

Imprisoned 'citizens-in-transition': Change and continuity in subjective citizenship experiences during incarceration

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The impact of imprisonment on citizenship has received substantial academic attention, in consideration of denied voting rights,² new responsibilities,³ or exploration of opportunities for 'active citizenship' during incarceration.⁴ Nevertheless, prior research has not considered how imprisoned people understand their subjective position as citizens, or how this subjective sense of citizenship demonstrates change or continuity over time, across and within the prison boundary. Citizenship, a contested concept,⁵ has been considered a status one can hold, and a feeling that can be experienced, and it is transitions in relation to this feeling of citizenship that will be considered.

This article draws on qualitative data from a project exploring the meaning of citizenship for imprisoned men in England and the Republic of Ireland through the lens of 'lived citizenship', defined as "the meaning that citizenship actually has in people's lives and the ways in which people's social and cultural backgrounds and material circumstances affect their lives as citizens" (p.2).⁶ The discussion explores how imprisoned men experience the presence or absence of change in meaningful citizenship, taking influence from youth studies literature on the 'citizen-in-transition'.⁷ It is argued the movement between a sense of citizenship,

or non-citizenship, is not a linear or absolute change at the point of incarceration (or release). Instead, it can involve transitions between different types or gradations of citizenship identification, between inclusion and exclusion, with individuals identifying as 'more' or 'less' of a citizen at different points across their lives and imprisonment.⁸

The article begins by explaining the importance of considering the citizen 'in-transition' and justifying the relevance of this approach for exploring experiences of imprisoned men, before providing details of the empirical research. The article then explores, through participants' perspectives, how citizenship transitions take place within prison, considering how individuals experienced a sense of becoming citizens, continuation of pre-existing exclusion, destruction of prior citizenship, or transient moments of feeling more or less a 'citizen'.

Imprisoned people as 'citizens-in-transition'?

Citizenship and punishment are intrinsically linked, with boundaries of acceptable citizen behaviour outlined in criminal law, denial of citizenship rights for people with convictions, and aims of creating 'law-abiding citizens' as central to notions of rehabilitation.⁹ That citizenship is not fixed for people with convictions

1. Formerly known as the University of Central Lancashire.
2. Tripkovic, M. (2018). *Punishment & Citizenship: A Theory of Criminal Disenfranchisement*. Oxford University Press; Cheney, D. (2008). Prisoners as citizens in a democracy. *Howard Journal of Crime and Justice*, 47(2), 124-145.
3. Miller, R. J., & Stuart, F. (2017). Carceral citizenship: race, rights and responsibility in the age of mass supervision. *Theoretical Criminology*, 21(4), 532-548.
4. Brosnens, D., Croux, F., & De Donder, L. (2018). *Prisoners' active citizenship: An insight into European prisons*. Available at: <https://prisonerseducation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Brosens-et-al.-2018-PAC-An-insight-in-European-prisons-DEF.pdf> ; Edgar, K., Jacobson, J. and Biggar, K. (2011). *Time Well Spent: A Practical Guide to Active Citizenship and Volunteering in Prison*. Prison Reform Trust.
5. Edwards, M. (2015). *The Limits of Political Belonging*. Palgrave Macmillan.
6. Hall, T., & Williamson, H. (1999). *Citizenship and Community*. Youth Work Press.
7. Wood, B. E. (2017). Youth studies, citizenship and transitions: towards a new research agenda, *Journal of Youth Studies*, 20(9), 1176-1190.
8. See footnote 7: Wood (2017); Smith, N., Lister, R., Middleton, S., & Cox, L. (2005). Young people as real citizens: Towards an inclusionary understanding of citizenship. *Journal of youth studies*, 8(4), 425-443.
9. Carlen, P. (2013). Against rehabilitation: for reparative justice. In K. Carrington, M. Ball, E. O'Brien, & J. Tuari, J. (Eds.), *Crime, justice and social democracy: international perspectives* (pp. 89-104). Palgrave Macmillan.

is evident in extant literature, with people in prison described as experiencing dormant,¹⁰ suspended,¹¹ conditional,¹² or qualified citizenship.¹³

However, there is less exploration of how changes in one's sense of citizenship are experienced within prison, or of prison as a site where such changes are resisted, supported or hindered. Discussions of citizenship often revolve around a binary of inclusion or exclusion, with little consideration of how one's sense of being 'more' or 'less' a citizen can shift, or be reframed, as experiences of feeling like citizens - and sensing exclusion from such identities - might occur simultaneously, due to conviction or incarceration.

Wood argues "citizenship identities change over the life course and are forged at the intersection of economic, social, political and life-course events and encounters" and critiques citizenship literature's centring of "singular events or moments as a result of their focus on the present, often at the expense of a more sustained understanding of citizenship changes through time and space (i.e. the citizen-in-transition)" (p.1178).¹⁴ Whilst in youth studies, this desire for more fluid conceptualisations of citizenship has acknowledged such identities are "continually negotiated, not only in youth but throughout the life-course" (p.1181),¹⁵ consequently suggesting the potential applicability of the 'citizen-in-transition' lens not just to young people, but to all adults, particularly where various dimensions of marginalisation or social context might lead to fluctuations in one's subjective sense of citizenship. Given the impact of imprisonment on time, not being experienced as linear or coherent,¹⁶ the intrinsic restrictions on autonomy,¹⁷ and the stigma associated with conviction, there is particular value in exploring imprisoned men's experiences of citizenship as 'in transition'. This acknowledgement of citizenship as potentially constantly 'in transition', highlights the need to consider individuals' statuses as not tied to singular events – in this instance, incarceration – but to understand how meaningful identification with citizenship might be in flux, or demonstrate continuity,¹⁸ over the course of one's imprisonment.

The research

This study involved interviews with 64 men imprisoned in either England or the Republic of Ireland, exploring their perceptions and experiences of citizenship during incarceration. Interviews explored the meaning of 'citizenship' for participants and the extent to which this subjectively understood citizenship was realised during incarceration. Approval was sought from the University of Sheffield, HMPPS and the Irish Prison Service, and ethical considerations, magnified in the coercive prison environment,¹⁹ were considered throughout. Participants volunteered in response to posters or informal discussions about the research and, before providing written consent, all were provided with information sheets outlining the purpose of the research, uses of data, and the limits of confidentiality, which were also read aloud. It was made clear participants could withdraw or refuse to answer questions with no consequence. Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 64, and the sample included those serving sentences from three months to Life, as well as some on remand. The vast majority interviewed were British or Irish nationals.²⁰ Interviews were anonymised on transcription, before being analysed thematically.

Three key elements of subjectively meaningful citizenship were identified based on this analysis: belonging to a self-defined community, opportunities to contribute to these communities, and an identity beyond the 'prisoner' label. The extent to which individuals felt citizenship was realised during imprisonment was influenced partly by its departure from, or consistency with, previous experiences, as well as shifts in feeling resulting from significant moments of interaction. The prison can be a site where a sense of citizenship is negotiated, contested and moulded, in multiple directions along the continuum between inclusion and exclusion depending on one's conceptualisation of citizenship, often being multiplicitous; while many participants initially identified themselves as citizens, based on nationality or universalist definitions based on personhood allowing

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10. McNeill, F., & Velasquez, J. (2017). *Prisoners, disenfranchisement and sleeping citizenship*. Available at: https://www.sccjr.ac.uk/news_item/prisoners-disenfranchisement-and-sleeping-citizenship/ (accessed on 23rd January 2025).
 11. Ramsay, P. (2013). Voters should not be in prison! The rights of prisoners in a democracy. *Critical Review of International Social & Political Philosophy*, 16, 421-438.
 12. Vaughan, B. (2000). Punishment and conditional citizenship. *Punishment & Society*, 2(1), 23-39.
 13. Easton, S. (2018). *The politics of the prison and the prisoner*: Zoon politikon. Routledge.
 14. See footnote 7: Wood (2017, p.1178).
 15. See footnote 7: Wood (2017, p.1181).
 16. Wahidin, A. (2006). Time and the Prison Experience. *Sociological Research Online*, 11(1), 104-113.
 17. Sykes, G. (1958). *The Society of Captives: A study of a maximum-security prison*. Princeton University Press.
 18. See footnote 7: Wood (2017).
 19. Moser, D. J., Arndt, S., Kanz, J. E., Benjamin, M. L., Bayless, J. D., Reese, R. L., Paulsen, J. S. & Flaum, M. A. (2004). Coercion and informed consent in research involving prisoners. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 45(1), 1-9.
 20. Only three of the participants were foreign national prisoners (all interviewed in Ireland), and consequently the vast majority of those interviewed were not experiencing precarious citizenship when considering territorial or nationality-based definitions, an experience which may well have impacted on both understandings and experiences of citizenship in a different sample.

for their inclusion, far fewer maintained this identification when delving into the subjective meaning of citizenship for them and its realisation during incarceration. When asked whether they considered themselves citizens, participants did not only consider the present. For some, reflections on current exclusion from citizenship were contrasted to a previous state of inclusion: "I'm not a citizen in the community anymore, no" (Mason, England), while for others citizenship was something they saw as reserved for, or aspired to, in their post-prison future.²¹ These perspectives reflect ideas of citizenship as dormant during incarceration,²² however participants also highlighted ways this sense of citizenship was subject to change throughout imprisonment, also challenging the idea that paused or denied citizenship is necessarily restricted to, or begins upon, incarceration. It is these transitions, and continuities, which will now be explored.

Becoming active citizens during incarceration?

The relationship between punishment and citizenship is evident in the rehabilitative goals of prison to "mould" individuals into law-abiding citizens (p.26) and,²³ despite widespread acceptance of barriers to citizenship following release,²⁴ some participants saw themselves as preparing for future citizenship through participation in education, training or, in Ireland where prisoners have the right to vote, elections. As noted elsewhere,²⁵ however, the potential for activities to be experienced as preparation for meaningful citizenship was dependent on their perceived relevance to external job-markets, with much provision considered as lacking relevance.

For a few Irish participants, imprisonment was a time during which conscious engagement with citizenship developed; incarceration's deprivations served to encourage political engagement. While literature has highlighted how imprisonment may produce narratives of 'reinvention',²⁶ evident in some participants' discussions of education, the politicising effect of witnessing an absence of rights in prison was

also noted as significant. This politicising effect suggested a move towards active participation, rather than away from citizenship, inverting the more negative implications shared by participants. For Ciaran, an Irish Traveller who had also been imprisoned in England, his particular circumstances meant witnessing disenfranchisement there had motivated his democratic participation in Ireland:

"So when I got here I was surprised that I could vote. When I got the registration form I questioned it because of my sentence – I'd worked it out and with my sentence I didn't think I would get it. When I found out I thought that was great. I've been trying to encourage other prisoners to vote, telling them that people are protesting for it in England.

AS: Did that influence your decision to vote?

Yeah that's one of the reasons that I do it. Because I was told that I couldn't in England, I wanted to. I encourage my family to vote now as well – my wife voted for the first time in this election. I don't know if my one opinion is going to make a difference, but if I don't vote then I can't change anything. Society likes to forget about you when you're in prison, like out of sight, out of mind."

When asked about voting before prison, Ciaran highlighted his altered view of the relevance of politics since incarceration, previously seeing voting as "nothing to do with me", noting he "couldn't read or write back then", but having "really seen the value of education" since imprisonment. Thus, prison may serve as a site for politicising, or instilling a new sense of democratic citizenship, through awareness of, or as a way to resist, the disempowerment of incarceration.²⁷ This complicates notions of imprisonment as suspending citizenship and demonstrates how

The prison can be a site where a sense of citizenship is negotiated, contested and moulded

21. Stark, A. D. (2022). Anticipated citizenship in the shadow of imprisonment. *Probation Journal*, 69(3), 278-295.

22. See footnote 10: McNeill & Velasquez, J. (2017).

23. Vaughan, B. (2000). Punishment and conditional citizenship. *Punishment & Society*, 2(1), 23-39.

24. See footnote 21: Stark (2022); Henley, A. (2018). Mind the gap: sentencing, rehabilitation and civic purgatory. *Probation Journal*, 63(3), 285-391; Miller, R. J., & Stuart, F. (2017). Carceral citizenship: race, rights and responsibility in the age of mass supervision. *Theoretical Criminology*, 21(4), 532-548.

25. See footnote 21: Stark (2022).

26. Crewe, B. & Ievins, A. (2019). The prison as a reinventive institution. *Theoretical Criminology*, 24(4), 568-589.

27. See footnote 13: Easton (2018).

individuals may experience shifts towards a sense of citizenship, and associated responsibility,²⁸ where regimes facilitate engagement. Such sentiment was less evident amongst English participants, suggesting political and legal rights have implications for such transitions to political engagement. However, crucially, such politicisation may come from the very sense of exclusion inherent in incarceration, with marginality being “productive of political subjectivity” (p.143).²⁹ Further demonstrating the potential for such exclusion to co-exist with elements of inclusion, despite enfranchisement helping “a bit”, Ciaran described himself as “less than a citizen”; while narratives of becoming engaged as citizens inside were evident for some, these were often shared alongside a broader sense of exclusion.

While enfranchisement of prisoners in Ireland constituted a significant change in formal citizenship rights, there were also limitations to this being experienced as meaningful. While Thomas highlighted the vote as indicative of citizenship, issues accessing voting cards limited the meaning of this right for a few participants:

"Thomas: I'm a citizen and I'm entitled to vote, but that said I was denied my vote at the recent elections. I never got my vote, and I'm registered to vote. AS: So what happened there then? Thomas: Just myself and a lot of the other prisoners didn't get our voting cards, so we didn't get to vote."

This demonstrated that, even where formal indicators of citizenship exist, the day-to-day reality of prison had significant implications for whether this status was experienced in practice.

Continuation of missed citizenship

While some saw their political engagement shift during incarceration, this was not universal, with others identifying a continued perceived irrelevance of citizenship consistent with pre-prison lives. Adolescence is often viewed as a period for formulating a citizen-self, through socialisation into routines of democratic participation, and beginning to engage with citizenship

acts through work and paying taxes.³⁰ While most participants responded with a sense of what citizenship meant to them, for a few who described experiences of social exclusion, growing up around crime, and negative/limited engagement with mainstream schooling, there was a sense of missed transitions to citizenship due to lack of exposure to, or opportunity for active citizenship participation:

“When it comes to all that kinda stuff I'm not right clued up, you know cause I've been in jail all my life? Like my lifestyle's the jail lifestyle like. Citizen and all this, MP like...I'm not really clued up with it, miss. I'm behind all that! I've never been to school and that, me. Everything I've learnt in education, it's been in jail!”

For Jayden (England), imprisoned in his teens, citizenship held little subjective relevance, which he identified as due to lacking relevant education. While citizenship education features in schools in some Irish prisons,³¹ there is limited citizenship education provision in English prisons. Further, through his continued incarceration up to and beyond voting age, he had never experienced the opportunity to participate in the democratic process, not developing a sense of citizenship through this practice. Youth studies literature highlights

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adolescence as a key period for transition to citizenship, and for participants who spent this time inside this was a stolen transition, through separation from society and mainstream education during formative years. Despite differences in formal enfranchisement, this sense of irrelevance, lack of understanding, and exclusion from citizenship³² was also evident amongst some Irish participants, where prison had been a feature of life since youth. This was reflected by Luke, excluded from school as a child and then imprisoned as a teenager, in answer to the question of whether he had ever voted:

“Never Miss, no. [...] I don't understand it. I literally don't understand it - Fianna Fáil, the

28. Behan, C., & O'Donnell, I. (2008). Prisoners, politics and the polls: Enfranchisement and the burden of responsibility. *British Journal of Criminology*, 48(3), 319-336.

29. Turner, J. (2015). (En)gendering the political: Citizenship from marginal spaces. *Citizenship Studies*, 20(2), 141-155.

30. See footnote 8: Smith et al. (2005).

31. Behan, C. (2021). Education in prison: A literature review. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning.

Dáil and ...it's not even the Dáil it's Fianna Fáil, Fianna Gael and you know stuff...I just don't get it, I don't. Yeah. Well I'd love to be able to understand it you know? But if I voted, my vote wouldn't matter, you know what I mean?"

Consequently the 'devaluing' of citizenship, that disenfranchisement has been argued to symbolise,³³ was not experienced as new but a more formalised continuation of exclusion from political processes perceived as irrelevant in Jayden and Luke's lives. This complicates understandings of incarceration as fundamentally changing citizenship identification. Instead, these responses suggested continuation or solidification of an existing sense of exclusion, demonstrating the importance of considering continuity, as well as change, when exploring citizenship identities.³⁴

Disruption and forgetting of meaningful citizenship

While some participants focused on current or forthcoming orientations to citizenship, others considered imprisonment to have altered perceptions of their former status or required the pausing of previous citizenship contributions. Jake (Ireland), felt his prior good deeds protecting others, and fulfilling acts of 'good citizenship' in his area, were overshadowed by his incarceration:

"Like, likes of me, like I contribute. I stopped...I took down a load of websites from ISIS, I helped people with their bank cards that got robbed...you know? Telling them to cancel it and get a new one and all, so...I even were good on the outside like if I see dirt on the street I'll pick it up, put it in the bin like. You know? Once you're in jail, you're looked at as a scumbag."

These men felt a 'master-status',³⁵ of prisoner or criminal, had overwritten previous citizenship and undone any acknowledgement of positive contributions. Their experience was thus one of disrupted citizenship, along with a sense that memory of former citizenship contributions was being tarnished. For a small number it was not simply that they felt currently denied citizenship, or their previous

contributions were forgotten or disrupted, but that good citizenship was being undone/destroyed through their absence and inability to make contact to coordinate maintenance of their businesses from inside:³⁶ "I've still not managed to get my credit cards out, and that's imperative because that's got a knock on effect. My company can't pay bills, other people are wanting to be paid...". For Theo (England), there was a sense this good was hindered, and potential harm done through losses for others, due to his inability to maintain these contributions. Thus, it was not only the case that one's citizenship contributions were halted, but that potential damage was being done to such prior contributions through the passing of time without the ability to minimise damage or prevent their destruction.

Transient moments of feeling more or less like a 'citizen'

While some felt there was "just no way" (Owen, England) individuals could feel more like 'citizens' during imprisonment, incarceration involving an integral denial of choice, acknowledgement of individuality, or dignity, for many a broader sense of exclusion from meaningful citizenship could be punctuated by moments of feeling 'more like' a citizen. The majority of such instances related to 'normal' experiences inside, acknowledgement of individuality, or opportunities to exercise autonomy. Some identified experiencing connections with life outside as the times they felt 'most' like citizens, such as "when the Angelus come on at the 6 o'clock news (Thomas, Ireland), or "when you could contribute" to discussions about life outside, as opposed to not being able to contribute being the 'least' (Alex, England). Most often, however, examples raised were about treatment by others, often uniformed or civilian staff. Rory (England) highlighted being treated as an individual by officers as when he felt most like a citizen:

"Like talking to the SOs [Supervising Officers] on a level, like you know like they treat you like you're a friend. Like they'll come in't office and give me a packet of biscuits or summit. Dya know, just like me - out of everyone they'll pull me in the office and say "Oh here, Rory, I wanna talk to you about PID [Prisoner Information Desk]"...and then they'll throw me a pack of biscuits and say "go on then, on your way". So...you feel like aww

32. Hall, T., Coffey, A., & Williamson, H. (2006). Self, space and place: Youth identities and citizenship. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 4, 501-513.

33. See footnote 28: Behan & O'Donnell (2008).

34. See footnote 7: Wood (2017).

35. Goffman, E. (1963) *Stigma: notes on the management of spoiled identity*. Simon & Schuster Inc.

36. See footnote 21: Stark (2022).

that's nice. It's like they're giving you something back. And then they have a laugh with you. They chat to you."

Contrastingly, it was when treated as a "standard basic prisoner" and staff "forget that you're that person" that Rory felt least like a citizen, highlighting the significance of individuality being recognised for a sense of citizenship. Numerous participants noted the significance of meaningful interactions with staff for a sense of citizenship, as Sam (England) said when asked when he felt 'most' like a citizen: "it'd be when I have those 1-to-1 chats with the officers". Both Rory and Sam's comments highlighted how they felt most like a citizen, when *treated* like a 'citizen' as opposed to a 'prisoner'. Sam also highlighted how the significance of interactions with others for one's sense of citizenship meant their feeling of being a citizen or not, at any point, could be determined by who they were speaking to:

"Sam: Erm... to some degree. I believe I am a citizen to certain prisoners, yeah...to prisoners yes, to officers no."

AS: OK, why is that?

Sam: "Well cause prison officers don't necessarily see the things you're doing are good. Like when people borrow tobacco in here, and they end up owing double...Then if I lend out tobacco the prison officers don't see that I'm not doing the same as the other guys. I'm actually doing it to try and stop the lads doing it cause they can't afford to buy it and are always in debt, but it's assumed that I'm doing the same."

Thus there was a sense that citizenship is in the eye of the beholder, and within their gift of how they choose to treat the individual, being fundamentally about how one is perceived by others.³⁷ For some, it was when in the school environment, viewed differently to the rest of the prison, that they felt most like citizens, due to the nature of interactions with teachers in this space, described by Ciaran (Ireland):

"At the school I'd feel a bit more like a citizen. The teachers call you by your first name and it's a bit more relaxed. Teachers might talk a bit about their personal life whereas if a prison officer asked about my kids, I couldn't ask back... he'd probably say it was none of my business because it's a security breach. The school is more down to earth, more normal. It makes you feel like you're not in prison for a few hours."

These comments reflected the belonging and trust that can be strengthened through generation of pedagogical capital in prison classrooms,³⁸ and highlighted how one's sense of citizenship may also be spatially differentiated, with the classroom as an

'escape' from the prison.³⁹ In contrast to these instances of meaningful interaction, acknowledgement of individuality and more 'relaxed' interactions, many participants identified elements of the regimes where denial of autonomy was most pronounced as making them feel less like a citizen. Aiden (England) identified "when they strip-search you" as when he felt least like a citizen, noting its "invasive" nature, while Max (Ireland) highlighted "when the door is banged out" on his cell as when exclusion felt

most pronounced. Participants' reflections on feeling more or less like citizens demonstrate the differentiated nature of feelings of citizenship, as well as the significance of relationships, interaction and autonomy for enabling broader experiences of exclusion to be punctuated with moments evoking a sense of citizenship.

Reframed 'prison citizenship'

While discussion thus far has considered transition, or continuity, in individuals' sense of citizenship, for some participants the meaning of citizenship also changed during incarceration; there was not only a pause in citizenship status, but a reframing of how citizenship was understood as meaningful, to signal a sense of inclusion within the institution: "Yeah. I'm a citizen yeah. Of the prison . . . So like, I'm a citizen

Numerous participants noted the significance of meaningful interactions with staff for a sense of citizenship

37. See footnote 8: Smith et al. (2005).

38. Little, R., & Warr, J. (2022). Abstraction, belonging and comfort in the prison classroom. *Incarceration*, 3(3), 1-21.

39. Behan, C. (2014). Learning to escape: Prison education, rehabilitation and the potential for transformation. *Journal of Prison Education & Reentry*, 1(1), 20-31.

inside these grounds. I'm not a citizen outside" (Cillian, Ireland).

This kind of citizenship identified, described as being a "prison citizen" (Conor, Ireland) or experiencing "a different citizenship. Jail citizenship" (Adam, England), also held a distinct meaning in what it entailed, including compliance with the regime. Ryan (Ireland) described this, saying citizenship inside means "three things: abiding by the rules of the prison; being the best I can; and doing good for others", while Adam (England) understood jail citizenship as "being under that thumb innit, in a sense." The meaning of citizenship changed from one centred on belonging, contributing to, and having a non-prisoner identity within a self-defined community, to being focused on compliance with the regime, 'fitting in' in prison, and seeking to do good, speaking to notions of rehabilitation. This emphasis on compliance as central to citizenship, echoed Crewe's findings that the oppressive impact of psychological power in prisons led to "inhuman" or "robotic" expectations of responsible citizenship, beyond passive compliance (p.133).⁴⁰ For some, prison citizenship indicated a greater sense of acceptance or inclusion within prison, than outside: "Erm...[I'm] a prison citizen, yeah [laughs]. Well you know, I think I belong in prison more than I do...not belong but...I'm more accepted in here than I would be outside maybe" (Conor, Ireland).

This sense of prison citizenship as belonging or acceptance within the prison environment echoed Schinkel and Lives Sentenced Participants' findings that, for those experiencing persistent short-term imprisonment, accumulated sentences meant individuals became increasingly displaced from the outside world and their sense of belonging inside was "enhanced (or exacerbated?)" (p.14).⁴¹ Other participants, however, actively resisted a sense of belonging, suggesting an intrinsic connection drawn between the concept of citizenship as belonging within prison and institutionalisation. This was illustrated in Blake's (England) response when asked whether he

belonged to a community: "Na I'm not institutionalised me. I class this as I'm in transit, me! I never make this place home...Once you make it home it's game over."

Blake's reflections suggest that, within the context of prison, notions of citizenship and belonging have the potential to hold more negative connotations and be indicative of one's identity being taken over by the institution. On this basis, Blake's assertion that he is "in transit" suggests that – within this morphed understanding of citizenship – he is wilfully taking the position of a passing visitor, resisting a sense of prison as "real life" (p.11) due to fear of negative implications.⁴²

Conclusion

Just as reintegration is understood as "both an event and a process" (p.23),⁴³ so too can the denial or fulfilment of meaningful citizenship. While the event of one's denial of liberty brings immediate formal consequences for citizenship rights, widely discussed in relation to prisoner disenfranchisement, the ways meaningful citizenship is either eroded or developed over time, or its denial sustained, are complex and changeable over the course of incarceration. Consequently, prison should be understood as a space where citizenship identities and

understandings are constituted and reconstituted through interactions, with messages of inclusion or exclusion, formal or informal, implicit in these interactions and the regime. This demonstrates that if meaningful citizenship is to be encouraged for those in prison, not only are the formal granting of rights or initiatives to reduce stigma and enhance opportunities on release required, but also an emphasis on treating individuals as citizens rather than prisoners in everyday interactions, with acknowledgement of the individual person in staff-prisoner relations being crucial.

As also argued in relation to youth transitions, it is posited that, in considering the subjective citizenship experiences of imprisoned men, discussion must move

Many participants identified elements of the regimes where denial of autonomy was most pronounced as making them feel less like a citizen.

40. Crewe, B. (2009). *The Prisoner Society: Power, Adaptation, and Social Life in an English Prison*. Oxford University Press.

41. Schinkel, M., & Lives Sentenced Participants. (2021). Persistent short-term imprisonment: Belonging as a lens to understand its shifting meanings over the life course. *Incarceration*, 2(1), 1-20.

42. See footnote 41: Schinkel & Lives Sentenced Participants (2021, p.11).

43. Maruna, S., Immarigeon, R., & LeBel, T. (2004). Ex-offender reintegration: theory and practice. In S. Maruna and R. Immarigeon. (Eds.), *After Crime and Punishment: Pathways to Offender Reintegration* (pp. 3-26). Willan Publishing.

beyond linear narratives of *becoming* citizens and disrupt the static binary in observations of (non)citizenship in the present, through a more “temporally, spatially and relationally-sensitive” (p.1177) understanding of everyday experiences as ‘citizens-in-transition’.⁴⁴ Doing so can illuminate the fluid nature of citizenship identification during imprisonment, which may be in flux, with feeling more or less like a citizen impacted by both broader structural, institutional influences, and everyday interactions. Stern argues prison policy often strengthens an identity of ‘criminal’ over ‘citizen’,⁴⁵ and this research illustrates that within prison the very meaning of citizenship is reframed, holding distinct, contextually-specific connotations not reflective of a meaningful sense of citizenship with relevance for life outside. Acknowledging this multiplicity of citizenship definitions can better illuminate the simultaneous experiences of a sense of being, becoming, or being excluded from, distinct notions of citizenship, thus reflecting the complexity of imprisoned men’s subjective experiences. While the significance of these subtle shifts in citizenship for imprisoned men, and the non-linear experience of feeling more or less like a citizen, have been identified as themes in this broader study, it is a limitation of this research that reflections

on citizenship (and transitions in relation to this notion) have been explored at only one fixed point in time. As such, further research focused explicitly on the experience of transition, change and continuity in citizenship, and considering individuals’ situated views of their citizenship over time through longitudinal research, would be beneficial to provide deeper understanding of transitions in subjective everyday citizenship for those subject to penal sanctions. Given the significance of individuals’ self-identity generally,⁴⁶ and specifically as citizens,⁴⁷ for journeys away from crime, such deeper understanding of what cultivates a sense of citizenship and how this changes (or not) during one’s imprisonment, may have implications for informing ways desistance can be supported through encouraging moments of feeling ‘more like’ citizens in people’s daily lives.

Funding: This research was supported by the Economic and Social Research Council (Grant number: ES/J500215/1).

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44. See footnote 7: Wood (2017, p.1177).

45. Stern, V. (2002). Prisoners as citizens: a comparative view. *Probation Journal*, 49(2), 130-139.

46. Farrall, S. (2005). On the existential aspects of desistance from crime. *Symbolic Interaction*, 28, 367-386; Vaughan, B. (2007). The internal narratives of desistance. *British Journal of Criminology*, 47, 390-404; Maruna, S. (2001). *Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives*. American Psychological Association; Paternoster, R., & Bushway, S. (2009). Desistance and the ‘feared self’: Toward an identity theory of criminal desistance. *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, 99, 1103-1156; Stone, R. (2016). Desistance and identity repair: Redemption narratives as resistance to stigma. *British Journal of Criminology*, 56(5), 956-975.

47. Farrall, S., Hunter, B., Sharpe, G., & Calverley, A. (2014). *Criminal careers in transition: the social context of desistance from crime*. Oxford University Press.