercion credibly (*infra*, Chapter 6) are now used during action.

Just another lawful intervention, or a duel?

Some prisoners contested the very existence of the emergency squad as such. They argued that they, being prisoners, would not mind fighting, of course; according to *some* of them fighting inside seemed to be just a normal occurrence over there; something taken for granted by a large proportion of the participants in Reggio Emilia. This was also clearly visible to the observer; observation largely confirmed prisoners' narrations on this point. This is hardly surprising considering both the violent masculine code shared by both keeper and the kept in that particularly masculine culture, and the international literature dealing with prison masculinity and officers' abuses in a way or another (Sim 2009; Tombs and Whyte 2003; Drake 2015; Earle 2016, 2014); yet, almost all prisoners lamented that the keeper were not consistently playing the game fairly, like according to Wacquant (2004), a boxer would do.

In other words, some prisoners would argue that the situation would not be balanced during the interventions because of the strongly unequal distribution of power that would make the outcome of the situation easily predictable. That's a quite comprehensible point. However, the emergency squad interventions are neither a box match nor a duels; they are emergency interventions. Many prisoners strongly criticised the modality of the intervention performed by the squad as such. Sometimes they admitted that a particular intervention had been a reasonable and justifiable response to a particular prisoner's wrongdoing; yet, during informal talks and ethnographic interviews, nobody has ever accepted the idea of the squad as such. In particular they all contested that one prisoner could be overdue by an emergency squad largely outnumbering him.

Many prisoners simply thought such an unbalance power relationship to be unfair. Often, prisoners claimed that a situation in which many fight as a team against one single person is unconditionally wrong and unjust, not masculine, too easy, and

even, as one prisoner put it, 'completely immoral'. Notwithstanding the particular situation at stake, many prisoners argued that officers' interventions should be performed differently: they should be a one-to-one affair. By saying so, those prisoners have unmasked a strongly masculine attitude towards a more balanced and at the same time strongly masculine approach that clearly referred to the duel (see also Collins 2008)[157]. Prisoners would prefer a more balanced fight grounded on reciprocity (like in box matches). A fight displayed in the form of the medieval duel; a way of using violence typical of previous phases of the civilization (Elias 1939, 1996) in which the participants' honour and reputation (and I would add credibility) would clearly be at stake.

'Be a man! Open the door...but just me and you...now! It's too easy doing it with your friends' help. Let's see who will survive, now! Open this fucking door! Don't escape, come on! I'll destroy you definitively. Hey, bastard come on, open this fucking door and let's see what happens. You are afraid coward! [Screaming] come back! Open this fucking barred door bastard!](Field note).

By staging a duel, some prisoners would consider a one-to-one fight as the appropriate way to honestly test one's capacity to overcome each other on equal terms. Yet, to be honest, not all prisoner-to-prisoner violence appeared to take the form of the 'fair' duel either, in Reggio Emilia.

The 'duel', in other words, seemed to be discussed and proposed more as a normative and rhetorical device, than a really feasible conflictual configuration to be adopted in day-to-day violent interactions inside. This type of formal configuration was sometimes accepted by both parties; yet, only ritualistically. Staging a duel was of course an informal, barely-lawful, procedure. Only a few officers would openly approve and even less would actually perform such a duel; hardly ever in front of an outsider. Duels do occur; maybe, more or less frequently depending on the particular context, but they do occur indeed.

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[157]   Collins (2008) writes about 'Hero versus Hero' (194) explicitilt referring to the Greeks mythology: the Iliad; he does so, to introduce his argument on the 'Audiense Support and Limit of violence' (198).

In those occasions, after a prisoners' one-to-one strong disagreement with an officer, some reciprocal verbal confrontations, one or the other might invoke the duel by signalling the intention to fight one-to-one; it is a kind of violent masculine test in which the respectability and toughness of each one is tested on physical terms on the ground.

Of course, due to the situation officers dominate the exchange and have the power, but also the accountability whether or not to open the barred door to start the duel. The officer cannot open the cell door at his own will lawfully. Surely, he cannot do it to perform a duel. Ex-post, however, with hardly any testimony it is not particularly difficult to justify what had occurred if the situation had run out of control.

The officer would open the bared door with one foot blocking it strongly. By doing so, the officer would test the prisoner's immediate reaction (this is what officers always have to do when routinely opening the cell's door) before opening the door completely and entering the cell. By doing so the officer tries to limit the actual possibility of an imminent confrontation, either symbolic or physical one to occur. As far as I grasped it by few observations and dozens of ethnographic interviews, accepting the duel and entering into the cell, the officer would show both 'respect' to the prisoner as far as he takes the prisoner's threat seriously, and fearlessness to the inmate, thereby enhancing his reputation.

Starting a duel

To start a duel an officer would open the barred door of the prisoner's cell. Prisoners seemingly respected, and even appreciated, those officers who dared to open the cell alone in those situations and often treat them accordingly following 'the script'; others did not.

Duels were tolerated and understood (if not agreed) by many prisoners and officers inside; those not agreeing with those practices would not challenge them openly; yet, accepting them, they might have felt abused, distressed, worried, traumatised and very vulnerable day in day out. It is noteworthy that those practices not only were usually unchallenged, but they were also clearly imbuing the culture and routine of doing coercion inside, as well as the reputation of those who have been involved in such interactions. Nobody had ever denounced any wrongdoers (but was the wrongdoer considered to be a wrongdoer?) for a reason or another during my fieldwork. Possibly because some officers and some prisoners shared a common code of violence and masculinity that would put a layer of respectability, or rhetorical respectability on the duel as a means to solve disputes adequately and in a balanced way. Possibly, then, the opinions of those not sharing those ideas were considered to be less relevant; and their voice would remain unheard anyway.

An officer opening the barred door alone and with bare hands (no shield, no baton was usually in the picture) in response to one inmate's threat would in fact demonstrate to the prisoner and to the other inmates on the wing the officer's respectability and toughness; it would demonstrate as one prisoner put it that 'he's a man and not just a turnkey'.

A ritualistic duel between one officer and one inmate: performing deference and demeanour

However, a less naive interpretation of the 'duel' would show that, only a ritualistic and rhetorical duel was actually at stake; not a real one with an unpredictable outcome. It looked more like the spectacle of Wrestling than to a box match on the ring. A ritualistic duel in which, instead, neither the script, nor the outcome of the 'duel' is at stake; in the ritualistic duel, in fact, both parties

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strictly follow the script or the duel turns into a real fight possibly followed by the emergency squad intervention. Such a *ritualistic duel* can be read at the light of the classical Goffman lesson (1958) as a particular case in which the entire ritual chain is constructed as a reciprocal and interactive performance of deference and demeanour. A chain characterised by a particular dramaturgy, a particular set of local rules, and possible honourable exit strategies by which the face of either party is saved and physical violence is avoided as much as possible (Collins 2008).

De facto, the officers dominate the duel from the beginning to the end. The prisoner must only play his role docilely and rhetorically, or the situation would change completely. In fact, in duels following the script, the officer would only be allowed to actively play that game theatrically (yet, in a way deeply imbued in symbolic violence) yelling very loudly, and occasionally even threatening or actually slapping the prisoner on his face. By doing so reinforcing the process of infantilization at the core of the process of prisonization.

The prisoner, on the contrary would be simply expected to accept the interaction docilely. In order to perform his role in the duel following the script, the prisoner should accept the definition of the situation (as well as slaps included) performed by the officer as a passive victim without physically reciprocating any of the officer's symbolic or actual offence, psychological or physical violence whatsoever: neither symbolically, nor bodily. The prisoner would either display his resistance passively, thereby accepting to continue to be abused physically or symbolically by the officer, or would admit his own 'wrongdoing', or simply to have lost, and apologize for it accordingly in order to stop the 'duel'. Other prisoners' reactions are not at stake in those ritual duels' scripts.

The officer must win the game and this is well known by both parties. Usually, both the keeper and the kept would stick to the script straightforwardly. A ritualistic duel is, of course, a very risky situation for the officer too, because the

prisoner might actually assault him at any time (or defend himself, depending from one's own perspective of this issue) either with or without weapons, such as razor blades, that in that custodial setting were frequently available to many prisoners. Those kind of duels had rarely occurred in front of me on the landing, though; moreover, to the best of my knowledge, they would mainly be performed by some particularly masculine and tough officers 'duelling' with masculine prisoners, whom the officer would publicly display to dominate easily following the script enhancing, by doing so, his own reputation.

A prisoner exiting the duel's script

If the prisoner exited from the script reacting to the officer's verbal or physical actions, than the officer would start punching him immediately, as one officer bluntly told me, and other colleagues, or the emergency squad, would arrive straightforwardly escalating the duel to a dog-eat-dog combat; this would also be common knowledge, shared by the officer and the prisoners alike, even though hardly ever academically in focus. The escalation of the fight would then probably be reported as a critical event in the appropriate official registers and documents. Duels are totally illegal and are not likely to be reported on paper: so they do not exist, officially. Duels that turned out to be an abusive aggression must therefore be described accordingly creating an *ad hoc* explanation of the event ex post; they will probably be described as a suddenly necessary response to an officer's assault even though the situation could, and should, be interpreted and described differently indeed.

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The previous night on the wing had been horrible: the
officer and the nurse had no possibility to rest at all;
many prisoners had been screaming and continuously asking
for anything they could imagine to ask for. Then, the night
shift was finally over.
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The next morning, after a half-hour walk from my hotel I enter into a wing in which stress was heavily in the air. The new officer starting his shift does not seem to appreciate the stressful situation he found inside. Both staff and prisoners seem to be particularly nervous and I am feeling uncomfortable there. One well-known 'difficult criminal', I'll call him Arturo here, had been particularly difficult in the previous hours. That was nothing new, though. He had been creating problems ever since his arrival about three weeks beforehand.

I witnessed his first arrival on the wing. A bunch of officers first took him to his cell that evening. His screaming and unreasonable bodily behaviour looked like he was berserk; yet, one week afterwards, the psychiatric explained me that, in his opinion at the light of his knowledge, he was not 'crazy at all'. (What is a mental health problem or how a mental health assessment works is never at stake inside; it is all taken for granted here and would in fact deserve much more attention, both by academics and by staff).

Arturo was sent to that forensic hospital from another prison in which he was detained for a psychiatric assessment. His behaviour, there, was judged to be too unpredictable and too violent to stay there and they sent him to the forensic hospital for a psychiatric assessment. The psychiatrist tells me that Arturo's diagnosis is already ready and that psychiatry can hardly do anything for such a 'criminal' as he or she calls him: he is simply a 'bad guy'; moreover, he also informs me that formally he [the psychiatrist] is supposed to wait for a month since Arturo's arrival before writing a definitive forensic psychiatric diagnosis that would imply either sending him back to where he came from, or accepting him as a new patient of the asylum.

Anyway, according to the psychiatrist, Arturo is just a criminal and not the mad and he pretends to be; they can, therefore, treat him accordingly. Arturo continues to behave strangely on the wing, maybe hoping by doing so to change the psychiatrist's mind about his own psychiatric assessment; yet, the psychiatrist has already taken his decision and does not display any intention to re-considering his case any further.

He has thrown anything he can out of his cell towards nurses, officers, and me. He has also destroyed the cell time and again, and flooded his cell repeatedly as acts of displaying 'insanity'. Eventually, he is in a completely bare cell (in Italian, *cella liscia*) with a mattress on the floor, no television because there is not any left on the wing [prisoners have broken them all and new one are on their ways]. Furthermore, he has no access to running water anymore now as the faucet is controlled externally by the officer to avoid new problems.

The officer starting his shift comments to the nurse even the '*cella liscia*' does not seem to work with that an…[imal; I suppose]. He does not refrain from behaving stupidly and violently. That officer is really annoyed and is no longer in the mood to accept to continue to accept to be stressed by the 'stupid guy' anymore.

Two hours after the officer has started his shift on the wing, a couple of heavy verbal exchanges had already happened between him and the prisoner. The officer, in fact, now refuses to go to the prisoner's cell each time the prisoner calls him 'for nor reason'. The prisoner insists and reminds the officer that listening to prisoner's request is one of the officer's duties. He was right, in a way, but, being honest, the prisoner was clearly calling provocatively to exacerbate the officer who was not in the mood to be comprehensive anymore even though I was there next to him (or maybe also because of my

presence).

The situation is slowly escalating; suddenly the officer walks toward Arturo's cell. Arriving in front of the cell, the officer starts screaming to the inmate. 'Are you stupid? I am trying to treat you like a normal guy. Do you get it or not? If you are stupid, then I'll treat you differently. Stop calling me continuously, or your requests will not be taken into account anymore! Ok? Do you get it? Is it now clear enough to you now? Bye.' The officer turns his back to the prisoner and walks back to his position, where he continues filling in documents, reading weekly papers, and time to time watching some TV (which was abusively there like it usually happens inside despite all formal rules and regulations).

Arturo is not the only prisoner giving problems; others are banging the toilet doors of their cells, few are screaming. The situation is really unbearable. The officer walks back to his chair he had previously put in the corridor facing the cells to better control 'the guys' and, concurrently, showing his awareness and at the same time readiness for action.

After one hour or so, the same prisoner throws some liquids on a female nurse passing by again. The officer, seeing the scene immediately runs toward the prisoner's cell; the prisoner is only wearing slips which were only partly covering his penis; he was completely wet and stinking of urine. Arturo threatens the officer urging him to open the door 'if you are really a man'. The officer, probably because I am also there, first tries to calm the prisoner down.

Eventually, the officer opens Arturo's barred door and slaps him on his face more or less 'symbolically' a couple of times, yet also physically. Arturo reacts by letting his own body fall down in the wet and filthy pavements of the

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cell to emphasise the officer's violence. The officer says
'it's enough for now. Just sleep! And don't call me! I
won't come anyway. Arturo remains quiet for a few hours;
then he starts creating problems again. I am afraid he will
experience other duels (he would also risk a lesson by
doing so repeatedly) before being sent back to the prison
he is coming from. I think that nobody will miss him in
Reggio Emilia when he will be gone: neither his fellow
prisoners, nor the officers. To be honest, though, yet
being sensible for his victimization, neither will I.
(Vignette 7.2).
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These kinds of duels have only occasionally happened in front of the researcher. Although, other alleged unlawful behaviours had also occurred in the facility under study time and again. One alleged case of double jeopardy is still under investigation and had produced wide local media coverage. Alleged double jeopardy without fatal consequences in prison does not apparently deserve national media coverage in Italy, though. In the Reggio Emilia's case, an alleged group of more than ten officers has been accused to be the perpetrators of a 'strong lesson' given to two prisoners that had previously assaulted a prison officer on the landing. That particular episode occurred just before this ethnography started and of course influenced its development significantly, particularly so in the beginning when trust in the ethnographer was not in the picture at all yet. Double jeopardy is nothing new in Italian prisons; nor abroad. Not only, have some episodes been prosecuted, but also some verdicts have clearly shown some officers' criminal behaviours and responsibilities (Buffa 2013a; Sarzotti 2012).

Those kinds of jeopardy are not usual, nor are they considered normal inside by many officers (at least in my understanding). That kind of jeopardy has never occurred in front of the ethnographer; yet officers and prisoners claim it has been recorded and will be fully addressed in another forthcoming publication focussed on *'Telling' About Coercion*. Usually, however, doing coercion bodily would not occur in the same way under all circumstance and with all prisoners: also at this

stage discretion and discrimination are strongly at stake; possibly even more. To affirm this soundly, however, much further investigation is required.

Chapter 8

The natural history of the research and some methodological notes

'Access to prison wings is harder to obtain than entry into public spaces such as the chapel or the library…there are also limits to which prisoners can be interviewed , when prisoners can be seen, and when, if at all, researcher can use recording equipment. No prison official permitted me to carry a digital recorder' (Kaufman 2015: 57).

About the preliminary stage of the research

The first informal contacts with those in charge of granting clearance to enter the custodial institution for research started in 2011, more than one year before my enrolment in the PhD school. Despite my experience in previous projects in other custodial institution either in Italy or abroad (The Netherlands, Scotland,

Finland, Poland and so on; *see* Visser and Vroge 2007) it took quite some time negotiating access for this research. One of the reasons was that the forensic psychiatric hospital was already a problem as such to be managed. Further research could only contribute creating new problems. After less than a year in total, the documents were ready and I was formally allowed access yet I still needed to contact the director of the institution to organize my first visit and discuss the project and its feasibility.

That proved to be quite challenging; eventually, the director who did not seem to be pleased to meet me, suggested me to get in contact with the medical director who would 'take care of me' on his behave. She did it, indeed. In less than three months I was invited for an informal meeting with the medical director who then, organised my first access to the wing. In less than four-hour car-ride I arrived at the facility one morning in July.

Few basic facts of this fieldwork

I agree with Clifford when he challenges a positivist approach to ethnography. However, I follow him, not only when he famously stated 'Ethnography is a hybrid textual activity: it traverses genres and disciplines' (1986: 26), but also, more importantly, and less often quoted, when he put it clearly that ethnography is not only, nor primarily literature (1986: 26).

The ethnography I present here is definitely not only literature. It is the textual result of a lot of interactions, co-presence, observation, dialogues, banters, cry and so on, that have lasted for something less than two years. This research was a strongly bodily experiences to me, as well as a heavily psychological one. Finishing it, left me filled in with memories of physical pain, psychological distress, and anxiety, that I experienced in-there. Yet, as Crewe put it, eventually I exited the field and officers and prisoners continued to live their

life there. I often continue to receive news from the participants, via Whatsup, Face Book, SMS and phone calls.

Doing ethnography in only one wing has been nothing like watching an exciting prison film, or doing my previous documentary projects describing the different aspects of particular custodial facilities I wanted to narrate 'navigating' through those facilities moving from one place to the other.

Of course, the result is a complex text; it is the translation of my experience of doing ethnography in that particular field. Yet, my experience was deeply grounded in a particular time and geography.

Some 'facts' are noteworthy, though:

1) The field work is the Istituti Penitenziari di Reggio Emilia. The facility Block House gate has always been 'open' to me for almost three years during which, in no occasion (at any time), I was refused access.

2) I worked within the wall for no less than 1600 hours, covering all shifts, usually for at least 12 hour a day: about 90% of the time in one wing, 5% on the yards, the rest just hanging around. During the entire ethnography, I would work holding a small paper notebook and pen visibly in my hands; later on, I would also sometimes work with a small digital camera that I would also use to record short videos and interviews.

3) Each single time I returned to my hotel room from the prison, I have always spent at least two to four hours, re-writing the notes, or commenting them on my lap-top. More than a dozen of time I have spent my free time going out with prison officers; once I went to see a theatre piece in which few the inmates from 'my wing' were acting; I went to a prison officer birthday party

and to a farewell party of a nurse who quit working. I refused some invitation to maintain some distance and to take time for writing.

4) I saw hundreds of interactions in which either prisoners would challenge officers, or officers would threat or use force against prisoners. I saw prisoners assaulting officers in front of me, and so on.

5) The 'unit of analysis' is the observable interaction. Each interaction is analysed at the light of the previous chains of interactions in which the actors at stake have been involved.

6) I heard screaming, yelling, insulting all the time. I saw sexism, machismo, racism, islamophobia (but, to be honest, not to such a different degree than in many other Italian social contexts, such as factories or schools) I had previously visited. I smelled the worst smell that I could ever have imagined. I saw persons cutting their belly with a razor blade and, afterwards, I saw the doctor and nurse curing them, sometimes while laughing to one another (as usually occurs in operation rooms in hospitals. I witness an amazing amount of violence or bodily confrontation. I saw people acting out, banging their heads towards the barred door and bleeding accordingly. I saw people screaming, asking to be tight to a bed feeling unable to refrain from hurting themselves to death or killing other; in those ways, at least, they had justified those requests approximately to the doctors in front of me.

7) I conducted more than 45 semi-structured video recorded interviews, and almost fifty photo-elicitation interviews mainly with prison officers, but also with medical staff and seven inmates.

8) I started writing from the very outset of the ethnography. This text has been continuously changing during the entire ethnography and I still consider it as a work in progress to a certain extend.

I witnessed all that with my body and my mind. I therefore dare saying that this thesis is absolutely not only literature, thereby agreeing with Clifford at least partially.

9) Even , the vignettes, the most 'literary' part of the ethnography only contain what I lived as facts; yet, some parts are combine in creative ways to try giving the intended emotion and to secure anonymity to my participants. Without all the time I lived there those vignettes could not simply exist.

Researching on the use-of-force appreciatively or critically: a third way?

Reading the literature that deals with the use-of-force and violence (both within the wall and beyond) one thing emerged clearly: in recent years the debate over the prison has been strongly polarised (and politicised); this is not surprising taking into account the settings in which this research is conducted, the political, electoral and public relevance of the issue and, finally, the problem of access and financing bodies (Power 2003; Sim 2008)[158]. Here, it suffice noting that the international study of prison officers have been traditionally conducted mainly from two opposite standpoints: the first is appreciative towards prison officers, it downplays the role of coercion, and is often co-founded by the prison service; the second instead tends to be very critical about them focussing on the illegal use-of-force and abuses (Berrington et al. 2003; Power 2003; Sim 2008).

The Prison officer (Liebling and Price 2001) is another crucial text on prison officers – like Kauffman's one (1988) – dealing in particular with the context of England and Wales. In that book, Alison Liebling and colleagues explicitly adopted a method and approach grounded on *appreciative inquiry* (Liebling

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[158]   At least two articles in prison sociology have directly focused on the issue raised by Becker on 'what side are we on?' (Liebling 2001; Sim 2003).

and Price 2001)[159] they argued that: '[u]nlike traditional social science research, which tends to focus on problems and difficulties, [appreciative inquiry] tries to allow good practice to emerge' (6); then they continue that it '*aims to understand what makes best practice possible*' (2001: 6; *emphasis added*). Towards the end of the conclusion of their book (that has its root in a research commissioned by HM Prison Service[160]) they wrote:

[w]hat can we conclude about the role of the prison officers in the late modern prison [in England and Wales]? […] Prison officers are the human face of the Prison Service. As human being, they are both special and fallible. The power they hold has the potential to corrupt, and the world they work in can be dangerous, difficult and always a challenge. Prison officers are perfectly able to challenge and help prisoners with their offending behaviour [...] There are myth and passions about who prison officers are. This book constitutes a first general attempt to consider the evidence (Liebling and Price 2001, 193).

In *The Prison Officer* book, a lot of evidence were indeed considered from an impressive number of research the authors conducted throughout their outstanding career and it remains an invaluable source for anybody who intends to work on the topic; yet, it does not say enough on a crucial and particular aspect that characterised prison officers' job: the duty of the threat and the use-of-force; then, of course, it is a piece of work that refers to the geographic context of England and Wales, as well as my research refers to Italy; lastly, it was not the first book on prison officers, it was only the first one in UK.

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[159]   In its third edition, some more critical issues has been sharply addressed;
[160]   *See also* the official report: *An exploration of staff – prisoner relationships at HMP Whitemoor: 12 years on* (Liebling et al. 2011).
(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/an-exploration-of-staff-prisoner-relationships-at-hmp-whitemoor-12-years-on) (01-10-2015).

On the other side of the divide between appreciative and critical scholars that has characterised this field of research, along with associations and political campaigners we can find many critical scholars studying or denouncing the 'use-of-force issue' straightforwardly focusing on officers' culture and practice and 'bad' violence[161].

Recently Joe Sim (2008) who has been teaching for the last thirty years at Liverpool More university published a chapter in *Understanding Prison Staff* (Bennett et al. 2008) titled 'An inconvenient criminological truth' in which he address it straightforwardly. He argues about the 'prison officer's issue', that it is crucial to address

> [t]he question of prison officer culture and its negative impact on prisoners and those staff who show humane empathy towards them. The detrimental and mortifying dimensions underpinning this culture still remains relatively marginal in prison literature. Instead a *theoretically sanitised penology has developed* in which this culture, occasionally disrupted by the shame-inducing behaviour of an atavistic 'bad apple', is regarded as functionally benevolent for offenders (Sim 2008: 189; *emphasis added*).

Sim then continues: '[t]his chapter takes a different position to this sanitised penology. It seek to provide a critical [thus, the opposite of appreciative] analysis of prison officers '(189) taking distance from the consensus around prison officers expressed by liberal prison reform groups and academics.

Three main points for thinking critically about prison officers are particularly significant for his argument: *firstly*, the recognition of the existence of institutional violence, or as he defines it 'the institutionalised nature of prison officer violence' (Sim 2008: 190); in Italy this is not a new thesis (Ricci and Salierno 1971; Gonnella 2014, 2013a, b; Manconi et al. 2015). *Secondly*, the role of prison officers' masculinity (Sim 1994; Toch 1998; Ricciardelli et al.

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[161]   A large group of scholars that studies also these kinds of issues can be found at: http://www.europeangroup.org/

2015; Earle 2016). *Lastly*, the relationship between the State and prison officers.[162]

The Justification of the field

This research, as it ended up to be, cannot be soundly defined as a comparative research, nor was ever intended to be one; yet, the setting was selected because in one particular custodial setting two identical facilities could be found one next to the other within the custodial complex's wall hosting two particular custodial institutions, each one characterised by one particular institutional goal: a prison and a forensic psychiatric hospital; and this seemed to be adequate to explore power relations between staff in those two institutions.

Generally speaking, in fact, I would agree with the assumption that studying only one case is problematic, or at least more problematic than studying more than one (yet, this is notoriously not true in different ethnographic traditions).[163] That's why this research started as a quasi-comparative research. The reason why, then, it has mainly focused on one setting, the forensic hospital, depended on the development of the research natural history and its focus on the possibility to study ethnographically by observation, and even adopting visual methods, the squad interventions on the wing during critical events. In other words, focussing only on one facility was a decision taken to better address the emerging research question on the use-of-force: it was not scheduled beforehand, but simply became the more adequate way to conduct the research in an attempt to pursue its goals. Normally, the single case study

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[162]   Joe Sim particularly emphasised the role of the state in the issue of punishment; A very different approach that tend to de-emphasise the role of the state and reason about border is growing among so called border criminologists (https://www.law.ox.ac.uk/research-subject-groups/centre-criminology/centreborder-criminologies); (*see* Kaufman 2015).
[163]   I here thank Franco Prina who stressed this point while discussing with me this work at the initial stage of it.

can be justified with two main reasons: the setting is very exceptional, or it is somehow representative of other similar settings.

My justification to focus mainly on only one setting is twofold.

Firstly, a lot of time was needed to gain trust in order to be allowed to have actual and not only formal access to the wing day-to-day life and even more to be allowed to participate to the emergency squad's interventions. Trust, as sketched above, was the result of the ongoing interactions with those particular officers working on one particular wing day in day out. Deciding to leave the asylum field to start a new one in the prison would have been simply unfeasible given the time-schedule at stake. Unintended consequences and time schedules gave me no chances to even trying it. More importantly, I had then the impression that my observation was not yet 'saturated' and that, concurrently, the field was becoming more and more familiar and open to me. In other words I was not yet quite satisfied with my understanding of the topic; however, I had the feeling that I might have some chance pursuing it. In particular, I felt the need to see even more critical episodes to give a sense of them and to elicit ethnographically new interpretations from participants to better grasp the subject understanding of it. Interactions with prison officers, other staff and inmates were becoming 'normal' occurrence in my day-to-day stay on the wing: deep, spontaneous and more reflexive conversation were emerging spontaneously or intentionally elicited by me.

The *second* justification to stick to only one setting was the physical contiguity of this institution. Due to that same contiguity, many prison officers working in the special hospital from time to time were allocated to the prison. Almost all but the youngster officers had at least some experience of at least two other prisons in Italy. Of course I am aware of the very different cognitive dimension implied in observation and ethnographic interviews (Gobo 2008).

Interview can in fact be considered as an 'actively constructed narratives' (Silverman 2013:45; *see also* Riessman 2008). But I do think that the opinion, discourses and justifications that can be grasped through observation are at least as interesting as the behaviours and course of action that we can actually see. And showing a slightly different opinion than Silverman, I do think that the two distinct dimensions can be related one another through theory and practical understanding. I do agree with Silverman that interviews [with non-participants] do not give access to 'experience' (Silverman, *personal communication*).

Due to my interest in the practice of the use-of-force, I decided to focus in this thesis mainly on the observational data (*see also* Jacobs 1977). Of course, those data have been influenced and made readable to me also by the bulk of interviews I collected and video recorded inside and outside with officer, medical staff and prisoners during the last months of the ethnography.

I considered the long participation in one wing and the interviews an adequate way of experiencing and participating in actual violence in one specific organization. Without participation and personal reciprocal trust (only by doing interviews) this results would simply not be there, at least not in this form. Doing ethnography and being there on the field allowed to me to grasp a set of different interpretations and discourses on the use-of-force occurring inside, in the special hospital, the nearby prison as well as in other facility the participants had experienced throughout their career. In the next section, I turn to my position in the field.

The ethnographer's position in the field: Insider/outsider, or what else?

Despite the risk of being unfashionable, I do follow the Max Weber's lesson; in other words, by doing so I try pursuing a quasi-value-free social research. I try to take into account the researcher's reflexivity, and express my position and opinion as clearly and explicitly as I am able to. Yet trying, at the same time, to unpack analytically the complexities of the field without, by doing so, pursuing any political goal.

Some words on the researcher's attitude and the research process from a critical realist ethnographer

A researcher, let alone a prison researcher, can never fully become an 'insider' or, adopting an anthropological heading can even hardly ever try to become a native. What is crucial, though, is what is commonly known as reflexivity (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007; Cardano 2009). In qualitative methods, reflexivity is a crucial concept, yet sometimes a bit too fuzzy to be adopted clearly in the field. Here, Hammersley (2015) version of reflexivity in prison ethnography will be used.

[Reflexivity is the] awareness on the part of the ethnographer of how her or his personal and social characteristics, feelings or emotions, and behaviour may not only facilitate and illuminate but also restrict and distort the data and the analysis…[T]he ethnographer can never simply be an insider (25).

Hammersley brilliantly points out some crucial problems of doing ethnography, either epistemological or ethical ones, which have been at the centre of the ethnographic agenda for decades, particularly so after the so-called *writing culture* debate.

Hammersley's critique of empiricism is relevant here; the way in which he directly challenges the heuristic value of 'inside' knowledge is noteworthy because it can challenge the very base of this thesis. Participation, in other words is more likely than not to enhance certain kinds of understanding; however, it *cannot 'guarantee'* it (Hammersley 2015). As a consequence, the author concludes by saying that, neither ethnography, nor any other methodological approach can claim any epistemic privilege.

There has been an interesting methodological and epistemological debate among ethnographers between, at one extreme of the continuum, those who have opted for the naturalist model and, on the other side, those who have opted for the constructionist model (Silverman 2011/1993)[164]; however, neither side can guarantee a 'better' knowledge than the other; each approach can instead produce and justify one plausible comprehension of the phenomenon under study from a particular standpoint adopting a particular method. I agree that not only 'research can ever be "theory free"' (Silverman 2011/1993: 149), but also, I would add, following Cardano (2009), that ethnography 'is [necessarily] "praxis" or "procedure laden"' (Cardano 2009: 1); this point was particularly relevant in this field. The implicit or explicit epistemological position of the researcher frames her or his own research strategy and practice accordingly and *vice versa*. In other words, I agree with Hammersley (2015) when he writes,

in ethnography, as in any kind of research, we are never simply documenting what goes on 'inside', providing a picture or comprehensive account of it, we are always seeking to answer some particular set of question about it (27).

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[164] The methods and fields of inquiries adopted by ethnographers varies grately between those extreem; a non-comprehensive list of 'methods of collecting and analyzing empirical materials' (Denzin and Lincoln 2013) includes: narrative inquiries, critical art-based inquiries, oral history, observations on observations (on this interesting point *see also* the methodological notes in *The Multicultural Prison* [Phillips 2012]), visual ethnography, performative autoethnography (Jewkes 2011), and convict autoethnography (Newbold et.al 2014), collaborative ethnography (Bosworth et al. 2005) and so on.

Even more importantly, 'the question we address never exhaust the phenomena we are studying' (27). The corollary is that, of course, another question, or the same question in another research context (or by a different researcher) would possibly result in a different comprehension of the 'same' phenomena. One interesting point not directly addressed by Hammersley in this text on prison ethnography is that newer interpretations can reinforce or contradict the previous ones already available of the phenomenon under study; however, it is crucial to point out that new ethnographic knowledge can hardly ever falsify older previous available knowledge. Falsification of hypothesis in not the normal way in which ethnography knowledge works. Quantitative methods, on the contrary, particularly so in the domain of the hard sciences, usually do refer to falsification as a crucial strategy of truth claiming within their particular epistemology and methodology.

The crucial issue of value free research is at stake here, as well as the relationships between ideology, culture, and knowledge, a longstanding epistemological conundrum that cannot be addressed here, due its relevance and complexity. What is possible to do, instead, is simply and shortly to address the question of the participants' and ethnographers' knowledge and position.

I do not recognize a privileged heuristic and epistemological position to neither researchers, nor participants. Prison researchers coming from the outside import their own idea, ideology, research practices, prejudices, and knowledge (i.e. drawing heavily on the theory and 'the' relevant literature from their own field); the 'participant', on the other side might also have their own personal opinions, prejudices, questions to pose, and why not, lay or sophisticate theory (one of my participant served as university teacher before his arrest). However, even those questions by human being locked-up or wearing a uniform are not disconnected from the 'outside', nor are they necessarily less likely to be biases than the researchers' ones.

Despite the wall separating inside and outside we always have to consider the interconnections and the relationships which link a particular prison with the social-political-geographical context in which it is located; this point was already grasped by Sykes almost sixty years ago (1958); it is important, moreover, to take into account, concurrently, both the importation model (in which Irwin and Cressey (1962) underlined the importance of prisoners' (and officers') identity prior to incarceration to the 'inmate culture') as well as the prisonization model –the socialization to prison values introduced by Clemmer (1940) and Sykes (1958]) – to try to grasp the complexity of the situations at stake.

The researcher's standpoint

Referring specifically to the micro-sociological ethnography at stake focussing on officers 'doing' coercion, I intend firstly to explicitly disclose my standpoint. My epistemology, here, already introduced above, draws from *critical realism*; my political attitude toward the participants was neither politically adverse to the Police and Prison Officers, nor particularly sympathetic to inmates (in fact these two categories are very broad and include very different set of people sharing a multitude of social positions, cultures, belonging and so on. Endorsing critical realism, I am aware to become an easy target for both realists and constructivists; yet, I am not a *partisan* of critical realism neither and I am acquainted with (and have been tempted by the sirens of) the deconstruction of post-structuralism, the brilliant insight of the different feminisms and the openness and opaqueness late-modernism; I have simply considered critical realism as the more adequate epistemology to adopt while doing observation on the use-of-force and violence in prison.

Prisons are places of physical confrontations, harm, sorrow and poverty (Buffa 2013a; Wacquant 2009, 2013) and that's a fact that can hardly be dismissed by anybody who has been inside for a while. It is possible to focus on prisoners' practices of 'doing' freedom (Ugelvik 2014) only giving it a very limited, indeed too limited, interpretation of the word freedom. I took another position inside and I experienced on my own body that a hard, hurting and heavy reality, such as a violent fight, do exist, indeed. Fights *do* occur bodily (of course the interpretation of those fights might vary greatly from one participant to another) whether or not a researcher is observing it.

Of course I am not saying that they are independent to the researcher's presence. On the contrary, I do not intend to downplay the researcher's effect which is well-known in the social science literature; I simply intend to challenge those philosophical late-modern interpretations of the prison and police context which tend to downplay the role of what actually occurs, to focus mainly on discourses and self-indulgent auto-ethnographies.

Avoiding to do so, adopting a more sophisticate and late-modern attitude philosophically questioning the idea of reality as such, would undermine the astonishing experiences of many people whose realities and recurrent violent interactions I have witnessed with my own body, my ears, my eyes and all the senses (Simmel 1908) repeatedly. I do not intend to do that.

The Ethnographer and the activist

A further question about my position would be: am I engaged? Yes, definitely; I am engaged in what I study, in the process of studying, and in the interactions I am observing and in the protagonists of those interaction at least to a certain extent.

I am somewhat also a witness; yet, I am definitely not a partisan; at least I do not intend to be one. I am a research rather than a witness. Although the distinction between the two might be philosophically complicated, my duty is clear to me and it is to work to produce knowledge, although 'knowledge' is a very contested expression nowadays; and it is particularly problematic in prison for its well-known relationship with power that was also highlighted by Foucault.

Being neither a partisan, nor an abolitionist, however, does not mean being neutral (which I think it is impossible to be). To me, it implies, however, trying *to be as neutral as possible* and as reflexive as possible concerning each and every decision making, strategy, interaction and behaviour adopted doing fieldwork and further analysis. This would require much more space that is available here. All my notes, schema, older draft, pictures, videos, uncut interviews are available to scrutiny to any person reading this thesis that might be interested.

Questions may arise from my personal academic interest, or directly from the participant. I am in the field to try to grasp some particular aspects of the reality I am studying and to enhance the common and shared knowledge about the subject. The questions I 'pose to the field', the question I interpret 'coming from the field', as well as, my positionality and the practicalities (such as the freedom/constraint I experienced 'inside') all impinge on both the research-process and the power dynamic on the ground.

Future implication of this research for others

Moreover, and more importantly, all these aspects impinge on the life of others, either participants or future researchers. On the one side, prisoners may be harmed, abused, psychologically distressed (or feel better) by the research

work. On the other, researcher's actual possibility of getting access (and in what form) to a custodial institutions could also be strongly influenced by the previous performance of fellow researchers. However, as a researcher, I might feel a duty to pursue knowledge even if that might be detrimental for colleagues or create some kind of problems to either future researchers or participants. Difficult and ethically relevant decisions must be made trying to reach an acceptable balance between knowledge, self-censorships and ethical imperatives. Doing research always imply a difficult balance between opportunities and constraints: ones that, at least in this particular fieldwork, swings between *turning a blind eye*, and *becoming a whistle blower*. I feel and I try to pursue knowledge that is not detrimental to those imbued in the situation, notwithstanding their particular position on the field. I do not tell necessarily all the truth, but I am not a fiction writer either and I put clear limit to my practice of self-censorships (Sim 1990; *see also* Drake 2015).

Here the issue of advocacy come into the picture; I agree with Hammersley where he suggests that ethnographers do not necessarily need to be advocate of those they study (I am not); I agree that the ethnography can, or even ought to 'produce knowledge of phenomena that are independent of it' (32). I also think that questions must address relevant issues at stake in society to be worthwhile; that's why I decided to study violence and power and I decided to doing so doing ethnography on prison officers using force. Other positions on the issue could have been possible and feasible as well.

Bearing witness to knowledge or doing something for the participants?

Ethnographers, journalists and photographers are sometimes accused to be voyeur, abusing the situation instead of doing something meaningful and useful for those personally involved in the situation under study. This commonsensical position might well find estimators and might present some

interesting points; yet, it is important to bear in mind that anybody has her or his own duty depending on her or his position in the field. Knowledge and its values are at risk working inside because it is often quite difficult to get rid of the shame one may feel when observing or talking with someone in a very uncomfortable situation or in psychological distress. I felt like that more than once. Yet I am not trained to be a social worker, nor do I want to be.

Although there might be different reasons or occasions to actively intervene in the situation in order to reduce sorrow or help someone to exit from a particularly difficult situation, this is not what an ethnographer is normally required (or capable) to do (Hammersley 2015); her or his duty, instead is to pursue knowledge to try to help to comprehend the situation under study; possibly also the way in which those problem emerge and how can they be challenged. To express my own position that greatly differs from Marquant's one who decided to become a prison officer to study them as insider, I quote again Hammersley (2015) who, referring to a study of Ned Polsky (1969) suggests

that if someone wants to be a 'social worker', or for that matter a 'correctional officer' (or, we might add, a political activist), that is 'their privilege', but that they should not do this in the name of the social science (Hammersley 2015: 35).

Following Hammersley's critical stance to ethnography and his call for critical realism in qualitative research (which as I already said is my perspective as well), I slightly disagree, however, with his normative position and hierarchy of values regarding which research approach is better or worse than any other. In particular, I slightly disagree with Hammersley when he openly writes that partisanship (so also feminist research?) and participatory inquiry 'they do not constitute research' (35). They are research and in prison research they have produces some of the more significant piece of research.

On the contrary, I think they *do* enrich the ethnographic landscape helping readers to get a better partial picture of the reality that all those particular ethnography attempt to (partially) represent. Moreover, particularly so in prison ethnography, how can anybody fail to recognise the very rich heuristic approaches used, and the insights offered, by those who attempted to do research differently in a way or another? I think, among many others, to outstanding research such as: Bosworth (1999); Bosworth en al. (2005); Jewkes (2002; 2011); Phillips (2012).

Those works strongly influenced the practice of prison ethnography and are widely considered to be very useful partial descriptions that must be considered by any researcher doing research inside. Each of them, and, more importantly, together, they offer a wider set of lens, then the one proscribed by Hammersley to try to comprehend particular aspects that might be otherwise be overseen or even denied.

Bosworth greatly enriched the approach to gender (1999), Border criminology and the detention of migrants (2014), Jewkes to Audience study at large and masculinity, Phillips and Earle (2010) both to ethnic issues, research methodology and intersectionality. How can anybody dismiss all this? Moreover, that fussy set of different approaches constitute the reality of contemporary research; a reality that has developed in different types and styles of ethnographies at least since the *writing culture debate*. And what about *convict criminology* (Ross and Richards 2003) then?

I would rather try (this is what I try doing) to follow a less radical and partisan approach, to find collaborative ways to pursue and share understanding embedding different perspectives, being opened to new approaches, collaborations and methods.

I intend to conclude this section disclosing a regret of mine. I regret that I have not had any chance to use mixed methods which is one kind of approach that I am particularly interested in; yet, the emerging complexity and the uniqueness of the data emerging from the field ethnographically suggested me not to try doing it in this occasion.

Complexity, in fact, cannot be easily grasp form one stand point alone with only one theoretical framework and one restricted self-referential approach. I prefer to look for a collection of plausible set of ways of doing research with the goal to produce an ensemble of plausible descriptions that might relate, in different ways to one another trying, by doing so, to contribute to pursue a better collective knowledge that might, as a collateral outcome, contribute to help others governing some particular social issues at stake.

On the genesis of the research

Just like in many other ethnographies 'The genesis of the study was somewhat banal' (Crewe 2009: 463); unlike Ben Crewe's interest that developed only at the end of his doctorate, my interest in prison marked my entire career both as photographer and researcher. In fact, entering prison for a documentary project in the early 90s strongly affected me ever since. During the first visits to some Italian prisons in the 1990s I shot no pictures at all and just decided that I needed to study prison academically to pursue my ideas; my previous study in photography did not suffice. Therefore, I started to study prison and sociology of deviance and sociology of law already as an undergraduate student and, some years afterwards, I decided to apply to become a PhD students with a research project focusing on prisoner's resistance based on observation and visual methods. Although prison was in the picture from the beginning of my PhD, the thesis developed differently than I had previously expected. I remember Antonio Chiesi lectures on research methods at the Graduate School

in which he stressed the researcher's need to be open and sensitive to the field, particularly so, in the initial stage of the research; Roberta Sassatelli and Mario Cardano guided me through all the journey; Chiesi, as well as Luisa Leonini, always granted me his precious time, suggestions and critiques. Meeting David Silverman and briefly discussing with him on my research was also an eye opener. Being a vising fellow at the Centre for criminology, University of Oxford, and Bosworth's lessons and personal suggestions have been crucial.

The natural history of the research

Three[165] [four at the time of the discussion] years ago, the initial intended goal of this ethnography was a comparative study of the *prisoners' resistance* tactics in two very different wings of one male Italian prison characterised by very diverse prisoners social position that I already knew. My personal biography shaped that research topic. My previous experience inside custodial institutions – both as university lecturer in sociology of communication and as a photographer doing documentary projects inside (Visser and Vroege 2007) – were all characterized by my position inside; since my first experience, in fact, I have always been mainly if not exclusively interested in prisoners and therefore I had always worked side by side with inmates; that position reinforced my initial cultural and political advocacy and framed my 'obvious' standpoint in this research as well. Both my imported culture and the socialization within the prisoners' cultures inside different prison settings for some years, played a role in it: I was definitely on prisoners' side, then.

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[165]   Before winning the Phd-student position at Milan University, I have been a doctoral student in sociology at the University of Turin where I followed all the theoretical courses they offered. Here I want to thank the Director of that Doctoral schools for the priviledge they granted me to be doctoral student at the University of Turin.

However, working for about twenty years, intermittently, on prisoners' side did not stop my curiosity and my efforts to continuously question what I was doing, and the reason why I was doing it in one particular way. Over the last few years, then, I begun to feel more and more familiar and, at the same time, critical with the quite homogenous Italian academic discourses about inmates' world. These discourses were mainly depicting inmates as victims, in a way or another, and often completely forgetting those working inside, either custodial or medical staff (*contra*, Sarzotti 1999).

During the initial phase of this research in Reggio Emilia custodial complex, I slowly started to feel a new curiosity. I progressively understood that I wanted to challenge my personal understanding about prison officers focussing on them straightforwardly. Beforehand, I had always seen officer mainly, if not only, as 'the other' on the wing; as useful social actor I needed to do my job inside mainly as turnkeys.

I have to admit that the book *The Prison Officer* (Liebling 2001; Liebling et al. 2011) gave me new lens to see the keepers and the kept differently. Since her first edition of *The Prison Officer* book which re-started to fill in an almost empty research field and prompt new academic research, following her lesson, I started to explore the much more reach literature about police and policing that was completely new for me at that time.

Through those reading, a new curiosity about Italian prison officers had developed into an actual scientific interest through the intertwined practice of reading literature on prison and prison officer (and prison staff and police more broadly) and being in the field with a new shifting, and less fixed, standpoint and attitude: I started to be sceptical about whose side was I on.

'Whose side are we on?' (Becker 1967) is an old lesson in ethnography dismissing the call for neutrality (*See also* Bourdieu 2002). The dilemma of being on either one or the other's side is a well-known longstanding issue in the social science (Becker 1967) then imported into prison research (Liebling 2001; Sim 2003; Drake et al. 2015). Both Liebling's and Sim's papers were very instructive to me yet presenting two opposite visions and implying two very different research agendas; Sim, a prison abolition activist, being somewhat a crucial exponent among critical prison scholars, and Liebling the one who introduced the appreciative approach into prison sociology[166].

During the ethnography, I progressively become more aware that deciding on whose side to stand would have a strong impact on the construction of the field [here my constructionist theoretical position become clear (Berger and Luckmann 1966).] (*See* Drake et al. 2015). Trying to be neutral (or should I say as little partisan as possible) or taking one of the possible sides in the field would have given me very different lens and keys through which to observe and enter into certain areas of the field, participating and observing to one activity or another. Furthermore, this crucial methodological decision would embed some epistemological assumptions and would also have significant ethical implications of one sort or another.

From the study of the practice of resistance to the ethnography of the power relation between custodial and medical staff

Moving from the doctoral school in Turin to that in Milan the research topic changed significantly: from the study of the inmates' practice of resistance, towards *the ethnography of power relation between custodial and medical staff*. During The first year as a doctoral student, in fact, I have become more

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[166]   Liebling has been serving as Director of the Institute of Criminology's Prisons Research Centre at the University of Cambridge.

interested in how and to what extent power was actually legitimately and not-so legitimately exerted, negotiated and delegated (and resisted as well) in practice by the uniformed and the other staff. In other words, the research focus started to shift towards the officers' side and, in particular, to the way in which the institutional governance was exerted on daily basis on inmates taking into account what is usually referred to as the *Problem of Order* (Sparks et al. 1996).

Of course, by doing so, I would necessary need considering what Goffman called the underworld and the prisoners' resistance anyway. *De facto*, these embodied and engendered interactions between the staff (both custodial and medical) and the kept become the focus of the research. Two main 'opportunistic' consideration guided, my choice toward the study of staff as well as, my decision to study it in a forensic hospital and in a prison. Firstly, both ethnography on custodial staff (*but see*: Bennet et al. 2008) and study in forensic hospitals are not present in Italian sociological and criminological literature at all, and are also rare abroad (at least in American and British literature). Secondly, the custodial complex in Reggio Emilia seemed to be the right setting to study these power relations because it included in two identical facility one next to the other, on the one side a prison (for defendant on remand), and on the other an asylum.

At this stage the power relation between uniformed and medical staff was thought to become the central topic of the research.

Observation and ethnographic interview staying on basis grade officers' side, but still being "Other" on the field.

Only a few weeks later in the field, however, I already thought that my focus on the ethnography of power relation between custodial and 'psy'[167] staff needed to be though more thoroughly. The topic seemed to be too large to me to be adequately controlled through observation by one researcher alone; it would *be a very interesting topic for a wider research group though*. I needed to refocus the goal; yet, this was not an easy task. Furthermore, my position in the field had to be redrawn since there was nothing like *the* staff inside (Bennett et al. 2008). Medical and paramedical staff have their own medical directors while uniformed staff have a prison officer commander (a chief inspector) that is governed by a director (*infra*, Chapter 4). Already during the initial phase of the fieldwork it clearly appeared that power relations, hierarchies and loyalties of custodial and psychiatric staff were continuously constituted, reconstituted and contested on the wings by all parties[168]on daily basis. As it is now widely recognised there were no homogenous cultures in any of the professional groups; nevertheless some macro differences were visible between one group and the others and those would have been my research focus at that stage. On some topics the difference between different staff crossed profession and seemed to be more influenced by other individual characteristics like political opinion, gender or age. The Sociology of profession and, more clearly, the participation to the life in the wing urged me to reconsider the issue of my position once again.

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[167] Psycology and psychiatric professions are often referred to in the literature as 'psy' staff.

[168] Educator play a minor role in these power relation and are very rarely present in the wing, mainly to talk to an inmate that cannot go downstairs to the educators' office. On the contrary, the priest is a key figures in the day to day life of the wing but his presence inside is very sporadic and should be studied in a different way.

As I have already discussed, my final decision was to stay on prison officer side and to focus on prison officers practices using both observation and interviews; following Lieblings suggestion (2001), however, I decided to include in the picture some other actors involved in the interactions: psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses, chaplain and educators.

To decide to stay on prison officers' side was not enough. More precisely, I had to decide whether to stay with the chief inspector, the managers or with the basic grade officers since formal hierarchies in a quasi-military environment do matter and do structure the observable interactions. I decided to stay by the basic grade officers simply because they are the ones who do rule the wing in practice; prison officers are 'the street-level bureaucracy' or 'the local police' inside, as a prison officer described his own role to me in an informal conversation.

This decision simply implied to stick to the wing where basic grade officer operate, day in day out. Sticking to one part of the facility was something others (Bosworth 2009) had done before. I was puzzled whether to follow Bosworth example or to stick to Crewe (2009) suggestion to try to get the wider picture. Eventually I decided to stick to the wing level and to move to other areas, such as the yard, only when useful (i.e. to have a better environment to conduct an ethnographic interview Gobo 2008).

Working closely with the basic grade, I often found myself at ease and to be honest some time I enjoyed the 'atmosphere'. I did not experience such a social distance between prison officers and I due to some kind of similarities in the family background. Something quite different than what Crewe argued about in his *Research identity and loyalties* (Crewe 2009: 472-478) in his *Appendix*. In his *Note on the research process*, Crewe writes:

I found myself *more at ease socially with the prison's teaching staff and management team* then I did with basic grade staff. But like other researcher (Jewkes 2002), I also felt considerable sympathy for most officers given the emotional demands of the job […]' (Crewe 2009:476; *emphasis added*).

On the contrary, I found myself very quickly at ease with basic grade staff and pretty quickly started to comprehend (and have some sympathy) with their masculinity (which I also incorporate, yet trying to resist it at least to some extent) and somewhat simple and unsophisticated approach to their life and profession (yet, some were intellectually sophisticated; few even had or where studying to get a university degree; few knew a lot about art and cinema). Probably, my social position influenced my preferences and sympathies in the field. In fact, I am the first with a University BA in my family.

I grew up in the outskirt of a big Italian industrial city, Turin, just 200 meter away from the biggest Fiat industry plant. An urban area in which young gang confrontation was very normal at that time and where violence was a daily occurrence for me. I have been beaten for the first time when I was only six by a group of four guys; two were much older than me. I was playing in the public garden close to my parent's flat. I had just received my first bike and I did not want to lose it right away. However, my resistance did not help. Then, I was not able to react physically, despite my strong appearance, but I screamed loudly and I tried to strongly hold my bike until I could. They took it away from me brutally, in few seconds. I still remember that episode clearly. Over the following years, until my family gained a much better economic standing, and we moved to a much more 'comfortable house' in the countryside, I have been robbed many times and been beaten but a few ones in that horrible 'hood' that had the same awful name as the FIAT main factory: Mirafiori.

Coming of age in such an awful area (at least to me), I learned how to live my life on that kind of streets coping with that kind of social milieu, sexist jokes and racist banters, and to some extent learned to like it as well (yet, maybe I

should not write it). Prison officers' infancy was often not that different to mine; often theirs had been even worse, I have learned in the field. Furthermore, my previous experience inside a lot of prison wings both working as photographer and serving as university lecturer in sociology of communication helped me in making me feel not too uncomfortable while being inside the wing or when moving 'freely' inside a prison, except the crucial issue of seeing person beneath bars which is still today unbearable to me.

I knew that prison could be an unsafe working place, but I would definitely feel easier and safer inside a prison now (in my capacity of researcher) than in my original neighbourhood when I was a young boy. Being pragmatic and honest, over a period of many years, I have only experienced a few soft aggressions and I have not been beaten seriously inside any prison yet. The only quite serious episode occurred in this ethnography due to the final focus of the research. Being hurt, and it occurred softly, was in the picture. Yet, I have also been hurt significantly regarding my psychological wellbeing and emotions.

On access

In the first period of my observation I was really very alert to get a sense of the situation. Due to my previous experience in prison, my first impression was a kind of familiarity with the new setting; yet, I quite soon realized that the new one was a particularly heavy and violent environment; particularly so the asylum. I initially had the impression that the forensic hospital was just like any other prison I had previously visited. This kind of familiarity gave me some confidence about the feasibility of the research project; however, I knew that too much familiarity with a subject could also turn out to be problematic making 'taken for granted situation' invisible.

I did not have any experience on being on prison officers'side yet, therefore I decided to adopt this new standpoint trying to gain in this way new possible understandings of my topic to challenge my old assumptions.

During the initial stage of the fieldwork 'on prison officer's side' I realize that my position in the field was still only a theoretical assumption and a methodological decision of mine, that that was not yet reflected in the actual interactions with prison officers at all. In fact, while I pretended to be on their side, some prison officers put some distance to me and in few occasions one particular officer did not seem to trust me at all (why should officers trust a researcher studying them in a country in which media only have prison officers in their agenda when accusing them of misbehaviour or illegal beatings?)

Trust had to be gained in the field. In fact, initially I was 'handled' by prison officers with suspicion, surprise and some forms of curiosity too. Over a period of less than two months the situation changed dramatically and I am still impressed as to how few officers became really open to me disclosing critical issues and displaying openness and trust to me.

While a couple of them remained quite critical to me during the entire research, a few suddenly started to be very open and friendly to me, one after the other. I do not quite get how this openness towards me have emerged in such a short time and I still consider it a bit naïve and maybe a sign of the officers' frustration and their need to talk about their situation inside with someone (by law, normally they must keep secret to any visitor, let alone to the press or researchers).

I was told by a prison officer that I was the first person he and his colleagues had knew so far who actually seemed to care about them and their job. I tried to make it clear to him immediately afterwards that this was my job and that even though it might be true that I did care, in a way or another, about officers, that would not necessarily imply that I would only show sympathy to them, let alone admiration.

In fact, I explicitly explained that I did *not* intend to do any kind of appreciative enquiry and I underlined that I was conducting my research paid only by the University and that I did not received any further funding neither from the Department of the Judiciary Administration, nor from any other public or private body.

I explained that it would be pure academic research conducted for its own sake. I continued by saying that, although I hoped my research could help to better understand some particular aspects of the prison officers' job (I did not specify any details, nor has he asked me for them), I was quite sure that it would *not* necessarily do any good to him or to any of his colleague in particular; hopefully nor would it do any bad either (saying that, for obvious reasons, became very problematic when the research topic turned to prison officers' use-of-force; that issue is in fact very critical indeed as hopefully became clear from the introduction of this manuscript).

The first practical sign of trust that I clearly recognised was an invitation to apply to have a room in the officers' dormitory inside the prison wall. The suggestion to ask for a room come from three prison officers during a meal at the canteen; they proposed it saying 'we'll have fun together'. Following their invitation I did apply but, officially, there was no room left, I was told by the governor's secretary. I took it badly because I knew there were rooms free.

Yet, that bad experience and feeling of being refused by the management, turned out to be an unexpected turning point to me. I do remember some officers commenting on the result of my failed request.

Now you can understand how they [upper grade or management; unclear] consider us. They just mind their own business…They do not give a fuck of us as they do not give a fuck of you, of course! [With a smile] Now you can start to get it! They smile in front of you and then…they get you! Welcome. [His gesture reinforced the idea with a sexual masculine stance] (Prison officer, field note).

I have never obtained that room. I even formally asked to the area manager if there was anything I could do to pay for a room inside; the point was that it seems to be forbidden to host outsiders; yet others have used it repeatedly, officers told me. Anyway, that refusal turned out to be one of the crucial *can opener* for my relationship with basic officers. A clear sign of me being dismissed, just a first example of the hierarchical distance 'between the wing and the office'.

Since I was not granted any privilege, officers thought that I could better understand them, one told me. A basic grade officer discussing informally about this point with me in the wing offered me a plausible interpretation of it. He told me that through that refusal he and his colleagues started to trust me. *I have been unable to have a room inside; therefore, I had but limited power and I was not on the manager side*, much less than they had previously imagined seeing me walking freely inside.

After a week or so, when I asked to the officer why he and his colleagues wanted me to stay with them at night, he told me that they just wanted something new to occur; having me with them, therefore, was but a tool to brake their routine [boredom] either in shift and during free-time. In other words, the refusal to give me a room in the barrack 'showed' them my vulnerability and the weakness of my power, even though, that was not really

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the case; but since it worked in that way, that became the local interpretation of it. The local constructed and shared reality.

Afterward, other episodes in which my alleged 'power' was publicly undermined, such as an order to move away from a particular situation with no clear or polite explanation, progressively helped me to gain some kind of trust among officers; yet a couple of officer still avoided me until the end of the fieldwork and have not appreciated my 'surveillance' at all.

One told me explicitly he considered nonsense to have someone like me walking around on the landing, moving even more freely that he was allowed to (in fact officers cannot move freely from one place to the other, that have to stick to the places they are assigned to during each shift). He told me bluntly that he thought to be the police officer there, and did not clearly get who I was (even though he would know it pretty well at that stage).

A turning point in the research biography: being there during a Prison officer assault

My topic [on officer' job] was something too mundane to prison officers to deserve any academic interest. They would not get why I could be interested in them; some officers asked me in different occasions why I had chosen such a subject if it was true that it was my choice and nobody oblige me to do it. As I already said before officers have been both curious and suspicious about my presence from the outset, like a few reported. But at the same time some prison officers seemed to be very pleased about my interest in them and told me that they knew that many of his colleagues would immediately by my book about them as soon as it will be distributed in the bookshops. Notwithstanding this curiosity and some kind of trust, in practice suspicion was obviously there as well in a form or another most of the time; particularly so in the beginning.

I was told by one of them that, initially, the main hypothesis about my actual role was that I was on duty for the Ministry of justice to control prison officers' (mis)behaviour: that was a particularly reasonable hypothesis of theirs because when my ethnography started it was a period of media attention about prison police misbehaviour in Italy; particularly so inside the forensic psychiatric hospitals.

Therefore, In the beginning of my research prison officers' response to 'critical episodes' were performed carefully taking my presence seriously into account and behaving accordingly. Officers' behaviour was very soft, very different from what I learned just two months afterwards. In the beginning, during the squad intervention following critical episodes, I always made my presence *very visible* shouting loudly 'I am hear' and standing visibly in sight to show no interest at all in targeting misconduct; which in fact was and is *not* the focus of this work. Yelling loudly my presence was surely a perturbation but I was told later, that it had been a right strategic attitude to gain trust, even though there was no strategy in it at all and I simply thought it was ethical to behave like that; after all I was an ethnographer and not a spy.

my colleague and I had quickly realized that you were not here to get a 'journalistic scoop' against us, nor were you here to cheat on us or still secrets to fuck us, mind our business, or put us into trouble (ethnographic interview with a prison officer).

One ethical issue

Initially, each time a critical situation happened, I would immediately leave the area to let the prison officers to do their work 'off record'. I never commented on those episodes and, moreover, I had no problem to admit when asked about it, that I had used some soft slapping with my kids few times, which is true. I was told that my non-intrusive and very visible presence during critical events has been really appreciated positively by almost all guards and, later on, it

turned out that it has been one of the keys, as I have understood it, to the 'real' access to their actual practices during violent confrontation that I accessed only afterwards, in which a different set of less formal 'institutional' practices have emerged, in more recent times.

One could say that gaining trust with participants by showing no special interest for one particular issue which is interesting for the researcher is ethically disputable. I would agree, at least partially. However, at that time I had no particular interest in crisis since my focus was on something else.

Only after being involved in many of such problematic events I understood that they might in fact become *the* topic of my research. Initially, I was mainly interested in the day-to-day power relation on the wing and I simply tried to avoiding as much as possible to interfere strongly into the officers' daily activities; moreover as already said I decided to spend most of the time inside in one particular detention wing that I had selected for my observation in order to slowly become another actor of the wing. In those institutions there are some medical staff that are normally employed for a fix period; therefore, staff are used to interact with new personnel. One very important decision I took was 'never cheat'; even though occasionally could have been very useful. Not only I tried to follow that basic ethical prescription, but I've always been open to answer personal questions, honestly in order to balance the relationship with officers as much as possible.

The turning point

Until the episode I will describe in a moment, only inmates' use-of-force – normally referred to as prison violence in the literature – and self-harm was very visible to me on the wing. Taking into account the visible and audible amount of prison violence, let alone the narration of it, I was exposed to on

daily basis and the relatively soft response I experienced in the wing, I became convinced that 'the [prison officers] action was "somewhere else"' (Crewe 2009: 476), in literal sense; in other words, I knew it was in the picture, but had not yet occurred in front of me.

Of course, in the beginning of my research almost all the uses of institutional force, legitimate ones included, were hidden from my sight for obvious reasons I have already previously introduced. A very unbalanced situation between the inmates' and patients' use-of-force and the institutional response become clear to me and seemed totally inconsistent. Later on I learned that any 'lessons' [use-of-force of different degree to respond to a prisoner's misconduct] could be easily postponed to a nearby future when possible testimony, like me or any other medical or civil personnel, have left the institutions. Prison officers, like or more than any other social actor, cannot be so naïve to continue doing things as usual regardless being or being not observed by a researcher studying openly them: this perturbation is commonly known as 'research effect' in qualitative methodology textbooks. I was wondering why the researcher effect should not also apply to this filed. Of course that effect would impinge on the situation more strongly whenever officers would use force when not strictly necessary or in a too heavy manner or in case of any other clearly prison officer's unlawful conduct.

On the contrary, when finally trust had been gained with few officers, it has then spread to others (of course, trust, just like reputation is a process and is not gained one and for all and must, on the contrary, be reinforced continuously, one day after the other) quite quickly. Eventually, a lot of different set of practices that I had never seen before as yet, enter into the picture.

A 'new' research topic

Experiencing the aftermath of the assault just reported above definitely helped me to move beyond my previous assumptions. After that episode I started to see things differently trying to grasp new understanding from prison officers' small talks during fieldwork, actual observation and finally interviews. I started to question with even more intensity all previous understanding beginning to develop a new cognitive prospective.

The harshness, the dangerousness, the excitement, and the boredom of working inside become a significant aspects of my doing ethnography. All these embodied aspects of the experience of doing research acquired new meaning. From that moment onward, I started to develop a new sensibility about the field. After that episode I interviewed one staff; the interview was planned and I did tried to do it anyway. I was very nervous in that occasion; yet I started the video-recorded interview. After a few moment, in response to an interviewee's comment on violence I started crying and I could not easily stop doing it. I was feeling very insecure, embarrassed, worried for my public face. Re-watching the video of that interview I realised that the first thing I told him when, eventually, I stopped crying was: 'please do not say what happened with me to anybody, please!' The interviewee told me to be quite, to stop the research for at least a couple of weeks and, anyway, to do much shorter shifts:

you are not superman, relax and take it easy; just accept you are vulnerable too ...and take some time for yourself. You can't stay inside in such a wing for fourteen hours a day, day in day out...it is simply too much. Luigi, don't worry about crying. It is just normal. All of us have had such episode...Our mental health here is challenge strongly. You need to find a balance and relax. Now just go home. I do not want to see you for a couple of weeks, ok?

I stopped for a few days and then I just need to go back, and I returned to the field. I was worried that not doing so, my emotions, fears and anxieties could refrain me to go return inside again. When I re-entered the wing and over the

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following days of my fieldwork I experienced a pretty normal prison atmosphere that was not quite different from the one I had previously experienced; it was like nothing had happened; yet, I had acquired a different sensibility and some new difficulties in dealing with the violence in the wing that I had to learn to overcome. Both the wing environment and its routine started to look different to me. I started to interpret and re-interpret conversations among prison officers and the conversation they had with me before, as well as the new ones, differently. I become aware of the large emphasis that officers usually put on the institutional use-of-force, yet the issue would have been there even without my presence. Although, I have tended to interpret the ways in which officers emphasised the importance of the use-of-force when talking to one-another mainly as a response to my presence in the field (a perturbation or, said differently, a researcher effect), I must note that such conversations and the perturbation embedded in it did attract my attention and helped me to shape a new sensitive concept I had not thought about before so far.

A few concluding thoughts

'It is a difficult balance to strike between recognizing that there is no 'view from nowhere' (Bourdieu 2000:2) and that you are not the story but the storyteller'. (Drake et al. 2015: 11).

First of all, I will only sketchy present some points that emerged discursively in this text (a complete resume of each chapter is provided in the last section of Chapter 1).

1) This research is the outcome of an ethnography; by no other means the same type of analysis, such as the 'Cycle of the use-of-force and violence' could be obtained. This is not to say that this thesis offers a better kind of knowledge; it is simply to say that it is likely to be a thesis on 'doing' ethnography as well as a thesis on the use-of-force.

2) This research started with one goal and ended up studying something slightly different particularly relevant both in the academic and in the public sphere.

3) This research draws extensively from interactionist literature and is a homage to those scholars who guided me in this interactionist path through their previous work and insights whether within or without ethnography.

4) This thesis is an attempt to 'doing' ethnography looking closely, for quite some time to a subject in order to grasp not only discourses and emotions (which are crucial components of the ethnographic enterprise), but also to construct a map of what was observably going on 'inside' to try to untangle the complexities encountered on the field.

The 'Cycle of doing coercion' is not intended to show any structural truth; yet, it provides a clear map that seems to work quite smoothly most of the time

empirically. Its only goal is to help the readers to orientate themselves in grasping how officers exert force on prisoners after a so called critical events and how they do it discretionary, despite all the rhetoric public accounts.

Being too detached and far from actual flesh and blood people, that Cycle offers only one side of the issue. Very relevant are also the vignettes that have been used to narratively describe some crucial episodes reconstructed *ad hoc*.

Why studying the use-of-force?

Despite the reasons why *not* to study this topic, which mainly regard the consequences that the publication of the ethnography may have with the possibility of the researcher and fellow colleagues to continue doing research inside and the particularly sensible topic that might also impinge with the vulnerability of the participants and the ethical issues, I prefer to say again why, instead, it is necessary to start studying the use-of-force empirically.

Despite good intentions and best practice, in fact, the crucial issue of coercion remains the characteristic feature of all enforcement agencies working ether within or without custodial institutions in Italy as well as abroad.

The use-of-force and violence impact strongly both on the person in uniform whose duty is to use force if ordered to do so and, of course, also on the persons in custody, which by the way, are not always only the docile victims sometimes described in the literature.

I tried not to be judgemental even though, doing so it has not always been easy dealing with issues that strongly impinge in Human Rights and peoples life and death.

The issue is complex and I do not pretend to offer any concluding remark here. This thesis is in fact simply the first attempt to trying doing research on the use-of-force in prison empirically via ethnography within the interactionist framework.

Appendix

Ethnography, photography and voyeurism and the disciplinary frame: A note on visual methods

John Tagg wrote a crucial book in 1988 *The Burden of Representation*; recently; he has published *The Disciplinary frame* (2009) (*see also* Sekula 1975). Unfortunately, ethnographers (except those visual ethnographers focussing exclusively on it) seem to pay no attention to neither of the two; nor to visual methods (Rose 2011). In those books, the crucial issue of the relationships among research (in particular through photography), science and the State have been discussed thoroughly in relation to Foucault's framework. In that perspective, both voyeurism and espionage (words re-used by Hammersley 2015) are intrinsically linked to the State apparatus' (to use a well-known Althusser's term) hegemonic discourses that, by the gaze and the archive govern, discipline and control those under the State's authority.

In those same years, Garland wrote on the relationships between ethnography and surveillance-control as well, and his position is widely recognised in the field of prison sociology. In Garland's section of *Punishment and Modern Society* (1990) titled 'Normalizing deviance' (145-146) Garland, following Foucault, not only problematized doing ethnography as a methodological techniques, but social sciences as such in so far as they also exert surveillance, control and power over the subjects under study. This is particularly true in ethnography conducted in custodial settings.

'The examination' is, for this system, a central method of control. Allowing close observation, differentiation, assessment of standards, and the identification of any failure to conform. So too is the dossier or case record, which allows the characteristics of the individual to be assessed over time and in comparison with others. From this time onwards, writing about individuals

ceases to be a form of worship fit only for notables, kings, and heroes, and becomes instead a form of domination to which the powerless are more and more subjected. Out of these practices emerges a detailed and systematic knowledge of individuals, a knowledge which gave rise, in turn, to the various 'human sciences' of (Garland 1990: 145) criminology, psychology, sociology, and so on. And, as Foucault is at pains to point out, the procedures of observation, examination and measurement which allows this knowledge to develop are, at the same time, exercising power and control over the individuals who are isolated – and in a sense, constituted – within their gaze (146).

Garland point is crucial, and doing prison research, either ethnography or photography, it is important to bear it in mind doing research. However, it is neither necessary, nor useful to overestimate that 'problem' either. Awareness of the issue, reflexivity and a sound methodological approach might allow any researcher to overcome the issue, or at least to control it as far as possible; doing ethnography inside following one's duty is based on the rationale to pursue knowledge.

Voyeurism has become a problematic issues in doing ethnography (Denzin 1992; Hammersley 2015); yet, it is a risk that worth taking pursuing difficult fieldwork that otherwise would simply remain understudies or even completely denied.

As I wrote elsewhere in different occasion writing about visual methods (Rose 2011) and particularly on photo-elicitation interviews (i.e. Gariglio 2010), I just want to conclude this very short Appendix by adding that Photo-elicitation allows the researcher to use photographs to inspire a conversation, a dialogue, hereby affording respondents-participants more freedom to construct their narrations than is possible in standard semi-structured interviews[169]. By becoming the 'experts' (on what was represented in the pictures), prison officers and other staff offered a set of multi-layered interpretations and descriptions on the images that will be discussed elsewhere. However, I simply

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[169]   On interviewing inmate, see Schlosser (2008).

intend to stress here that photo-elicitation interview serve as invaluable research tools not only for unpacking relevant factors, stories, and personal experiences, from staff and prisoners standpoints on the use force, but also for inspiring and then facilitating dialogue between researchers and interviewees. Photo-elicitation served as an 'icebreakers' in this particular field. This sketchy Appendix is just intended to serve an example of a possible pathway for using it, and much more methodological and substantive research must focus on the pros and cons of applying this tool within custodial institutions.

In conclusion, this note only attempts to motivate researchers to use photographs during interviews to unpack the complexities of custodial worlds by affording those who experience it a voice in a different way.

Image A.1. Road sign (reproduction of the printed image used for photo-elicitation interviews (image: Luigi Gariglio).

Image A.2. A prison wall (image: Luigi Gariglio).

Image A.3. The Asylum closed wing (reproduction of the printed image used for photo-elicitation interviews (image: Luigi Gariglio).

Image A.4. An Asylum's cell closed wing (image: Luigi Gariglio).

Image A.3. A prison officer after being assaulted (reproduction of the printed image used for photo-elicitation interviews (image: Luigi Gariglio).

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