Introduction

Inside immigration detention

Today is the Chinese women's welfare focus meeting in Yarl's Wood. Nobody comes. Staff members sit around waiting. Eventually Tina[1] appears. A long-term British resident originally from Taiwan, she has been personally invited since she is the informal interpreter for the Chinese women in Yarl's Wood. As it turns out, she has come to complain. 'Every day they ask me for things', she moans. 'I'm an old lady. I'm 56. And I have to run everywhere'. She also wants the staff to stop asking her to interpret. Amir, the Welfare Officer, suggests that the women could ask the weekly Buddhist preacher for help and reminds Tina that the centre has employed a Chinese woman to come in weekly to interpret. All detainees need to do, he says, is post a note in a special black box in the library asking to see her. Tina rebuffs both suggestions, reporting that the preacher 'tells us he can't help us with anything', and that the official interpreter has not been in for a fortnight. The issues are urgent Tina points out: 'There are lots of them who need help with forms. A lot of these Chinese people get a solicitor. He says £500 I help you. Then he says £4000 and then £8000. Yesterday there was a girl whose solicitor had taken £1500 and wanted more money but she has no more. So I had to fill it out for her. It was very stressful.' Amir is sympathetic but has no other solution. He then turns to the agenda:

AMIR: 'The next issue is activities. Are there any problems?'

TINA: 'We have spoken to the Pastor and IMB[2] about this. There is a cleaner who comes to the vacuuming during our Chinese prayer meeting and makes a lot of noise.'

AMIR: 'They are dealing with this but if the problem persists, please speak to us.'

TINA: 'When we have a service in the evening the black persons come in and are very rude. They interrupt our meeting. The other women are very angry

1. Not her real name. All participants have been allocated pseudonyms.
2. Independent Monitoring Board; a group of volunteers screened and appointed by the Ministry of Justice in the UK with a permanent presence in prisons and immigration removal centres (IRCs). Along with HM Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) and the Prison and Probation Ombudsman (PPO) they provide official mechanisms of accountability. The IMB produce annual reports about each IRC. More information about them can be found on the Ministry of Justice website <http://www.justice.gov.uk/about/imb>.

Inside Immigration Detention. Mary Bosworth.
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because they can't speak English. I can, but I do it gently. They think I'm too weak. The Chinese think the Pastor is on their side because he is black.'

AMIR: 'No, no! Healthcare?'

TINA: 'I run here and there. Every time I go to healthcare there are Chinese talking, talking. They ask me to interpret. Some nurses are very appreciative, but one was very rude saying this is confidential.'

AMIR: 'Tell them there is Language Line.'

TINA: 'Oh Language Line! They don't use it. They think they know what is wrong . . . When patients are waiting and angry you need to calm them down. She is so frustrated. She don't know how to speak English. She doesn't want to talk on the phone. They are anxious that the service makes mistakes.'

After more complaints about other matters, Tina raises a final set of issues:

TINA: 'One thing my Chinese say whenever they asked for anything they have to wait for months and they see black people are released quickly because they speak English.'

AMIR: 'I will say this: Black people aren't released because they speak English. Each case is different. The main delay is the embassy. Another delay might be if they have a solicitor who is putting up barriers.'

TINA: 'I think my Chinese are angry. I wrote to the Embassy five times about Hui-Ying [a young woman who had been in Yarl's Wood for over a year despite agreeing to return to China]. I write and say she has tried to kill herself two times. But I got no answer.'

AMIR: 'We can't get involved' (Fieldnotes, July 2010).

Nearly 3,000 foreign national citizens are detained under Immigration Act powers in the UK on any given day in one of 10 Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) scattered throughout the country (see Figure 1).[3] The government spends £100 per person per night to house them in this way (AVID, 2014).[4] An additional, undisclosed number of men, women, and children are held in police cells, immigration reporting centres, or in

3. An 11th establishment, IRC The Verne, was due to open in March 2014. That month, due to fears about prison overcrowding elsewhere, its official reclassification from HMP The Verne was put on hold until September 2014, even though its cells had been emptied of prisoners and were being filled with immigration detainees (HC Deb 3 April 2014, col 757).

4. See also HC Deb 17 January 2014, cols 720–1, House of Commons Written Answers for 17 January 2014. Available at <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmhansrd/cm140117/text/140117w0002.htm>.

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hospital. Since May 2013, the government has made available an additional 1,000 bed spaces in prison, most of which are set aside for ex-prisoners who have finished their sentence and are awaiting deportation.[5] Around 100 others are held for up to five days in short-term holding facilities at ports and airports.[6] Finally, the Home Office operates a so-called 'Pre-departure accommodation' facility for up to nine families near Gatwick airport (HMIP, 2013). Families may be held at Cedars, or in Tinsley House down the road, for 72 hours at a time.[7]

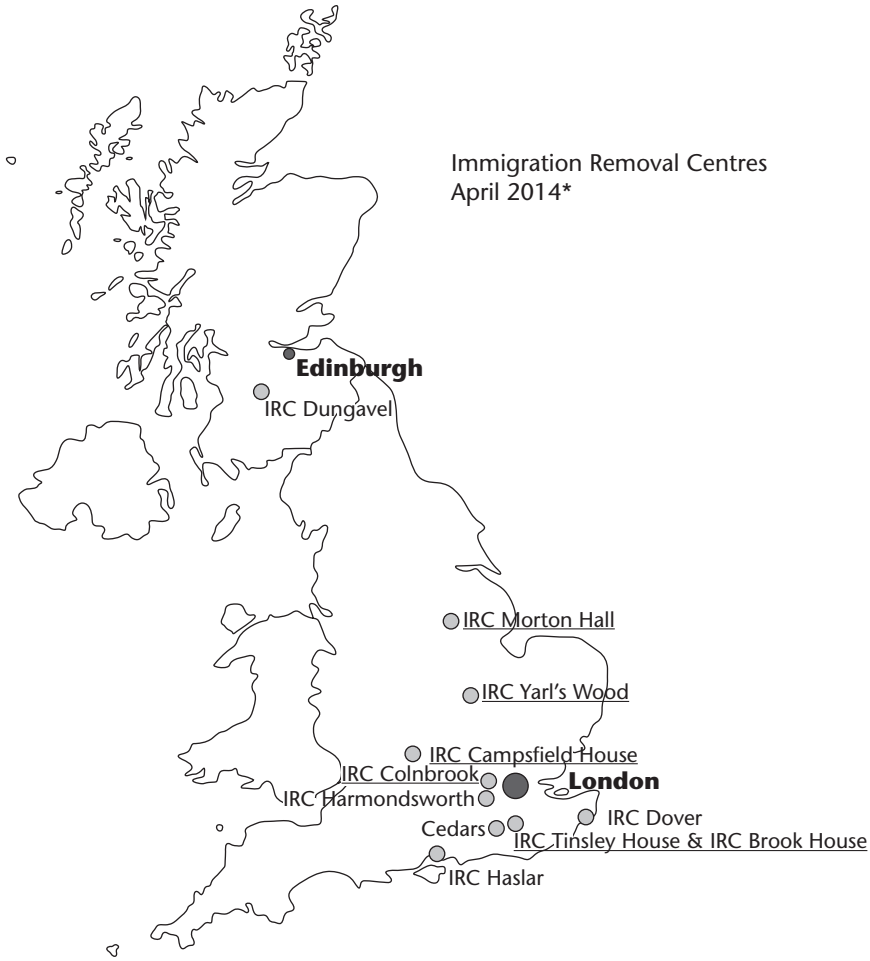
These are not enormous numbers being confined, particularly in comparison to the far greater population living in the community without legal documentation,[8] or to the sum of foreigners in prison.[9] Yet, their small size belies the considerable moral, ethical, and legal dilemmas they raise, issues that demand careful academic scrutiny. These institutions are volatile and contested sites. They are also places about which we know very little. What is their goal? How are they justified?

As this book will demonstrate, these two fundamental questions are surprisingly hard to answer. There is no clearly defined objective of detention. Instead, the aim, the 2001 Detention Centre Rules state, is to detain:

> 3. (1) The purpose of detention centres shall be to provide for the secure but humane accommodation of detained persons in a relaxed regime with as much freedom of movement and association as possible, consistent with maintaining a safe and secure environment, and to encourage and assist detained persons to make the most productive use of their time, whilst respecting in particular their dignity and the right to individual expression.

5. The sum of available beds in prison for this purpose changes frequently. According to the most recently available figures made in response to a Parliamentary question from Philip Davies, the Conservative Member for Shipley, on 31 December 2013 there were 1,214 men and women being held in prison under Immigration Act powers (HC Deb 9 April 2014, col 248).
6. The numbers of which are unclear. In a 2013 report, for instance, the government body with responsibility for monitoring such places, the HMIP, discovered several new ones previously undeclared to it operating on French territory (HMIP and CGPL, 2013).
7. In exceptional circumstances, and only with ministerial authority, the period of confinement may be extended to one week.
8. A population that was estimated at between 417,000–863,000 in 2007 (Gordon et al, 2009).
9. Who, as of June 2013, accounted for 13% of the total prison population of England and Wales in March 2013, at 10,786 women and men (Prison Reform Trust, 2013).

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*The underlined establishments were included in this study.

Figure 1. Map of UK Immigration Removal Centres, April 2014.

Signs recently erected in the gatehouses of IRCs entitled 'Detention Operations Mission' offer a little more explanation, yet do not stray far from this text:[10]

> Detention operations, part of immigration enforcement, serves the public by escorting and holding people detained under immigration law and by assisting in the removal of those not entitled to stay in the United Kingdom.

10. These signs are usually placed next to another outlining the 'Immigration Enforcement Customer Charter for Immigration Removal Centres' which 'sets out how you [the detainee] will be treated whilst in our care, and how we expect you [the detainee] to behave in return'.

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> Our purpose is to ensure that they are held securely and cared for with humanity.

Unlike other parts of the government, it is hard to find an official statement of purpose, 'vision', or a set of 'values' of immigration detention or those in charge of these facilities. While opting briefly for a slogan: 'detain, protect, remove', the Home Office soon abandoned even that descriptive ambition. It is likewise difficult to identify the name, scope, and nature of the government department responsible for these institutions. During the research project and since it finished, the immigration service within the Home Office has been relabelled several times, and seen its internal organization and leadership change as well.[11] The private contractors also alter frequently, while centres are closed and new ones opened with some regularity.

Such institutional uncertainty has been no barrier to debate or to expansion. For its proponents, immigration detention is a necessary part of border control, both a right and an obligation of the British sovereign state. Those without visas and immigration status are not entitled to stay and, if they will not go voluntarily, they must be detained to prompt their deportation. For critics, however, immigration removal centres should be abolished. They cause long-term psychological distress, are used in an arbitrary fashion, and are expensive and inefficient. Notwithstanding official claims that people are detained only briefly prior to their departure, such opponents point out a growing number languish in detention for months and even years (Phelps, 2009; HMIP and ICIBI, 2012).

In either set of arguments about immigration detention, little detail is given about the experience of confinement or the lives and identities of those detained. For the most part, due to the difficulties in gaining research access, critical scholarship has relied either on purely theoretical arguments about state power and sovereignty or on secondary material produced by NGOs, the media or the government. If commentators gather original empirical material about such places, and most do not, they typically do so through interviews with detainees in visits halls arranged by local NGOs, or speak to individuals who have been released.[12] As a result, and notwithstanding

11. At the time of writing, IRCs are now part of a section of the Home Office referred to as 'Immigration Enforcement'.
12. There are important exceptions to this claim, most obviously in the work of HMIP, as well as BID and other voluntary sector organizations who try to give voice to detainees and illuminate their experiences of incarceration.

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a growing, interdisciplinary set of publications on border control practices around the world, we simply have very little sense of the social and cultural world of immigration detention centres. What do detainees do all day? How do they get along with the staff? How does detention make them feel? Where are they from? How do they cope? What are they like?

This book presents material from the first national study of life in British IRCs. Based on 20 months of fieldwork in six institutions, it draws on a large amount of empirical data, including 250 detainee surveys, over 500 unstructured detainee interviews (including life histories), 130 structured and unstructured staff interviews, over 2,400 hours of observation (the equivalent of three days per week over 20 months), and detailed field notes. This account presents more than just a description of life behind bars. Instead, it uses staff and detainee testimonies to revisit key assumptions about state power and the legacies of colonialism under conditions of globalization, exploring how IRCs designate certain people as strangers no matter how familiar. By focusing on the tensions between identification and identity, this study exposes the shifting and uneasy relational nature of power in the face of mass mobility. In so doing, it draws on and develops literature on the criminalization of migration and border criminologies, also known as the criminology of mobility (Stumpf, 2006; Aas, 2011; Aas and Bosworth, 2013), as well as utilizing longstanding ideas and approaches from the field of punishment and society (Simon and Sparks, 2012; Bosworth, 2012; Bosworth and Kaufman, 2013).

In a short period of time, immigration detention has attracted considerable academic attention. Some seek to delineate its parameters (Flynn, 2012; Guild, 2005), others to define its goals (Broeders, 2010; Hailbronner, 2007; Leerkes and Broeders, 2010; 2013; Mainwearing, 2012), and map its legal framework (Wilsher, 2012; Stevens, 2011; Cornelisse, 2010; Thwaites, 2014). In addition to a small (but growing) body of criminological research (see, for example, Miller, 2002; Pratt, 2005; Malloch and Stanley, 2005; Grewcock, 2010; Bosworth, 2012; 2013; Larsen and Piché, 2009; Leerkes and Brodeurs, 2010; Welch, 2002; Ugelvik and Ugelvik, 2013), there is a considerable quantity of reports produced each year by NGOs and government agencies around the world (see, inter alia, HMIP, 2013; IMB, 2013; Phelps, 2009; BID, 2013; Amnesty International, 2013; PICUM, 2013).[13]

13. See also the work of the Global Detention Project <http://www.globaldetentionproject.org>.

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Scholars in refugee and migration studies (Silverman and Massa, 2012), political science (Gibney, 2004; 2008; Squire, 2010; Walters, 2002; 2006; Ceccorulli and Lebanca, 2014), human rights (Dembour, 2006; Dembour and Kelly, 2011), anthropology (Hall, 2010; 2012; Makaremi, 2009a; 2009b; Fassin, 2011; Fischer, 2013a; 2013b; De Genova, 2002; 2010; Griffiths, 2012; 2013), geography (Gill, 2009; Coleman and Kocher, 2011; Mountz, 2010; 2011a; 2011b), law (Wilsher, 2012; Cornelisse, 2010; Stumpf, 2006), and sociology (Bigo, 2008; Barker, 2012; 2013a; Schuster, 2005; Sanchez and Romero, 2010; Schuster and Bloch, 2005; Schuster and Majidi, 2013) locate immigration detention in larger debates about border control. Authors in political theory (Fraser, 2008; Benhabib, 2004; 2006; Walters, 2006), feminist (Butler, 2009; Butler and Spivak, 2009; Brown, 2010), and critical race theory (Ahmed, 2000; Sanchez and Romero, 2010; Hernandez, 2008) do the same. Primarily theoretical, much of this literature draws on Michel Foucault's (1991; 2004) writings on governmentality and biopower, and Giorgio Agamben's (1998; 2005) ideas of the state of exception and the Camp.

Whereas Foucault's notions of governmentality and biopower focus on the productive and controlling nature of power, the strategies and technologies by which the state manages populations and sets minimum thresholds of care, Agamben's work deliberately, and provocatively, invokes the horrors of the Nazi Concentration Camp to examine how the state annihilates and sacrifices the unwanted. An actual as well as metaphorical space, 'the camp' is directly connected to the 'state of exception', the power inherent in the liberal rule of law to suspend the usual rights in moments of emergencies. For Agamben, 'The camp is the space that is opened when the state of exception begins to become the rule' (Agamben, 1998: 63). It is 'the fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West' (Agamben, 1998: 181). A system of governance outside the law.

All this work provides clues for a consideration of the nature and effect of this form of custody. Yet, in its predominantly theoretical bent, academic scholarship is sometimes difficult to square with life in detention. We receive little information about the texture of the institutions, how they differ from one another, their ambiguities, points of tension, or commonalities. In the priority given to Foucault and Agamben, other factors, most predicatably, race, gender (Bosworth and Kellezi, 2014), class (De Giorgi, 2010), and the role of the private sector (Bacon, 2005) tend to be overlooked. Foucault and Agamben also propose notoriously bleak world-views, offering little cause for hope or strategies for change.

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Consequently, notwithstanding a handful of important exceptions (Hall, 2010; 2012; Fischer, 2013a; 2013b) and in marked contrast to the rich ethnographic studies of refugee camps elsewhere (and, we might add, of prisons), 'knowledge of these new detention sites, at the doors of Europe, remains limited' (Fassin, 2011: 219). It is that gap that this book starts to fill.

Who is detained and why?

Unlike other immigration systems in Australia, Italy, and Greece, where people are predominantly detained on arrival, removal centres in the UK are meant to be the final point in someone's migration. Non-British citizens may be detained following a criminal conviction, for over-staying a visa, for failing to possess a visa of any sort, or for working while on a holiday or student visa.[14] Foreigners may be held 'whilst identity and basis of claim are established, where there is a risk of absconding, as part of fast-track asylum procedures (in the case of straightforward asylum claims that can be decided quickly)' (Home Office, 2013a: 71). Former asylum seekers, whose claims have been rejected, may also be detained prior to their removal.

As with other countries, the UK is a signatory to various UN protocols, most importantly the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, that are meant to restrict the kinds of people who can be detained, as well as the conditions under which they can be held.[15] In addition to observing the strictures on the *non-refoulement* of refugees set out in the 1951 Convention, unaccompanied minors, those who have been trafficked, and victims of torture should not be confined. Neither should anyone with serious mental or physical health problems 'if the condition cannot be satisfactorily managed' in detention.[16] Britain ought also be guided by

14. Most students are entitled to work a limited number of hours per week while studying although, like much of British immigration law, this arrangement is currently under review.
15. Other relevant human rights agreements which Britain has ratified include the 1966 International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the 2000 Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, and its protocols on Human Trafficking (2003) and Smuggling of Migrants (2004), and the 2005 Council of Europe's Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings.
16. Although bureaucratic systems exist to weed out all these populations, they are not always successful. All the centres I visited included 'age-disputed' minors, ie individuals who were claiming to be younger than 18, as well as some who said they had been trafficked and/or tortured. Many appeared to be suffering from quite severe mental health problems, and

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Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which stipulates that:

1. Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be deprived of his liberty save in [particular] cases and in accordance with a procedure prescribed by law. . . .

(f) the lawful arrest or detention of a person is only allowed to prevent his effecting an unauthorized entry into the country or of a person against whom action is being taken with a view to deportation or extradition. . . .

2. Everyone who is arrested shall be informed promptly, in a language which he understands, of the reasons for his arrest and of any charge against him. . . .

4. Everyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings by which the lawfulness of his detention shall be decided speedily by a court and his release ordered if the detention is not lawful.

5. Everyone who has been the victim of arrest or detention in contravention of the provisions of this article shall have an enforceable right to compensation.

Such international instruments are implemented at the national level, in the UK via the Human Rights Act 1998, in an ever-expanding body of criminal justice, immigration, and asylum legislation, and in various pieces of case law. More locally, Article 5 has been written into Chapter 55 of the UKBA *Operation Enforcement Manual* (OEM)[17] and is part of the 2001 Detention Centre Rules.[18]

some were clearly physically unwell. While we were conducting research in IRC Yarl's Wood, for example, one of the detainees had a (non-fatal) heart attack. In the period since my research ended, a 40-year-old woman, Christine Case, died of a heart attack at the same institution, while a number of men have expired in Colnbrook, and one man just hours after he was released. In February 2014, Alois Dvorzac, an elderly Canadian man, who had been detained in Harmondsworth upon arrival at Heathrow, died while handcuffed in hospital as centre staff belatedly sought assistance for his dementia (Allison, 2013; D. Taylor, 2014; Rawlinson, 2014).

17. Revised most recently in 2011 (UKBA, 2011).

18. On some matters, the guidelines surrounding detention seem unambiguous. Individuals should only be detained for a clear purpose, for a reasonable period of time, and under acceptable conditions. They must be informed of the reason for their detention and their

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Most detention centres house relatively young men, the majority of whom are aged between 18 and 45 years. They are drawn from all over the world, but tend to originate from the global south. Most come from former colonies—India, Pakistan, Jamaica, Bangladesh—with a consistent minority haling from states in which the UK is, or was until recently, at war—eg Iraq and Afghanistan. There are exceptions to these generalizations: all detention centres hold a significant number of Chinese and a smaller sum of Vietnamese nationals, both from countries with which the UK has only had limited colonial involvement (outside Hong Kong). There are also, far more predictably, very few individuals from white former colonies. I met one white Australian citizen, one white Zimbabwean, and one white South African. I saw no New Zealanders or Canadians. One (black) man claimed to be from the US, although the authorities were disputing his nationality.

The women and men described in this study had entered Britain in a variety of ways: as members of a family group who sought asylum, often many years previously; as a spouse or fiancée; on a work permit; on a holiday visa; in the back of a lorry.[19] David, who was taken to the airport for deportation twice while I was in Colnbrook and returned each time when the paperwork for a judicial review of his immigration case was accepted for last minute consideration, arrived in the UK from Uganda when he was just three years old, part of a family fleeing persecution: 'that was the last time I was on a plane, man. Can you believe it?' he said, shaking his head (Uganda, CB). Now in his 20s, and despite having no remaining family members in Uganda, David was being forced out of the UK due to a string of criminal convictions for firearm offences that had nullified his indefinite leave to remain.

cases must be subject to regular (albeit administrative, internal, and undisclosed) review. On the other hand, however, such statements may come into conflict with contractual arrangements, particularly if the contract in question is rather old. Thus, while the operating standards require certain levels of medical care, the contract may not have budgeted for sufficient nursing staff. Similarly while the Detention Centre Rules advocates a 'productive use' of detainees' time, contracts stipulate only minimal training in ESOL classes and art and craft. In any case, they fail to articulate a clear goal, aim, or principle.

19. It is worth noting that most of those interviewed were far more comfortable listing their reasons for coming and desiring to stay than the practicalities of their arrival. Such reticence was, as expected, more marked among those who had either purchased false documents or arrived without any. IRCs are very low-trust environments and it was apparent that questions about the logistics of border crossing made many people uncomfortable, presumably due to their fear that I might report on them.

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Another long-term Colnbrook detainee, Samien described his journey to the UK, during parts of which he hid under the axle of a lorry, as 'terrifying' (Palestine, CB). Deeply depressed,[20] alluding to experiences of torture and rape in Israel, Samien told me: 'When you are afraid, you can run, it doesn't matter. I just ran'. For Wali, a Turkish Kurd, forced to leave his home due to threats from the military, the journey was expensive. 'I paid 10,000 to come here', he disclosed. 'I travelled for 3–4 days in the lorry. There was a space in the middle, and we were covered by merchandise. There was no bed we just slept on the floor. The lorry driver gave us food and drinks because he knew about it. It was expensive but my brother paid for it as we have a farm' (Turkey, TH).

While Samien and Wali purchased false documents before leaving their country of origin, others, like Ena and Deb, paid for them through sex work during the voyage and after arrival in the UK. Chinese nationals, like Fen and Da-Xia were smuggled in on condition they would work in a restaurant, sell counterfeit DVDs, or cultivate marijuana. The more fortunate were sponsored by family members, assisted by acquaintances, or had simply qualified for a visa in their own right. Rana, from Bangladesh, for instance, whom I met in Brook House, had obtained a 'Tier two' visa to manage an Indian restaurant in London. He had lived in the UK for nine years, during which he had obtained an MBA from a British university. The physical border for this man had been legitimately traversed. It seemed as though he would succeed. Yet, he ended up in detention nonetheless, when he broke the terms of his visa, taking on a second job to earn more money.

Allocation to detention

Detainees like Samien, Rana, and Da-Xia are allocated to IRCs by Home Office staff working within the Detainee Escorting and Population Management Unit (DEPMU) upon receipt of a form known as an IS91 or 'warrant of detention', that must be completed by an immigration officer.[21] This warrant should only be issued if deportation is imminent,

20. Soon after our interview Samien was awarded temporary admission to the UK by the Home Office.

21. According to Chapter 31 of the June 2013 Immigration Directorates Instructions, 'in very few cases where neither the detention nor the movement of a detainee is being arranged

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or if the individual is considered a flight risk. These conditions are not always observed. Not only are some people held for many months, suggesting their deportation was not imminent when they were first detained, but, staff made clear, detention could be used for other reasons altogether. 'The other day', one immigration officer at Colnbrook said angrily,

> we got sent a flea-infested vagrant. He was disgusting. They had to put him in segregation because he refused to wash . . . Lin Homer [the former head of what was then called UKBA[22]] had taken a personal interest in him; people had been complaining. So he was put on a bus from Leeds. Why did they pick him up in the first place? Does he have removal orders? I don't know. When he got here he smelled, but he is refusing to have a bath. We can't make him take a bath; he refused everything we offered him. He refused all blood tests. He scratched his head and you wouldn't want to know what came out (Elle, Home Office, CB).

There is no formal classification scheme for IRCs. Consequently, allocation decisions are, for the most part, made on the basis of bed space. Nevertheless, certain centres tend to attract particular kinds of cases. Home Office and custodial staff at Colnbrook, for instance, referred to it as a 'centre of last resort', claiming they often received men allocated whom other establishments would not accept due to their precarious mental health or serious criminal record.[23] 'A lot of problems here', Elle alleged, 'is that Colnbrook has a healthcare suite which has 6 beds, nurses, and an on-call doctor.[24] So we get sent difficult people. Other centres take less vulnerable persons. This is the last stop' (Home Office, CB). Alternatively, after enduring a number of disturbances and an escape in the first few years of the twenty-first century, Campsfield House capped the proportion of ex-prisoners whom they

via DEPMU. The form [IS91M] must be completed and used to notify both the detaining authority and the escorting agency of the proposed move' (Home Office, 2013b: para 8.3, p. 14).

22. The United Kingdom Border Agency (UKBA). The Agency's status was revoked in 2013 and its responsibilities returned to ministerial oversight within the Home Office. Despite this official shift in terminology and autonomy, at the time of writing in Spring 2014, UKBA continues to be used by many alongside immigration, 'immigration enforcement', and the Home Office. Throughout the book I use 'Immigration' and 'Home Office' interchangeably as well as UKBA when referring to the term used by the respondent.
23. On its website, the Home Office refers to Colnbrook as 'the most secure removal centre within the UK Border Agency estate' <http://www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk/aboutus/organisation/immigrationremovalcentres/colnbrook>.
24. 'The health care unit', Kevin, a member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) at Colnbrook noted, 'is filled with mental health cases waiting for beds at the PCT' (Primary Care Trust, ie local hospital) (SMT, CB).

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would accept, leaving them with a higher proportion of visa over-stayers and those without documents.[25]

Staff in IRCs (via the centre manager) can ask DEPMU to transfer detainees to prison[26] or to another establishment, on the basis of good order and discipline or in response to a request from the detainee. Some women and men ask to be moved in order to be closer to their family and friends. Others are attracted by the reputation of certain establishments. Men in this project were particularly positive about Dungavel, also singling out Tinsley House and Campsfield House for praise. Most were critical of the high-security establishments, Colnbrook and Brook House, relieved to be away from them, or upset they were there. Long-term detainees sometimes request a move in order to alleviate their boredom. Everyone hopes that the immigration judge associated with a different establishment might take another view of their case (BID, 2010).[27] In all these respects women are far more limited in their options, able to circulate only between Yarl's Wood and prison, although they may be held for up to a week in the women's sections of Colnbrook (in a short-stay unit),[28] or Dungavel. If they are part of family groups, they may be held briefly in Tinsley House or at Cedars.

Transfer and release decisions can be made on other grounds as well. Once someone has removal directions he or she can be shifted to a short-term holding facility in or near a port. Such places hold women, men and families. The Home Office may temporarily admit detainees to the UK who are proving difficult to deport or remove, while individuals may also be granted bail by an immigration judge. Decisions about transfer and admission may also reflect factors unrelated to the person's case. On one occasion, for instance, during the research in Campsfield House, four men were temporarily admitted to the UK at the same time, an unusual occasion

25. As a strategy to avoid disruption, this was only mildly successful. In November 2013, one man who did not wish to be removed caused a conflagration which destroyed one of the two main housing blocks. He subsequently admitted to his crime in the Oxford Crown Court, and was sentenced to 32 months in prison.
26. In May 2013 the government announced a plan to ring-fence 1,000 beds in prison, in order to reduce the number of ex-prisoners in the detention estate, in order to reduce the average stay in an IRC and increase the 'throughput'. According to a senior civil servant, the Home Office wants to speed up the whole process yet again.
27. For more about decision-making in asylum tribunals, see Thomas, 2011; on the treatment of women in particular, see Baillot, Cowan, and Munro, 2013.
28. If the sum outnumbers the 27 available beds in Colnbrook, women may also find themselves held alongside men in the centre's far more austere Short-Term Holding Facility (STHF).

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explained to me by reception staff as a result of a planned mass deportation. 'They must have chartered a flight', Keith deduced. 'When that happens, they gather together everyone who is going from all over and send them to Colnbrook and Brook House. That means we get people from those places so they have enough room' (DCO, CH). Similarly I was told by a number of people that around Christmas a higher proportion of detainees are temporarily admitted to Britain (ie released from detention), irrespective of the state of their immigration case.

What are detention centres like?

There is considerable variation among the centres in terms of their physical environment and how they are managed. Although the Home Office published a set of national operating standards in 2008 (UKBA, 2008), which all IRCs are required to follow, the institutions are each quite different from one another in terms of physical layout, population, and in the fine details of their contract. Such differences inevitably have an impact on the lived experience of detention.

Material conditions can be particularly significant. For instance, whereas Colnbrook (adjacent to Heathrow) and Brook House (next to the runway at Gatwick) were both built according to highly restricted Category B Prison security standards, Campsfield House, outside Oxford, is a much older institution that has served a number of purposes from military barracks to a Young Offenders Institution (YOI). Campsfield House operates a 'free flow' regime, where detainees can walk freely around the building and access a grassy outdoor area all day from early in the morning until late at night. At Colnbrook and Brook House, in contrast, movements are more circumscribed and there is far greater time spent locked on the units or in the rooms with no fresh air.

Within each centre there are multiple layers of governance. While the private contractors, or HM Prison Service, are responsible for the day-to-day running of the removal centres, they are accountable to an onsite 'immigration manager' whose job is to check that the contract is followed. Such people usually have limited prior experience of working in a custodial environment, and may hold different expectations about such places and their inhabitants than HM Prison Service or the private custody firms.

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The immigration manager oversees a number of local immigration officers who mediate between the detainees and their immigration case-workers based elsewhere. Immigration officers meet with detainees in 'legal visits', passing documents and information between them and their case workers. They represent the face of the Home Office in detention, serving removal directions and communicating decisions about bail, temporary admission, and asylum. They do not, however, make those decisions.

All centres contract out their cleaning and healthcare services. The healthcare contract is usually awarded to a local GP practice, and a doctor will be available most days. In removal centres run by the prison service, healthcare is provided by the National Health Service (NHS).[29] Some centres employ counsellors and education staff, others do not, opting instead to use Detention Custody Officers to run art and craft courses. Some—like Colnbrook—train detainees to act as 'Buddies' offering advice to new arrivals and anyone feeling depressed. Others have no such organized arrangements relying instead on informal networks among the detainees and religious volunteers to offer additional support to those in need.

The daily regime in detention is limited. According to the operating standards (UKBA, 2008), the contractors must offer lessons in English as a second language (ESOL), art and craft and leisure activities, including gym. They must also make available internet access and offer some level of IT training. There is no requirement for any paid work, vocational training, or higher education.

All removal centres rely on voluntary organizations to supplement their daily regime. They are required to work with a local visitor group, that is part of the national body, the Association of Visitors to Immigration Detainees (AVID). Members of these organizations visit detainees socially, and, on occasion, provide them with small sums of money or phone cards. They also can direct them to other groups or immigration solicitors who may be able to offer advice and assistance. Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) operate in most centres helping detainees fill out bail applications and lodge asylum claims, while other volunteer groups are also active. Music in Detention runs workshops in many detention centres, in Colnbrook

29. After the fieldwork ended, the government announced that it would be handing over the medical care in all centres to the NHS. However, the process of transferring from private healthcare contractors to the public sector has been slow and, at the time of writing, is still incomplete.

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producing CDs with detainees in a purpose-built recording studio. Finally, until April 2014 representatives from the International Organisation of Migration (IOM) or Refugee Action, who sought to encourage individuals to return voluntarily to their country of origin by offering them financial assistance to set up businesses or to undergo training upon their return, held regular workshops for detainees.[30]

What are removal centres for?

In both their population and their institutional make-up, removal centres defy simple taxonomy. Ostensibly the destination for people en route to the airport, they also house women and men for upwards of six months and sometimes longer. Although deportation and the detention that precedes it is a matter of administrative law, foreign offenders are now routinely given deportation orders by judges and magistrates as part of their criminal sentence. Considerable ambivalence and confusion remain, however, about the precise or desired relationship between the immigration and criminal justice systems.

There is a national immigration detention system. Yet, there is no single national service provider. Rather, the institutions are divided between companies and HM Prison Service and are run by them according to terms set out in their private contracts. Ultimately, the Home Office is responsible for the centres, yet, on a day-to-day level, they have devolved this duty via the contract. Centre managers meet collectively throughout the year with the Home Office, while the head of detention services or his or her deputy chairs regular committee meetings with centre staff addressing particular issues like Safer Custody. During the research there was also a committee known as the 'Detention Users Group' that brought together representatives from the voluntary sector with the Home Office staff to discuss their concerns about immigration detention, although this has since been disbanded. In any case, among these various groups there is little shared corporate culture and no cohesive statement of values or approach. The contractors, after all, are competitors with one another, and often with the voluntary sector who are among their harshest critics.

30. For a critical account of the role of humanitarian agencies in border control, see Walters, 2011 and Lee, 2013.

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The fragmented and complex system of governance and responsibility contributes to a lack of clarity over the aims of detention. Among those I met, the bases for the decisions to detain, admit, or remove as well as the duration of confinement were also poorly understood.[31] Would I 'be asking how UKBA made their decisions about who to release and who to keep?' Keith, and others, wanted to know (DCO, CH).[32] Such uncertainty over the duration and justification for detention at all levels of IRCs, from the detainees to the Home Office, are compounded by the variety of pathways to detention. Only by going inside can we try to make better sense of IRCs. Bearing witness to daily life, and observing how women and men interact, reveal the trials of living and working in such a liminal space. As subsequent chapters will show, whereas detention centres were initially founded to offer some due process protections, rather like the lower criminal courts observed by Malcolm Feeley (1979) in the 1970s, such aspirations had unintended consequences, that have lead to a system with few proponents.

The field of immigration detention is a fluid one. Not only does immigration law and policy frequently change, but removal centres have high staff turnover at all levels. Such developments pose considerable challenges to the researcher, both in obtaining access and in reporting findings. It is important, in other words, to recognize the shifting context, and to accept, that by the time this book is published some aspects of the system will have altered again. At the same time, it is equally necessary to accept that generalizations can be made and lessons learned. With this ambition, this book starts by tracing the longer history of detention.

In order to make sense of the current system, the book proceeds as follows. Chapter 1 establishes the historical development of the current system and refines the image of it that has been sketched in this introduction. Chapter 2 sets out the practicalities of the study, while Chapters 3–7 draw on staff and detainee testimonies to flesh out our understanding of

31. Recent work in geography (eg Gill, 2009; Michalon, 2013; Moran, Conlon, and Gill, 2013) has emphasized the need to concentrate on transfers and what they refer to as the 'forced mobility' within networks of detention and border control more generally. See also Herd, 2011.

32. While I interviewed some staff in DEPMU for this project, I did not speak with the 'case owners' or others with the power to detain. Subsequently, however, I have administered a survey and conducted focus group interviews with a series of such staff. The findings from that project can be found in Bosworth and Bradford, forthcoming.

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immigration detention. In these chapters, I explore matters of identity and community, paying particular attention to matters of race and gender. Despite the undeniable vulnerabilities of detainees, I find considerable ambivalence and uncertainty about border control under conditions of mass mobility.

IRCs identify their inhabitants as strangers, constructing them as unfamiliar, ambiguous, and uncertain. In this endeavour, they are greatly assisted by their resemblance to prisons and by familiar racialized narratives about foreigners and nationality. However, as staff and detainee testimonies reveal, in their interactions and day-to-day life, women and men find many points of commonality. In their interactions and recognition of one another, the goal and effect of detention is shown to be incomplete. Denial requires effort. It can be challenged.

In order to minimize the effort it must expend, the state 'governs at distance', via the contract. It also splits itself in two, deploying some immigration staff onsite, while keeping the actual decision-makers (the caseworkers) elsewhere, sequestered from the potentially destabilizing effects of facing up to those they wish to remove. Such distancing, while bureaucratically effective, contributes to the uncertainty of daily life in detention, and is often the source of considerable criticism and unease. Denial and familiarity are embodied and localized activities, whose pains and contradictions inhere in concrete relationships. Such matters, which become visible through applied research, raise profound questions about the limits and pains of denial under conditions of mass mobility. These matters form the basis of the conclusion in which I argue for a more moderate approach to border control.

Conclusion

Despite the best efforts of those working in detention, detainees across the board—whether former prisoners or visa over-stayers—articulate a number of common concerns. Reflecting the enduring nature of Empire, as well as their period of residence in the UK, most of those confined speak some English. However, few are fully literate. Many have great difficulty reading the Home Office documentation relating to their immigration case or the signs around the removal centres advertising courses or events. They may also find it hard to communicate with custody officers and one

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another. Many are confused about why they are detained and nobody knows how long they will be there. They find it difficult, despite the availability of mobile phones, to maintain contact with their families and, even though centres arrange family-day visits to assist with contact with children, few take this option.

Detainees are often unable to obtain a trustworthy and effective immigration solicitor. Fewer and fewer of them are entitled to legal aid. Many are frustrated by the limited amount of paid work and education in detention, particularly if they have served a prison sentence during which they have taken advantage of a wide range of courses and programmes. Healthcare remains, across the board, a source of great anxiety.

Such complaints are likely to be disheartening for centre managers and staff, as well as for those working in immigration, some of whom are actively striving to improve conditions behind bars. The findings do not make for optimistic reading for detainees, their families, or their supporters. For all concerned, these problems are also likely to be familiar. The question remains, then, why are these failings so entrenched and why do they have such little impact on the legitimacy of the practice of immigration detention?

It seems plausible that there may be limitations inherent in the contracts—although, since these are protected, private documents, it is not possible to be sure about their content. Likewise, it is clear that most people in detention do not wish to be deported, so they are hardly likely to be satisfied with their treatment. Instead, they are anxious, depressed, and often angry.

Yet, there is also a more substantive point to be made about the utilitarian justification of detention as no more than a means to the end of enforcing deportation. Just as legal scholars (von Hirsch, 1976) argued in the 1970s that approaching punishment in a purely utilitarian fashion was unjust, so too it seems clear that considering detention in this way is a large part of the problem. What we need instead is greater attention to detention centres and a tougher examination of those they house in their own terms. To do so effectively, we must uncouple detention from a criminal justice imagination and generate new ideas and language to understand them.

In so doing, we may need to leave behind the traditional vocabulary that centres on legitimacy in our analysis of state power (Beetham, 1991). On what basis might we find a shared perspective and beliefs? In a global world, and in institutions situated at the limits of the nation state, how useful is this

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term anyway? Instead, we should concentrate on why we detain *foreigners* and treat them in the way we do. In terms of the IRCs, such questions become quite simple. What is detention like? What is it for? What is its effect?

Why do foreigners, particularly in a postcolonialist multicultural country like the UK, generate such a response? What is it about those without citizenship that enables us (morally and ethically) to perceive them differently from ourselves? What are the costs to us, to those who work with them and to detainees of this estrangement? Given the enormous financial and personal burdens, which will be elucidated in the coming pages, what might it take to think and act otherwise? Although detainees may not, by law, have the right to remain, they do have the right to call on us as fellow human beings. In their current form, detention centres make it hard to recognize that right and this situation needs to change. This book will make that case.

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