

**A Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the Continuing Professional Development**

**Doctorate in Forensic Psychological Practice**

**Exploring the protective role of significant  
interpersonal relationships in reducing recidivism**

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## Abstract

**Objectives:** The overarching aim of this thesis is to understand and explore the impact that positive interpersonal relationships have on reducing re-offending behaviour. This thesis addresses this aim via three pieces of work. A systematic review which explores the impact of prison visits on wellbeing, rule-breaking behaviour in prison and recidivism; a qualitative study of prisoners and their partners' experience through the prison sentence and the impact on offending behaviour; and a critique of a popular psychometric tool, the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ), used to measure adult attachment. **Method:** A systematic review was conducted using online resources. Ten studies met the inclusion criteria. Studies were reviewed using a standardised quality assessment tool. The research study involved interviewing four couples, in relation to the study's areas of interest. The data was then analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Evaluation of the psychometric tool was based on the available literature. **Results:** In the systematic review there was considerable variation in study quality, methods used, and findings. Studies consistently found generally positive effects of prisoners receiving visits. There was good evidence that prison visits reduced depressive symptoms. However, impact on prison rule-breaking behaviour suggested a negative relationship. A high quality study identified that visits reduced rates of recidivism. In the research study the analysis of the stories resulted in the emergence of four main themes to explain the couples' experience, the maintenance of the relationship and the impact on offending; *having a special connection, challenges and threats, reciprocal behaviours* and *maintaining a belief in the future*. The outcome of the evaluation of the RSQ suggests that with reservations it is effective tool to use in research. **Conclusions:** The findings suggest a number of ways in which prisoners' relationships influence desistance and has practical implications for supporting couples to maintain their relationships in the future. It also provides suggestions for future research in this area.

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NB. Due to the volume, full transcripts and analysis of each participant's interview are not included within the document. These are included on a memory stick for anyone wishing to access them.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Interpersonal Relationships and Recidivism**

The current evidence suggests that strong interpersonal relationships reduce the likelihood of criminal recidivism. Research drawn from Home Office re-offending follow up data suggests the existence and maintenance of good family relationships helps to reduce re-offending (May, Sharma & Stewart, 2008). This is based on earlier research which suggests that the support of families and friends on release can help offenders successfully settle back into the community (Ditchfield, 1994). Baumer, O'Donnell and Hughes (2009) studied almost 20,000 Irish prisoners released during a four year period. They found that those who received periods of family leave from prison into the community were less likely to reoffend and this remained the case over a four year period of follow up. Zamble and Quinsey (1997) highlighted the importance of the characteristics of relationships in recidivism, their research identified that recidivists quoted relationship conflict as instrumental in re-offending. It is therefore in the interests of professionals working with offenders to consider the implications of family relationships in the resettlement process.

#### **Interpersonal Relationships and Other Positive Outcomes**

Exploring the available literature suggests it is important to maintain or develop good relationships during prison sentences in order to reduce recidivism. Reviews by Hairston (1988, 1991) reinforce this and also suggest that maintaining family ties improves other areas of experience for offenders such as their wellbeing within the prison environment. At the time Hairston (1991) rightly identified that the evidence for the importance of family ties was not often studied explicitly but rather emerged in the pursuit of other research questions.



Since these reviews other researchers have begun to explore more explicitly the differing impact of social support and maintaining family ties throughout the prison sentence. These studies link to; prison behaviour (Jiang & Winfree, 2006), reduced parental distress and improved attachment (Poehlmann, Dallaire & Loper 2010) and depression (Monaghan, Goldweber & Cauffman, 2011). Woolf and Tumin (1991) related prison visits to direct positive consequences for prison management. They reviewed six British prisons following riots and suggested that institutional goals could be achieved more easily by improving prisoners' perceptions of institutions by maintaining family ties through frequent visits.

### **The Impact of Specific Relationships**

The literature explores the impact of different interpersonal relationships in the lives of offenders. Most consistently parental relationships for younger offenders and intimate partner relationships and relationships with their children for adult offenders are researched.

**Parent/child relationships:** The general offending literature considers family relationships to be both a risk and protective factor for delinquency (Stouhamer-Loeber, Loeber, Wei, Farrington & Wikstrom, 2002). Positive relationships are viewed as protective. Eichelsheim et al. (2010) highlight the protective role of effective parental-child communication. Adolescents who perceived their parents to have parental expertise, to be trustworthy and to be accessible were more likely to disclose risk related information which may reduce the likelihood of behaving in a risky manner (Guilamo-Ramos, Jaccard, Dittus & Bouris 2006).

Research specific to the parent/child relationship post offending also suggest positive parental influence. A study by Ryan and Yang (2005) found a reduced rate of re-offending in adolescents who had received visits from their parents. This was the case when the visits were initiated by the parents when the adolescent was in residential care. From their findings

they purported that in order to reduce recidivism in this age group families should be involved in treatment with the offender. Although parental impact on recidivism has not been fully explored other benefits for adolescents of maintaining contact with their parents have been identified. Monaghan et al. (2011) found that parental contact during incarceration has positive impacts on an adolescent's mental health in terms of reduced symptoms of depression. A review of the literature related to this area may help to explore the qualities of these relationships further.

**Child/parent relationships:** When considering the child/parent relationship there is little research exploring the processes by which the child influences a parents' offending behaviour. The actual impact of the child on the parent's behaviour has, however, been more widely considered. Parsons and Warner-Robbins (2002) identified female prisoners' relationships with their children as significant motivators for attempts to avoid re-offending, while Jiang and Winfree (2006) explored the differences between social support for male and female prisoners and the impact this had upon rule-breaking within the prison environment. Both men and women who moved from a situation where they were not receiving and making telephone calls to their children to a situation where they were, reduced their rule-breaking behaviour; men by 18% and women by 27%. However, these findings were not replicated for children actually visiting their parents. The research is often conflicting and suggests that there is significant stress for parents but also significant rewards in managing their relationships effectively with their children during a prison sentence (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper and Shear, 2010).

**Intimate partner relationships:** The impact of prisoners' relationships with their intimate partners has received more research attention in terms of impact on recidivism, wellbeing and behaviour. Longitudinal research with 500 young men (Sampson, Laub & Wimer, 2006) provided evidence to suggest that marriage was associated with a 35%

reduction in the odds of an individual engaging in crime. This was attributed to the influence of the female partner, the change in social contacts, the sense of self as a responsible person and the increased investment in remaining in the community. Within the prison environment Jiang and Winfree (2006) found that married men were 23% less likely to engage in rule-breaking behaviour suggesting continued influence even when partners are separated from each other. Exploration that considers the quality of committed relationships provides further evidence of the protective nature of an intimate relationship with a partner. Segrin and Flora (2001) asked male married prisoners to complete measures of loneliness, marital satisfaction and commitment. They also asked them a series of open-ended questions about their relational history. From the evidence collected the authors concluded that possessing a satisfying and committed marriage reduced feelings of loneliness during incarceration. These studies demonstrate that marriage is protective in terms of recidivism, improved prison behaviour and wellbeing within the prison environment.

Although the general consensus is that intimate relationships are protective for male offenders there is some evidence that close personal relationships may not be protective in terms of re-offending (Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). Individuals choose partners that support each other's anti-social and criminal behaviours and this reinforces offending behaviour. Varying findings suggest there is more to learn about the function of intimate relationships as a protective or risk factor for re-offending. If good quality relationships are protective, understanding how some couples stay together despite the difficulties of a prison sentence may inform good practice.

### **Maintaining Relationships**

A number of studies have explored the impact of maintaining relationships throughout the prison sentence. La Vigne, Naser, Brooks and Castro (2005) found that the maintenance

of 'good quality' family relationships while offenders are in prison is related to the successful development of the relationship post release. They also found that the maintenance of 'poor quality' relationships has the opposite effect. Unfortunately the separation that is the main feature of a prison sentence can have a negative impact upon relationships. Institutional barriers create emotional withdrawal which can lead to disengagement from close personal relationships (Harman, Smith & Egan, 2007) and a lack of time to resolve problems through personal contact exacerbates the problems that couples experience (Accordino & Guerney, 1998). Relationship research considers what constitutes quality in relationships and explores a number of factors such as; support seeking and care giving (Collins & Feeney, 2000) and how attachment style links into relationship functioning (Feeney & Collins 2003). In order for relationships to function over time it is important that each participant is able to feel secure. Attachment research suggests that early attachment style translates into adult relationship behaviours (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). The concept of adult attachment styles has demonstrated considerable predictive validity in a number of areas including jealousy, well being, relationship satisfaction and support (Shaver & Hazen, 1993). Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski and Bartholomew (1994) also found, that secure attachment in adult relationships was related to a lack of abusive behaviour. A prison sentence is likely to impact on relationship satisfaction, the experiences of conflict and support and an increased opportunity for jealousy. Secure attachment is therefore likely to be a contributing factor that supports prisoners to maintain long term relationships through these difficult circumstances.

Research that considers the benefits of maintaining family ties provides the potential to inform those working with prisoners of the benefits of supporting them to improve their relationships. Desistance research suggests that the rehabilitation of offenders is a capacity building process (Ward & Laws, 2010) and supporting offenders to improve relationships is consistent with this approach. In order to consider methods of improving social support a

better understanding of the qualities of positive relationships between prisoners and their families and the processes that influence behaviour would be beneficial.

### **Implications for Intervention**

In the Criminal Justice System little intervention is engaged in with offenders to enable them to maintain and improve their existing intimate relationships. In general the focus is placed upon working with offenders who have been abusive to their partners rather than improving already protective relationships to enable them to survive custody and continue to perform a protective role. Where intervention does occur it is conducted with the offender in isolation and fails to engage the offender's partner.

NOMS (National Offender Management Service) Wales and the Time for Families organisation are currently running a non accredited programme Building Stronger Families with prisoners and their partners with the aim of supporting them to strengthen the relationship and maintain it through the prison sentence. As prison intervention rarely involves partners, this programme provides a unique opportunity to gain insight into offenders and their partners' perceptions about the impact of their relationship on criminal behaviour. In order to improve the development of programmes that aim to support prisoners' positive interpersonal relationships exploration of the literature and further research in this area would be beneficial.

### **Thesis Objectives and Rationale**

Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to understand and explore the impact that positive interpersonal relationships have on reducing re-offending behaviour. This objective is first explored through systematically considering the literature available in relation to the impact of prison visits on aspects of the prison experience and future recidivism. The review

considers the impact of the maintenance of relationships through visits on re-offending. It is hoped that the exploration of quantitative evidence from this review will establish whether maintaining relationships in this manner reduces re-offending. If it does then understanding the impact of prison visits related to prisoners' relationships may offer an area in which institutional intervention could promote relationship maintenance. In order to explore the importance of visits, in addition to recidivism, the impact of visits on prisoner wellbeing and rule-breaking behaviour will also be considered in the review. The review while useful to establish the impact of interpersonal relationships and visits does not explore the mechanisms through which re-offending could be influenced by the relationship. Considering these areas provides a basis for exploring the actual relationships prisoners have with their partners. Exploring their experiences could identify the manner in which relationships impact on re-offending.

The next part of the thesis is a qualitative study that aims to identify the characteristics of positive supportive relationships through the exploration of the experience of prisoners and their partners. It is hoped that this will add depth to the findings of the systematic review. The research detailed in Chapter 3 explores with the couples their individual and shared experiences of the prison sentence, the impact it has upon the relationship and the strategies they use to maintain the relationship and the manner in which they influence and support each other. Through this exploration of relatively strong relationships it is hoped that an understanding of the characteristics of a strong supportive relationship will emerge which can aid those working with prisoners and their partners to advise other couples on coping through the sentence.

Exploring prisoners' perceptions of the qualities involved in their relationships is rare. Rarer still is the involvement of the prisoner's partner in the research. When considering relationship qualities researchers have discovered that talking to both partners improves the

accuracy of the prediction of the stability of that relationship (Attridge, Berscheid & Simpson, 1995). Therefore, it is likely that considering the experience of both partners will provide richer and more useful information about the mechanisms through which long term marital type relationships may impact upon desistance.

Finally, the thesis will consider a tool that could be used in future to explore the relationships further. In order to understand attachment further and to consider the way in which it could be effectively measured for adults, the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ: Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) has been critiqued in Chapter 4. Understanding individual adult attachment styles could inform the development of specific features in adult intimate relationships that impact upon the maintenance of the relationships through the period of separation created by a prison sentence. Studying attachment styles could be beneficial in developing an understanding of the meaning of prison visits in the prisoner's relationships.

The discussion at the end of this thesis will explore how each chapter links together to present evidence that maintaining interpersonal relationships impacts upon future re-offending, to consider the mechanism operating within relationships that maintain them through a prison sentence and influence reduced recidivism and explore options for exploring individual characteristics that might influence those mechanisms using a psychometric measure. It is hoped that together, the body of work present in this thesis will provide evidence to suggest some ways in which prisons could support the maintenance of the relationships between prisoners and the most important members of their social support network.

## CHAPTER 2

# SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW: THE EFFECTS OF PRISON VISITS ON PRISONERS' WELLBEING, PRISON RULE-BREAKING BEHAVIOUR AND RECIDIVISM

### Abstract

**Background:** The maintenance of strong interpersonal relationships throughout a prisoner's sentence can be supported through visits. Whether visits have a positive impact on prisoner wellbeing and future behaviour is an important consideration in the development of prison policy. This review aims to systematically examine the impact of prison visits on three specific offender outcomes; prisoners' wellbeing (measured by stress, depression, suicidal ideation and self harm), rule-breaking behaviour within the prison, and recidivism. **Method:** A literature search was conducted using online resources PsycINFO, MEDLINE and Web of Science and EBSCO databases. Ten studies met the stipulated inclusion criteria. All were case-control and cohort studies published after 1991. Studies were reviewed using a standardised quality assessment tool. **Results:** There was considerable variation in study quality, methods used, and findings obtained for each outcome. Studies consistently found generally positive effects of prisoners receiving visits. There was good evidence that prison visits reduced depressive symptoms in women and adolescent prisoners. Some research investigating the impact of visits on prison rule-breaking behaviour suggested a negative relationship. One high quality study identified that visits reduced rates of recidivism and increased survival in the community before re-offending. **Conclusions:** Although there were generally positive outcomes associated with prison visits it was not possible to draw strong conclusions about the role of prison visits for the outcomes of interest. This is due to a lack of specific research in this area, research predominantly being based on North American



samples, methodological discrepancies, variability in outcome measures used and inconsistency of results in studies available.

## **Introduction**

The current evidence suggests that strong interpersonal relationships reduce the likelihood of recidivism. Research drawn from Home Office re-offending data suggests the existence and maintenance of good family relationships helps to reduce re-offending (May, Sharma & Stewart, 2008). This builds on earlier research which found that the support of family and friends on release can help offenders successfully settle back into the community (Niven & Stewart, 2005). The maintenance of ‘good quality’ family relationships while offenders are in prison is related to the successful development of the relationship post release (La Vigne, Naser, Brooks & Castro, 2005). This literature suggests it is important to maintain or develop supportive relationships during prison sentences in order to reduce recidivism. Hale (1988) went so far as to say that “Since rehabilitation and re-entry of the offender into the community is the ultimate goal of the correctional system, it should be obvious that the maintenance of the offender’s family system is of vital concern” (Hale, 1988, p. 143).

## **Prison Visits**

Prison visits allow prisoners to strengthen existing relationships and maintain social ties. There is evidence that suggests the maintenance of those social ties leads to a reduction in re-offending post release (Hairston, 1988). Prison visits are generally incorporated into all prison regimes in Europe and the United States. There is an accepted view that visits from family and intimate partners are beneficial to the prisoners and their families. Research into this area suggests the benefits, in addition to reduced recidivism following release, include improved mental health of prisoners and other family members and an increased probability

of the family remaining together following release (Hairston, 1991). There are a number of areas which are explored in terms of prison visits. Bales and Mears (2008) suggest that when considering male prisoners the available research focuses on the impact of visits on behaviour in prison. For female prisoners the emphasis is on factors that contribute to visits (Tewksbury & DeMichelle, 2005) and the experience of visits (Hutchinson, 2008), rather than the impact of visits on any measurable outcomes. Casey-Avecedo and Bakken, (2002) suggest that prison visits for men are related to an improved level of social adjustment during the period of imprisonment and after release. Improving social adjustment during the prison sentence suggests that prison behaviour and prisoners' wellbeing may be improved through the encouragement of visits.

La Vigne et al. (2005) found that visits from family members during the prison sentence improved the prediction of family support post release and contact with children increased scores on an attachment to children measure, suggesting an increase in the sense of parental responsibility. They established that visits from partners predicted higher quality intimate relationships post release when pre-prison relationship quality was high. Earlier research suggests that good intimate relationships are associated with reduced recidivism while lower quality relationships can increase recidivism (Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). LaVigne et al. (2005) also suggest a positive effect from visits when they are used to support already positive relationships. These positive relationships may then help to support a reduction in recidivism. These studies suggest that prison visits are beneficial in the reduction of recidivism through the strengthening of relationships but they do not directly test the relationship between prison visits and recidivism.

## **Relationships**

When considering an offender's personal support network the most important relationships disrupted by imprisonment are parental relationships for adolescents and intimate partner relationships/relationships with their children for adults. These relationships are known as primary relationships and are not viewed as instrumental, but rather relationships that provide a sense of security, well being and an assurance of worth (Hairston, 1988). Primary relationships allow prisoners to maintain their social identity. Exploration of the criminological and psychological literature considering how primary relationships may foster a protective role on recidivism provides some background for this review.

### **Parental relationships.**

There is little research that explores the role of the parental relationship in recidivism, other than initial offending of adolescent offenders (Hoge, Andrews & Leschied, 1996). However, the general offending literature considers family relationships to be both a risk and protective factor for delinquency (Stouhamer-Loeber, Loeber, Wei, Farrington, & Wikstrom, 2002). Considerable research has concentrated on the risks and mechanisms through which offending behaviour in adolescence is influenced via the parental relationship. Parental modelling is often cited as a powerful mechanism through which antisocial behaviour is transmitted (Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). The existence of this process, through which negative anti-social behaviour can emerge from parent child relationships, suggests that removal from parental influence during incarceration may actually be beneficial. However, a study by Ryan and Yang (2005) of juvenile delinquents in residential care found that those who received visits initiated by their family, or who went on home visits, had lower offending rates than those who did not.

Problem behaviour exhibited and experienced by adolescents within their family relationships can transmit into their peer relationships and eventually their intimate partner relationships (Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). There is also evidence to suggest that adolescents with the capacity to enter good quality romantic relationships are less at risk of general recidivism (Gimenez, Corrada, Biatier, & Cohen, 2007). Therefore, ensuring young people communicate with their parents and develop positive relationships have wider implications for the future.

In addition to the risk posed, understanding the process by which family relationships facilitate protection is important if such relationships are to be encouraged in future attempts to reduce delinquency. Recent Dutch research (Eichelsheim, et al., 2010) highlights the protective role of effective parental-child communication, whereby adolescents who perceived their parents to have parental expertise, to be trustworthy and accessible were more likely to disclose risk related information which may reduce the likelihood of behaving in a risky manner (Guilamo-Ramos, Jaccard, Dittus, & Bouris, 2006). In order to communicate effectively adolescents need to have contact with their parents throughout their prison sentence and prison visits may maintain this positive link.

### **Intimate partner relationships.**

The general consensus is that intimate relationships are protective for male offenders. There is some contrary evidence that close personal relationships may not be protective in terms of re-offending (Rhule-Louie & McMahon, 2007). Rhule-Louie and McMahon (2007), suggest individuals choose partners that support their anti-social and criminal behaviours. However, this research explores partner similarity and specifically substance use with retrospective data collected at one time point. It also concentrates on late adolescence and early adulthood and does not explore long term adult relationships.

Longitudinal research with 500 young men (Sampson, Laub, & Wimer, 2006) provided evidence to suggest that marriage was associated with a 35% reduction in the odds of an individual engaging in crime. Thus, suggesting a relationship between marriage and reduction in recidivism exists. If marriage is a protective factor for men then encouraging prisoners to maintain their long term relationships may be a useful tool in the reduction of re-offending. Sampson et al. (2006) described four possible mechanisms, through which marriage could be causal in reducing re-offending; marriage creates social obligations that increase the cost of crime, marriage causes significant changes in routines and patterns of association, the female partner exerts direct social control and finally marriage leads to a change in self identity - perhaps to a more 'responsible' person. For intimate relationships to continue to work through these four mechanisms, contact during a prison sentence is likely to be important.

Segrin and Flora (2001) suggest that relationship quality acts as a protector against loneliness. They took a sample of 96 married prisoners and asked them to complete measures of loneliness, marital satisfaction and commitment. Prisoners reported considerable variability in the experience of loneliness. From the evidence collected the authors concluded that possessing a satisfying and committed marriage reduced feelings of loneliness during incarceration. Carlson and Cervera (1991) specifically considered the impact of conjugal visits, family contact and family functioning. They found that the conjugal visits increased the participants' perception of closeness. This supports the view that maintaining contact between prisoners and their partners through visits can improve the wellbeing of prisoners during their sentence.

### **Relationships with children.**

Contact with children is viewed as positive for the parents and many parents work hard to maintain contact during periods of separation (Hairston, 1991). Children with parents in prison are at risk of a number of negative outcomes, including behaviour problems, substance abuse, future offending and imprisonment, truancy, and academic failure (Poehlmann, Dallaire, Loper, & Shear, 2010). Some of these outcomes may be related to the disruptions in parent-child attachment that occur when a child is separated from a parent (Poehlmann, 2005) and others may be the consequence of genetic influence, social modelling and parental supervision. Poehlman et al. (2010) reviewed papers that explored whether contact is beneficial during a prison sentence. They found benefits of child contact for incarcerated parents, but the benefits to children were less clear. Studies that specifically considered visits documented positive outcomes for the child when the visits occurred as part of an intervention, but negative outcomes when the visits were not part of an intervention. Poehlmann (2005) explored the quality of the relationship between incarcerated mothers and their children. The findings did not establish a relationship between visits and increased relationship quality, while telephone contact did appear to be associated with quality. This suggests that the effects of visits between parents and their children are complicated. Concerns for their children's experience may prevent prisoners from encouraging visits. This creates difficulties as the impact of a lack of contact for the prisoners themselves is likely to be negative, while bringing their children into the prison environment to visit may also feel negative to the prisoner and limit the positive effects of the visit.

### **Maintaining Visits**

Whatever the impact of maintaining relationships, there are difficulties associated with maintaining visits throughout a prison sentence. There are many factors that affect

whether family and intimate partners visit. Fuller (1993) identified a range of obstacles such as work schedules, distance, childcare and health problems, while Comfort (2003) described a very negative experience that visitors to one American prison experienced. This research suggested that the process of visits was almost a secondary form of imprisonment for the female partners of prisoners. Prison visits are difficult and there are a number of practical and emotional consequences for maintaining visits especially on the part of the visitors. The visitors need motivation to maintain contact and those setting prison policies need reasons to support family members to visit. Hairston (1988) suggests that without access to their family in prison offenders lose hope that they can do better in their lives. They become more socially impaired and their emotional resources to deal with problems on release are depleted. As a result they may re-offend at higher rates than previously. If this is the case then a review of research that investigates the impact of visits on future positive outcomes may help to provide information to shape future policy. The question therefore remains can the maintenance of relationships with significant others through prison visits support positive functioning, improve prison behaviour and ultimately reduce re-offending.

### **Objectives of the Review**

Establishing the existence of an up to date robust evidence base for the impact of prison visits may have benefits in supporting the management of effective prison visits programmes. The role of prison visits in the maintenance of relationships and the reduction of recidivism is a subject that has undergone some research to date. Hairston (1988) conducted a review that explored the existing literature in relation to family ties and recidivism, which included disciplinary infractions within the prison environment. In 1991, she further provided a review of family ties and the preservation of relationships, wellbeing and post release success (Hairston, 1991).

This study aims to systematically review the literature that has specifically investigated the effects of prison visits on offender outcomes. However, the nature of Hairston's questions in relation to family ties meant that all of the papers related to prison visits prior to 1991 were included in his reviews. During the course of this review no additional papers prior to 1991 were identified that had not been reviewed by Hairston (1988, 1991). Therefore this review focuses on research post 1991 so as not to duplicate findings.

The objectives of the current review were developed to ensure that the benefits of visits to the prison authorities and society generally are also explored. Therefore the review aims to explore the following questions:

1. To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing – measured by stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours,
2. To determine if prison visits improve prisoners' behaviour in terms of rule-breaking within the prison environment,
3. To determine if prison visits reduce recidivism as measured by official records.

In order to answer these questions the review will include studies whose participants are prisoners of either sex and will include adolescents who are incarcerated within a prison environment as a consequence of their offending and not those in residential care due to other factors. These prisoners will have experienced prison visits and some measure of number, length or quality of visits will be applied in order to make comparisons between individuals. The outcomes will be measures of wellbeing, prison rule-breaking behaviour and re-offending.



## **Method:**

### **Sources of Literature**

A literature search for studies was performed using Ovid MEDLINE(R) 2008 to 2012, Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1988 to 1995, Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1980 to 1987, Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1946 to 1979, Ovid OLDMEDLINE(R) 1946 to 1965, PsycINFO 1806 to 2012 Web of Science (1898-2012) and EBSCO (1978-2012) databases as they are representative of the literature published in this area. These databases were searched in December 2011, January 2012 and finally April 2012.

### **Search Strategy**

The abstracts of relevant online databases were searched using a number of search terms related to the key concepts. The search terms were developed through a number of exploratory searches using different terms and permutations for each research question, as shown below:

#### **Research question 1.**

To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing - measured by stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours.

#### *Search terms:*

prison\*AND visit\* AND self harm\*

prison\*AND visit\* AND suicid\*

prison\*AND visit\* AND wellbeing

prison\*AND visit\* AND stress\*

prison\*AND visit\* AND depression\*

All of the searches were re-run substituting jail\* and then incarceration for prison\* and social support for visit\* until all permutations of these terms were used.

The searches resulted in 94 hits for PsycINFO/Medline, once duplicates were removed this resulted in 65 hits. Web of Science had 29 hits once PsycINFO/Medline duplicates were removed this resulted in 23 additional papers, EBSCO searches resulted in 13 hits once previous search duplicates were removed this resulted in 8 additional papers (Appendix 1). This search resulted in 96 papers in total.

### **Research question 2.**

To determine if prison visits improve prisoners' behaviour in terms of rule-breaking within the prison environment.

*Search terms:*

prison\*AND visit\* AND rule-breaking\*

prison\*AND visit\* AND violence\*

prison\*AND visit\* AND rule violation

All of the searches were re-run substituting jail\* and then incarceration for prison\* and social support for visit\* until all permutations of these terms were used.

The searches resulted in 24 hits for PsycINFO/Medline, once duplicates were removed this resulted in 22 hits. Web of Science had 9 hits, EBSCO searches resulted in 2 hits (Appendix 1). This search resulted in 33 papers in total.

### **Research question 3.**

To determine if prison visits reduce recidivism as measured by official records

*Search terms:*

prison\*AND visit\* AND recidivism

prison\*AND visit\* AND re-offend\*

prison\*AND visit\* AND offend\*

All of the searches were re-run substituting jail\* and then incarceration for prison\* and social support for visit\* until all permutations of these terms were used.

The searches resulted in 130 hits for PsycINFO/Medline, once duplicates were removed this resulted in 85 hits. Web of Science had 32 hits, once PsycINFO/Medline duplicates were removed this resulted in 20 additional papers. EBSCO searches resulted in 8 hits once previous search duplicates were removed this resulted in 0 additional papers (Appendix 1). This search resulted in 105 papers in total.

## **Study Selection**

### **General inclusion criteria.**

Studies were selected where the following inclusion criteria were met:

- Participants of each study were prisoners of either gender including adolescents.
- The prisoner had experienced prison visits with family members. Conjugal visits with partners were also included.
- The studies provide some quantifiable measure of visits that were compared with a range of outcome measures. The outcomes were measures of wellbeing, prison behaviour or re-offending/recidivism.
- Studies conducted on prisoners can be less ethically stringent than research using other populations, in order to limit the likelihood of including studies with ethical problems a criterion was included that only those reported in peer reviewed journals in full would be reviewed.

The above inclusion/exclusion criteria differed slightly for each research question as follows:

**Research question 1: Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria.**

To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing - measured by stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours.

***Inclusion criteria:***

1. Studies published in full in peer-reviewed journals.
2. Studies that included specific reference to prison visits into the prison environment from family members or intimate partners.
3. Experimental, quasi-experimental, controlled observational and observational studies including longitudinal studies and case-control studies that investigated a relationship between prison visits and the outcomes of interest.
4. Studies that measure stress, depression, suicidal or self harm thoughts and behaviour in a quantifiable and objective manner that can be replicated.
5. Studies that measure prison visits in a quantifiable and objective manner.
6. Studies that compare the relationship between wellbeing and prison visits specifically and control for other factors.

***Exclusion Criteria:***

1. Studies not published in full in peer-reviewed journals.
2. Studies that did not include specific reference to prison visits into the prison environment from family members or intimate partners.
3. Reviews, discussion articles, single case-studies, and studies that do not examine a relationship between prison visits and the outcomes of interest.

4. Studies that do not measure stress, depression, suicidal or self harm thoughts and behaviour in a quantifiable and objective manner that can be replicated.
5. Studies that do not measure prison visits in a quantifiable and objective manner.
6. Studies that do not compare the relationship between wellbeing and prison visits specifically and control for other factors.

These criteria were applied through three stages to the 96 papers. The stages were Stage 1; the initial sift, Stage 2; consideration of the abstracts and Stage 3; full reading of the papers. The outcome is detailed in Figure 1.

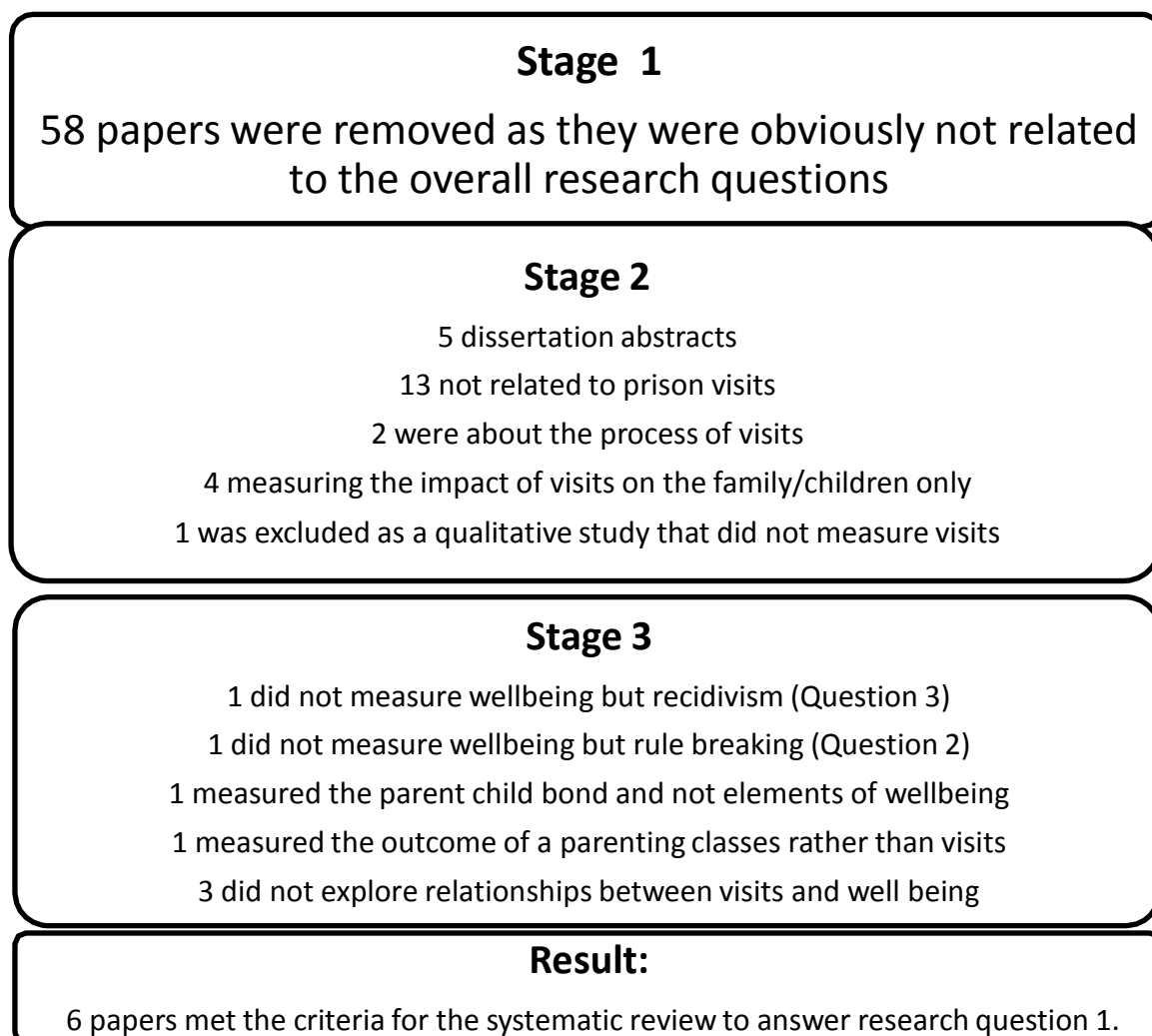


Figure 1: Exclusion results for Question 1.

## **Research question 2: Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria.**

To determine if prison visits improve prisoners' behaviour in terms of rule-breaking within the prison environment.

### ***Inclusion criteria:***

1. Studies published in full in peer-reviewed journals.
2. Studies that included specific reference to prison visits into the prison environment from family members or intimate partners.
3. Experimental, quasi-experimental, controlled observational and observational studies including longitudinal studies and case-control studies that investigated a relationship between prison visits and the outcomes of interest.
4. Studies that measure rule-breaking behaviour in prison in a quantifiable and objective manner that can be replicated.
5. Studies that measure prison visits in a quantifiable and objective manner.
6. Studies that compare the relationship between rule-breaking and prison visits specifically and control for other factors.

### ***Exclusion Criteria:***

1. Studies not published in full in peer-reviewed journals.
2. Studies that did not include specific reference to prison visits into the prison environment from family members or intimate partners.
3. Reviews, discussion articles, single case-studies, and studies that do not examine a relationship between prison visits and the outcomes of interest.
4. Studies that do not measure rule-breaking behaviour in prison in a quantifiable and objective manner that can be replicated.

5. Studies that do not measure prison visits in a quantifiable and objective manner.
6. Studies that do not compare the relationship between rule-breaking and prison visits specifically and control for other factors.

These criteria were applied through three stages to the 33 papers identified during this search. The outcome is detailed in Figure 2.

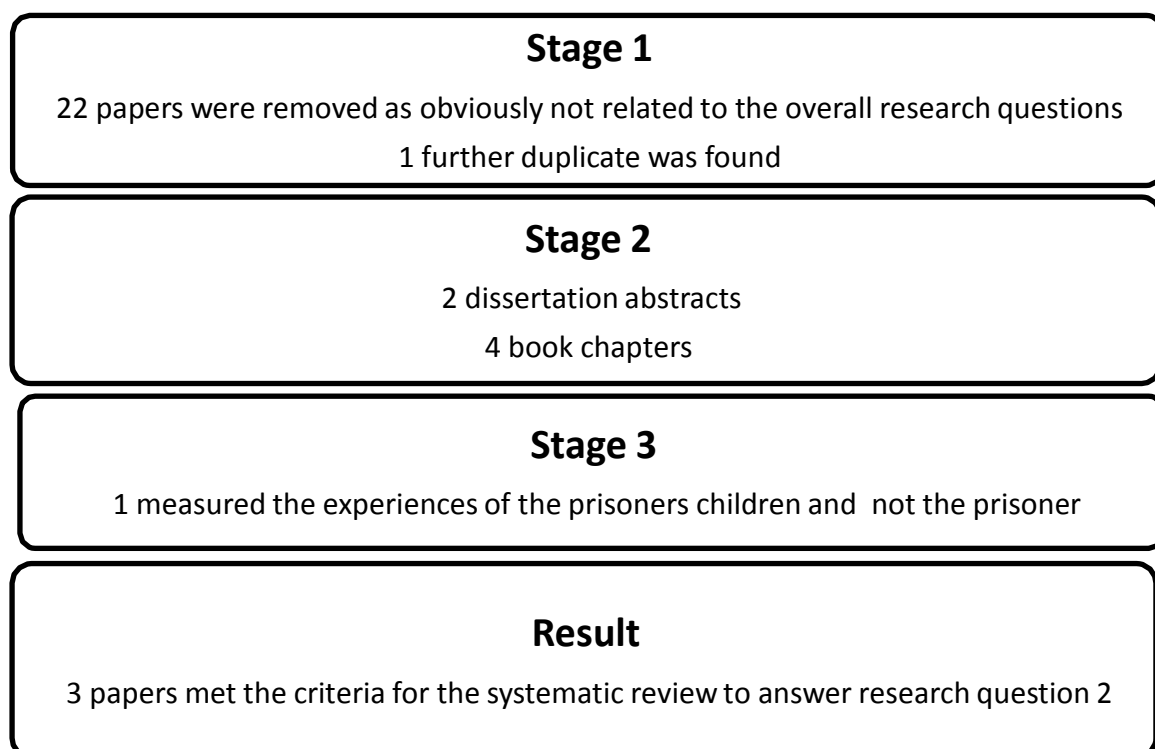


Figure 2: Exclusion results for Question 2.

### **Research question 3: Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria.**

To determine if prison visits reduce recidivism as measured by official records

#### ***Inclusion criteria:***

1. Studies published in full in peer-reviewed journals.
2. Studies that included specific reference to prison visits into the prison environment from family members or intimate partners.

3. Experimental, quasi-experimental, controlled observational and observational studies including longitudinal studies and case-control studies that investigated a relationship between prison visits and the outcomes of interest.
4. Studies that measure recidivism/re-offending in a quantifiable and objective manner that can be replicated.
5. Studies that measure prison visits in a quantifiable and objective manner.
6. Studies that compare the relationship between recidivism and prison visits specifically and control for other factors.

***Exclusion Criteria:***

1. Studies not published in full in peer-reviewed journals.
2. Studies that did not include specific reference to prison visits into the prison environment from family members or intimate partners.
3. Reviews, discussion articles, single case-studies, and studies that do not examine a relationship between prison visits and the outcomes of interest.
4. Studies that do not measure recidivism/re-offending in a quantifiable and objective manner that can be replicated.
5. Studies that do not measure prison visits in a quantifiable and objective manner.
6. Studies that do not compare the relationship between recidivism and prison visits specifically and control for other factors.

These criteria were applied through three stages to the 105 papers identified during this search. The outcome is detailed in Figure 3.



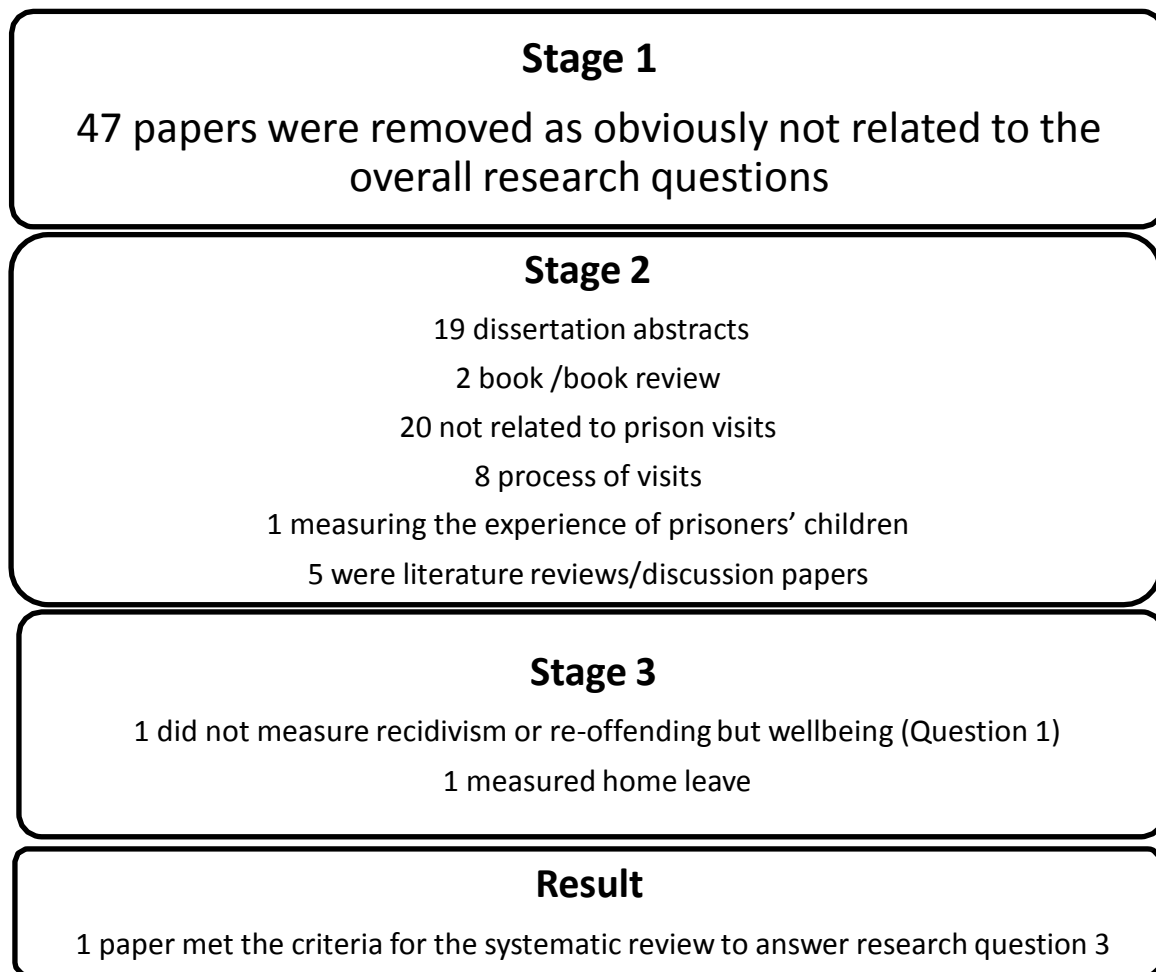
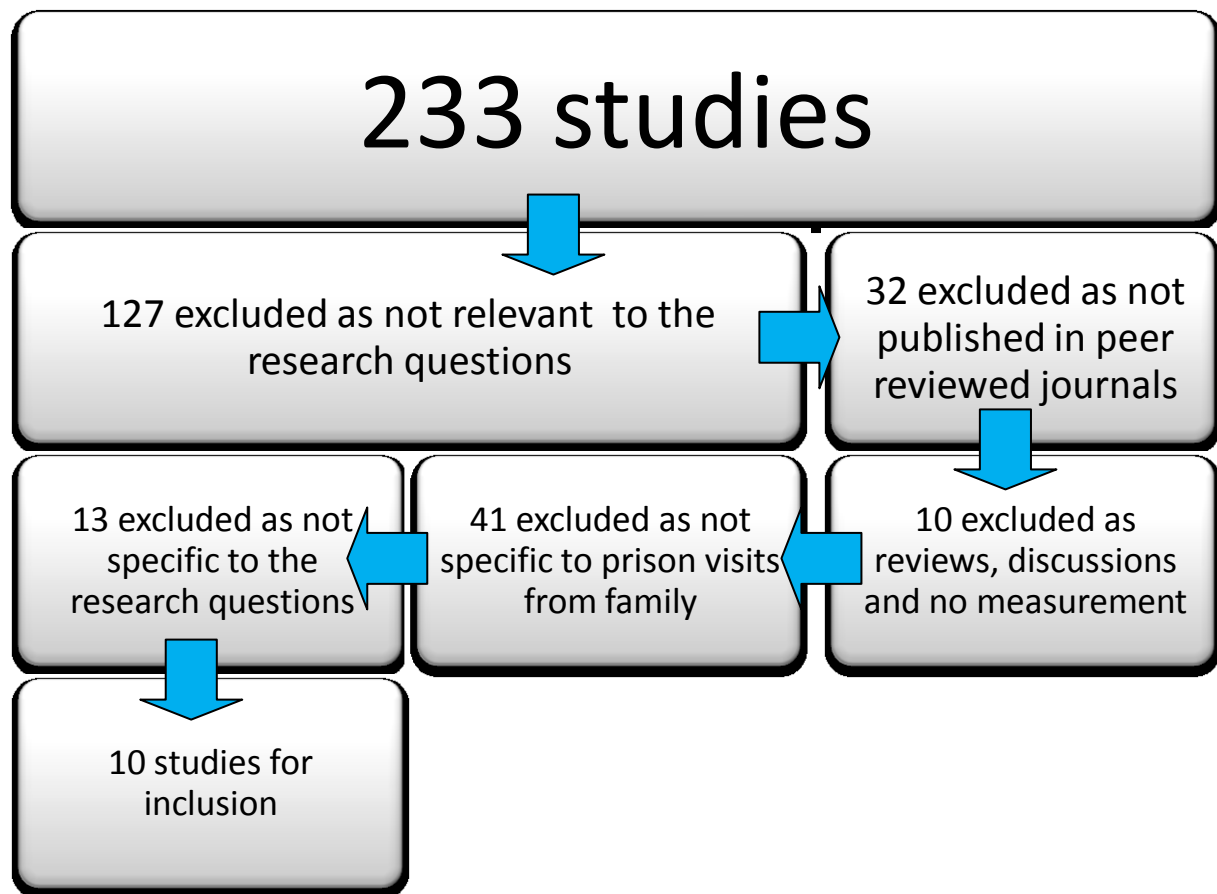


Figure 3: Exclusion results for Question 3.

### **Final Selection of Studies Included in the Review**

The final selection for the whole review included ten papers which are asterisked in the reference list and discussed in later sections of this report. The reference sections of the ten papers were searched by hand resulting in two further possible papers. However, when these papers were accessed one was a short review and the other did not include specific reference to visits. Figure 4 provides an overview of the exclusion process.



**Figure 4.** Overall exclusion process.

### **Data Extraction**

Data was extracted from the articles using a standardised form developed specifically for the purpose of this review (Appendix 2). This included information on the studies characteristics, method of measuring effect, participant characteristics and results for male prisoners, results for female prisoners and results for adolescent prisoners. Each study was scrutinised by the reviewer and the information transferred to the extraction form. The extraction for each study is included in Appendix 2.

### **Quality Assessment**

The ten remaining studies were assessed by the author and separately by a second researcher, full descriptions of this process for each study is included in Appendix 2. The

quality assessment instrument was adapted from the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, Public Health Resource Unit, 2006) tools for reviewing Randomised Control Trials (RCTs), Cohort Studies and Case Studies. Given the nature of the subject being explored it was viewed as unrealistic to consider RCTs as the most rigorous and therefore desired type of research. Prison visits are a fundamental right and assigning prisoners to groups based on whether they receive visits or not, or interfering with the frequency of visits for the purpose of research would be highly unethical. The quality of the study was therefore weighted towards how the researchers dealt with the limitations of the type of study, the actions they took to manage this and how they reported the results. In terms of broader quality assessment these studies may not be rated so highly if more stringent experimental criteria were applied.

Quality was rated on the extent to which each of the criteria in the quality assessment tool was fulfilled (possible ratings; 2= Yes fully met the criteria, 1= partially met the criteria, 0=No did not meet the criteria). After rating each of the items the overall score was calculated, the maximum possible score was 18 cut off scores were decided and the following codes were assigned to each study; A, high quality (16-18)- all or most of the criteria were met and if not the areas that have not been met would not alter the conclusion significantly. B, medium quality (12-15) - some of the criteria were met. Those criteria that have not been met are thought unlikely to alter the conclusions; C, low quality (less than 12) - few or none of the criteria were met. The conclusions of the study are likely to alter significantly.

## **Results**

### **Overview of Studies Reviewed**

Table 1 provides an overview of each study with respect to: research question(s) addressed, measures used, participant characteristics, relevant findings and quality rating. A

summary table of Quality scores and full details of how the quality for each study was scored are depicted in Appendix 2.

This review set out to consider three specific questions related to the effects of prison visits. Of the ten studies included; Six studies addressed Question 1 related to prisons and well being, three studies addressed Question 2 related to visits and prison behaviour and one study addressed Question 3 related to visits and recidivism. All studies were conducted in North America apart from one conducted in Brazil and recruited males and/or females who had been convicted. With the exception of one study which recruited adolescent offenders (aged 14-17), the studies recruited adult offenders (aged 18 and above). Studies had a breadth of sample characteristics, recruiting from low, medium and high secure custodial settings.

Each of the studies measured number of visits; eight studies used prisoner self report and two studies used official prison records, three studies accounted for all visits from family and other members of the prisoners' support network; one study considered conjugal visits, five studies considered visits from prisoners' children; and one study (the one considering adolescents) considered visits from parents. The studies varied in the outcome measures; one study measured re-conviction two years post release; three measured rule-breaking behaviour in prison; three measured depression; two measured stress and one measured wellbeing.

Table 1

*Summary of studies included in the review*

Study and research question	Measures	Sample	Outcome	Quality rating
<b>Research Question 1</b>				
<b>Monahan, Goldweber &amp; Cauffman (2011)</b>	<u>Visits:</u> Number of visits from official records. The number from baseline to month 2 calculated at number per week.	n=276 male adolescent prisoners self selecting from all possible participants with visit data available from one facility in North America	No differences between groups on depressive symptoms in the first week.	A
To consider how visitation from parents impacts on adolescents' mental health during the first 2 months of incarceration.	<u>Depression</u> assessed through Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977) during a 2 hour baseline interview and weekly 1.5 hour follow up interviews for first 3 weeks then 1.5 hour monthly	Age: 14-17	Those who were receiving visits reported a more rapid decline in depressive symptoms than those who did not.  An increased number of visits accounted for a more rapid reduction in depressive symptoms.  Parental visits accounted for 8% of the variance in depressive symptoms  The effects of visits and relationship quality accounted for 11% of variance suggesting	Score 16

interview

independent effects.

<b>Poehlman 2005</b>	<u>Visits:</u> Type and frequency of	n=98 females recruited	Fewer face to face visits with children related	B
To consider whether early	contact was taken from self report	from one prison in North	to an increase in depression which	Score 15
and current relationship	of face to face visits in the last two	America (94 sets of results	additionally accounted for 5% of the variance.	
disconnection is associated	months.	used after removing		
with maternal depression	<u>Depression:</u> Centre for	outliers). Exclusion		
and mother child	Epidemiological Studies	criteria were applied and		
relationship quality.	Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977)	85% of the eligible sample		
	during a two hour baseline	was included.		
	interview and then weekly one and			
	a half hour follow up interviews	Age 19-43.5 (Mean 28.33,		
	for first three weeks and then	SD 5.64)		
	monthly.			

<b>Pinese, Furegato &amp; Santos (2010)</b>	<u>Visits:</u> Self report of receiving or not receiving, no measure of frequency or of who visited.	n= 100 randomly selected females from one prison in Brazil.	A strong association between not receiving visits and severe depression was shown. The relative risk ratio was 9.15 and $p<0.02$ .	B Score 14
To understand the variables that are associated with depression in a sample of female prisoners. Variables studied included; age, ethnicity, living together, education, co-morbidity, religion, eating habits, visitors, sleep and tobacco use.	<u>Depression:</u> The Beck Depression Inventory which evaluates depressive symptoms with 21 items using 4 levels of intensity ( $\alpha$ .81). The dependent variable depression was classified into four levels with cut offs; absence of depression (0-9), light depression/dysthymia (10-18), mild depression (19-29), severe depression (30 or more).	Age: 20-63 with most participants falling into the range 20-29 (52%).		

<b>Houck &amp; Loper 2002</b>	<u>Visits:</u> Self report in the test battery; 'During the last year, I have seen my child during visitation.' - about 1-4 times per month, about every other month, about 4 times during the year, about once this year, never	n= 362 female participants from one prison in North America Age: 19-59 (Mean = 32.6 years, SD = 7.4)	Analysis of individual beta weights for each regression analysis indicated that parenting stress concerning visitation was associated with elevated anxiety. Visitation stress (measured through the 7 item scale) was also associated with the global score on the BSI suggesting overall emotional adjustment difficulties.	B Score: 13
To examine stress related to parenting among a sample of female prisoners and to relate the stress to adjustment. Visitation stress was measured within this question.	<u>Stress and depression:</u> Parenting stress measured by an adaptation of the Parenting Stress Index (PSI: Abidin, 1995). Visitation stress was added to the PSI as a 7 item scale by the study authors and validated prior to use ( $\alpha$ .76).  Adjustment was measured using the depression, anxiety,			



somatisation and global scales of  
the Brief Symptom Inventory  
(Derogotis, 1993).

<b>Wooldredge (1999)</b>	<u>Visits:</u> self report of the number in	n=581 adult male	A significant relationship was identified	C
To explore the relationship	the last month. The information	prisoners from three	between prisoner well being and increased	Score 11
between engagement in	was provided by self report	prisons in North America.	engagement in programmes, increased	
prison programmes	questionnaires administered over a	The response rate was	numbers of visits and decreased incidents of	
(purposeful activity), visits	thirty minute period.	81% of the targeted	victimisation.	
and victimisation and	<u>Wellbeing:</u> The sum of responses	population.		
prisoner well being.	to seven questions related to	Mean age: 28.65		
	perceptions of insecurity, stress,	(range 16-61)		
	anger, self esteem and loneliness,			
	measured on a four point scale.			
<b>Tuerk &amp; Loper (2006)</b>	<u>Visits:</u> Self report of face to face	n= 357 female prisoners	The results of the regression analysis	C

To explore the association between the amount type and frequency of contact between incarcerated children and their mothers and parental stress.	visits in the last year. <u>Parental stress:</u> the Parenting Stress Index for Incarcerated Women (PSI-IW, Houck & Loper, 2002).	recruited as part of a larger study in 1 prison in North America.	demonstrated a relationship between increased prior contacts, increased letter writing and reduced stress. However, increased visits were not significantly associated with a reduction in parental stress	Score 10
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## Research Question 2

<b>Jiang &amp; Winfree (2006)</b>	<u>Visits:</u> Self report of visits by children Yes/No	n=14000 (agreed to take part from n=1269 male, n=3116 female)	Visits from children resulted in no significant impact upon prison rule-breaking behaviour.	A
To provide quantitative data to explore the differences between social support for male and female prisoners and the impact this had upon rule-breaking within the prison	<u>Rule-breaking:</u> The data on prison rule-breaking was collected on archived data for the prisoners in 13 categories of rule-breaking. The numbers of rule infractions	Chosen from a stratified sample from 275 prisons in North America.		Score 17

environment. Prison visits were divided by the time spent in Mean age male 33.37,  
from children were prison to establish monthly rate. female 34.21  
included.

<b>Jiang, Fisher-Giorlando &amp; Mo (2005)</b>	<u>Visits:</u> Self report of visits by children Yes/No	n=9000	Prisoners who received visits from children	B
To provide quantitative data to explore the impact of social support for prisoners upon rule-breaking within the prison environment. Prison visits from children were viewed as one element of a number for social support and its effects on prison	<u>Rule-breaking:</u> The data on prison rule-breaking was collected on archived data for the prisoners in 13 categories of rule-breaking. The numbers of rule infractions were divided by the time spent in prison to establish monthly rate. Rule-breaking is split into 3 categories:	Chosen from a stratified sample from 275 prisons	Prisoners who received visits from children were more likely to engage in drug and property rule-breaking behaviour.	Score 15
		Participants without children and those sentenced to Life were excluded		
		Mean age 35.05 (SD 9.44)		

behaviour were assessed

1. Overall
2. Violent
3. Drug/property

<b>Hensley, Koscheski &amp; Tewksbury (2002)</b>	<u>Visits:</u> Part of the conjugal visits programme or not (number of visits or the length of time receiving visits was not reported or considered in the analysis).	n=256 prisoners from low and medium security in 2 North American prisons in Mississippi.	Participation in conjugal visits does not have a significant impact on perpetration of threats of violence or actual violence towards other prisoners.	C
To explore the relationship between threatened and actual violence within the prison environment and conjugal visits.	<u>Violent threats and behaviour:</u> Self report based on 8 questions. 4 asking specific questions about the threats of violence engaged in and 4 about actual violence engaged in. Sexual assault is included in the actual violence questions.	n=126 Male n=130 female. 62.6% of the male sample participated in conjugal visits 18% of the female sample participated in conjugal visits		Score 12

Research Question 3				
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<b>Bales &amp; Mears (2008)</b>	<u>Visits:</u> Official data	n=7000 prisoners of both	Prisoners who were visited had 30.7% lower	A
To provide support for the assumption that social ties reduce recidivism through testing the impact of prison visits on two year recidivism rates.	1. One or more in 12 months prior to release. 2. Frequency in 12 months prior to release. 3. 7 categories of visitor type. 4. Visits in month prior to release received higher weighting.  <u>Recidivism:</u> Reconviction for offence committed within a follow up period of two years post release.	genders (pre-dominantly male) released from prisons in Florida, North America, between November 2001 and March 2002  Mean age: 34.5	odds for recidivism than those who were not visited.  For each additional visit the odds were lowered by 3.8%.  For each additional month visited the odds lower by 4.8%.  Those who received visits but did re-offend survived longer in the community compared to those who did not receive visits.  Higher frequency of spousal visits was associated with lower recidivism.  Higher frequency of child visits was associated with higher recidivism.  Visits closer to release lowered the likelihood	Score 17

of recidivism further.

These effects were seen for men but not women and were not significant for white men.

*Quality key:*

*A= high quality (16-18)- all or most of the criteria were met and if not the areas that have not been met would not alter the conclusion significantly.*

*B= medium quality (12-15) - some of the criteria were met. Those criteria that have not been met are thought unlikely to alter the conclusions.*

*C= low quality (less than 12) - few or none of the criteria were met. The conclusions of the study are likely to alter significantly.*

**Research Question 1: To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing measured by stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours.**

*Monahan, Goldweber and Cauffman (2011)*

This study considered how visitation from parents impacted on adolescents' mental health during the first 2 months of incarceration. Prison visits from parents were taken from official records as the number from baseline to month 2, calculated at number per week. Level of depression was assessed through the Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977) during a 2 hour baseline interview and then weekly 1.5 hour follow up interviews for the first 3 weeks and then monthly. Differences in the groups were considered for age, parental education and distance for parents to travel and no significant differences were found.

The study used growth curve modelling to test the differences in level of depression and change in level over time. During the first week there were no differences between groups on level of depressive symptoms. Over the 2 months those who were receiving visits reported a more rapid decline in depressive symptoms than those who did not. An increased number of visits accounted for a more rapid reduction in depressive symptoms. Parental visits accounted for 8% of the variance in depressive symptoms. The effects of visits and relationship quality accounted for 11% of variance suggesting the effects of visits as independent from the effects of relationship quality.

This study scored 16 on the quality assurance measure. The researcher defined a clear research question and measurable hypotheses. The participant group was appropriate and comparison was achieved effectively within the sample. The data was collected from the same source and within the same time frame and was collected

regularly. Some controlling variables were considered. However, other factors that may impact upon depression were not accounted for. The results were presented in detail and included confidence intervals. Each hypothesis was reported on and explained in the results and all outcomes were considered and explored. The authors reported clearly on the limitations of the study.

***Poehlmann (2005)***

This study attempted to determine whether early and current relationship disconnection is associated with maternal depression. Type and frequency of contact was taken from self report of face to face visits in the last two months. Level of depression was assessed through the Centre for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977). The sample included 98 women recruited from one prison and 94 sets of results were used. Differences in the groups were considered for age, recency of sentence and distance to travel for visits and no significant differences were found.

The results of the multiple regression analysis demonstrated a relationship between early relationship disconnection and depression which accounted for 6% of the variance. Fewer face to face visits with children related to an increase in depression which additionally accounted for 5% of the variance.

This study scored 15. The researchers had defined a research question that was complicated. The hypotheses could have been simplified however they were measurable. The participant group was appropriate and comparison was achieved effectively within the sample. The data was collected from the same source and within the same time frame for each participant. The data was collected regularly and was current for all measures apart from past trauma. Some controlling variables were



considered. However, other factors that may impact upon depression were not accounted for. More positively the results were robust and presented in detail. All the results were explored and each hypothesis was reported on and explained in the results and all outcomes were considered and explored.

***Pinese, Furegato and Santos (2010)***

This study attempted to determine the variables associated with depression in a sample of female prisoners. Depression was measured and related to other variables through multivariate and bivariate analysis. The independent variables were age, ethnicity, living with a partner, education level, co-morbidities, religion, eating habits, visitors, sleep and tobacco use. The dependent variable depression was classified into four levels with cut offs; absence of depression (0-9), light depression/dysthymia (10-18), mild depression (19-29), severe depression (30 or more). The sample included 100 women recruited from one prison in Brazil. The results of the analysis demonstrated a relationship between the absence of visits and severe depression. The relative risk ratio was 9.15,  $p < 0.02$ .

This study scored 14. The aim of the study was clear but the hypotheses were complicated. Nevertheless the participant group was appropriate and randomly selected which was a strength of this study. Comparison was achieved effectively within the sample, however, visits were not measured in terms of frequency or who was visiting. The data was collected from the same source and within the same time frame for each participant. Some controlling variables were considered. More positively the results were robust and presented in detail. All the results were explored and each hypothesis was reported on and explained in the results and all outcomes were considered and explored. The authors recognised and reported on the limitations of the study.

***Houck and Loper (2002)***

This study attempted to examine stress related to parenting among a sample of female prisoners and to determine whether differences in the amount of parenting stress predicted prison adjustment. Frequency of visits was taken from self report over the last year. Parenting stress was measured by an adaptation of the Parenting Stress Index (PSI: Abidin, 1995). Visitation stress was added to the PSI as a 7 item scale by the study authors and validated prior to use ( $\alpha$  .76). It measured discomfort felt by mothers regarding visit procedures and constraints. Adjustment was measured using the depression, anxiety, somatisation and global scales of the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogotis, 1993). The sample included 362 women recruited from one prison.

Initial analysis suggested that being part of a minority impacted on the results and this was added as a covariate to the subsequent analysis. Analysis of individual beta weights for each regression analysis indicated that parenting stress concerning visitation was associated with elevated anxiety. Visitation stress (measured through the 7 item scale) was also associated with the global score on the BSI suggesting overall emotional adjustment difficulties.

This study scored 13. The researchers had defined a clear research question and measurable hypotheses. They attempted to quantify relationships between stress and adjustment for the terms of this reviews research question visits were not well defined. Nevertheless the participant group was appropriate and comparison was achieved effectively within the sample and norms were considered for comparison with the general and psychiatric populations. The data was collected from the same source and within the same time frame for each participant; although some participants completed

the questionnaires alone. The participants were given general information that would not have made the expected outcomes obvious to them; however, introducing the incentive of 'soda and cookies' may have introduced bias' related to motivation to fully engage.

The results of multiple regression analysis were clearly presented in detail and the process of attaining the results was explained in a clear step by step manner. The strength of this study was that the researchers created a measure related to visitation stress that they developed from talking to the prison population and prior to its use in this study. Participants involved in development of the measure were not involved in this study. The authors were thorough in exploring the limitations of the study and considering a number of variables that may have impacted on the results. The authors considered a number of options for the meaning of their findings and suggested future research. They considered services that may help participants in terms of their mental health issues.

### ***Wooldredge (1999)***

This study attempted to explore the relationship between engagement in prison programmes (purposeful activity), visits and victimisation and prisoner wellbeing. The data was collected from 581 adult male prisoners who volunteered to take part from 3 prisons in Ohio. The response rate was 81% of the targeted population. The information was provided by self report questionnaires administered over a 30 minute period. Wellbeing was taken from the sum of responses to 7 questions related to perceptions of insecurity, stress, anger, self esteem and loneliness, measured on a four point scale. Visits were the number in the last month.

The results of OLS regression supported the hypothesis although the measure of wellbeing used did not necessarily represent healthy attitudes. A significant relationship was identified between prisoner wellbeing and increased numbers of visits ( $p < .01$ ).

This study scored 11. The researchers had defined a clear research question and developed measurable hypotheses. However the methods they used for measurement of wellbeing were not likely to be complex enough to capture the concept effectively. They attempted to quantify relationships between visits and wellbeing in the prison environment. However, the measurement strategies were weak; there was no attempt to measure the number of visits. The study was reliant upon self report using a questionnaire that could not be completed by prisoners with low reading skills. The self selected sample was not clearly representative of the population and statistical measurements of comparison with the general population were not reported. The author also reported a part of the sample being selected by the researcher and did not explain why this was the case. More positively the data was collected in the same way for each participant and the author of the study recognised some of the limitations of the study and presented the findings appropriately. However, the findings were then linked to the psychological phenomena personal control that had not been measured in the research. The study was rated as a C because due to the limitations the results could not be viewed with confidence.

***Tuerk and Loper (2006)***

This study attempted to explore the association between the amount of prior contact and the type and frequency of current contact between incarcerated children and

their mothers and parental stress. Type and frequency of contact was taken from self report of face to face visits in the last year. Level of stress was assessed through the Parenting Stress Index for Incarcerated Women (PSI-IW, Houck & Loper, 2002). The sample included 357 women recruited as part of a larger study in one prison. Factors such as age, age of the child and criminal history were included in the analysis. The variable of interest for this review increased visits, was not significantly associated with parental stress.

This study scored 11. The researchers had defined a research question that was not fully answered within the results. The hypotheses could have been simplified however they were measurable hypotheses. They attempted to quantify relationships between parental stress and prison contact but this was inconsistent. Nevertheless the participant group was appropriate. The data was collected from the same source and within the same time frame for each participant and the participants were part of a larger study and blind to the purpose of the research. Some controlling variables were considered. However, other factors that may impact upon stress were not accounted for.

**Research question 2: To determine if prison visits improve prisoners' behaviour in terms of rule-breaking within the prison environment.**

***Jiang and Winfree (2006)***

This study attempted to provide quantitative data to explore the differences between social support for male and female prisoners and the impact this had upon rule-breaking within the prison environment. Prison visits from children was viewed as one element of a number that constituted social support and the effects of visits on prison behaviour were assessed. The data on prison rule-breaking was collected from archived

data for the prisoners who agreed to take part in a nationwide study in the United States. The data on social support both internal and external was collected from interview. 12,269 male and 3116 female prisoners were chosen from a stratified sample. The sample was taken from 275 separate prisons. 1100 prisoners refused to participate, resulting in over 14,000 participants. The researchers hypothesised that social support would impact upon rule-breaking behaviour and that the effect of social support would vary by gender. Visits by children were one measure of social support. The study controlled for age, race, crime history, length of sentence and drug use as these factors have been shown to impact upon prison rule-breaking behaviour.

Many of the results were positive. However, in terms of visits from children, the variable of interest in this review, there was no significant impact upon prison behaviour.

With regard to the Quality Appraisal Tool this study scored 17 and was rated as A 'all or most of the criteria have been met and if not the areas that have not been met would not alter the conclusion significantly'. The researchers had defined a clear research question and developed measurable hypotheses. They attempted to quantify relationships between elements of social support and rule-breaking behaviour. The participant group was appropriate and the development of the sample well constructed, comparison was achieved effectively within the sample. The data was collected from the same source for each participant and all available participants within a time frame were asked to participate resulting in a very large cohort. Controlling variables were considered and included in the analysis and results for different groups reported separately. The results generated from regression models were presented as percentage of change on rule-breaking behaviour and they were robust and meaningful. Each

hypothesis was reported on and explained in the results and all outcomes were considered and explored.

***Jiang, Fisher-Giorlando and Mo (2005)***

This study attempted to provide quantitative data to explore the impact of social support on rule-breaking within the prison environment. Prison visits from children was explored as one element of a number for social support and its effects on prison behaviour were assessed. Sampling, data collection and control variables were the same as the study above. Participants without children and those sentenced to Life were excluded resulting in over 9000 participants. The researchers hypothesised that social support would impact upon rule-breaking behaviour. Rule-breaking behaviour was split into 3 categories; overall rule violations per month, violent rule violations per month and drug property rule violations per month. Visits by children were one measure of social support.

Many of the results of the regression analysis were positive. The significant results (ranging between  $p < .05$  and  $p < .001$ ) for external social support were as follows; married prisoners were 14% less likely to engage in overall rule-breaking behaviour. Those who received visits from children were more likely to engage in drug and property rule-breaking behaviour.

This study scored 15. The researchers had defined a clear research question and developed measurable hypotheses. They attempted to quantify relationships between visits and rule-breaking behaviour. The participant group was appropriate and the development of the sample well constructed, comparison was achieved effectively within the sample. The data was collected from the same source for each participant.

However, some of the exclusion criteria for participants were not well explained. Controlling variables were considered and included in the analysis. The results were presented as significant differences between rule-breaking behaviours when different variables were applied. However, no differentiation was made between results for each gender group which limited the meaning of the findings.

***Hensley, Koscheski and Tewksbury (2002)***

This study attempted to explore the relationship between threatened and actual violence and conjugal visits. The data was collected from 256 male and female prisoners who volunteered to take part from 2 prisons in Mississippi, all the prisoners in randomly selected units were asked to take part. The response rate for men was 30% and for women was 33%. The study considered 2 research questions; Do those who in engage in conjugal visits have lower levels of threats of violence? Do those who engage in conjugal visits have lower levels of actual violence?

The results of multiple regression analysis suggest that those prisoners who engaged in the conjugal visits programme did not differ significantly from those who did not on their self reported threats of violence and actual violence.

This study scored 12. The researchers had defined a clear research question and developed measurable hypotheses. They attempted to quantify relationships between conjugal visits and violence in the prison environment. However, the measurement strategies were weak; there was no attempt to measure the number of conjugal visits or the length of time participants had been engaged in the programme. The study was reliant upon self report for violence and the questions asked did not capture low level violent acts. Sexual assault was also included but this was only one question and did not



differentiate between behaviours. The self selected sample was small compared to the population and differed from the general population. The differences between those who engaged in visits and those who did not could have accounted for the results. More positively the authors of the study recognised the limitations of the study, presented the findings appropriately and labelled the study as exploratory. The study was rated as a C because due to the limitations the results could not be viewed with confidence.

**Research question 3: To determine if prison visits reduce recidivism as measured by official records**

***Bales and Mears (2008)***

This study attempted to provide support for the assumption that social ties reduce recidivism through testing the impact of prison visits on 2 year recidivism rates. The data was collected on archived data for all 7000 prisoners released from prisons in Florida during a 4 month period. The study explored eight hypotheses that considered a combination of the following ideas: Prisoners visited in the previous twelve months were less likely to be reconvicted, that increased frequency of visits lowered or delayed recidivism, that visits from family and most specifically a spouse lowered or delayed recidivism, that visits closer to release were more beneficial and that effects would differ dependent on the characteristics of each prisoner. These characteristics were included as controlling variables in the analyses.

A logistic regression analysis was conducted and the results were reported as odds ratios. The results suggest that those prisoners who were visited had 30.7% lower odds for recidivism than those who were not visited. For each additional visit that took place the odds were lowered by 3.8% on average, although the effects of the first visits

were higher. For each additional month that visits were received the odds lowered by 4.8%. Survival curves were constructed and those who received visits but did re-offend survived longer in the community prior to re-offending compared to those who did not receive visits. When exploring the differences between who visited and recidivism, the higher frequency of spousal visits was associated with lower recidivism. The higher frequency of child visits was associated with higher recidivism which had not been anticipated by the researchers. However, as anticipated visits closer to release lowered the likelihood of recidivism further. These effects were seen for men but not women and were not significant for white men which were also factors that were not anticipated.

This study scored 17. The researchers had defined a clear research question and developed measurable hypotheses. They attempted to quantify relationships between visits and recidivism. Comparison was achieved within the sample which effectively provided its own control. The data was collected from the same source for each participant and all available participants within a time frame were used. The data collection period and follow up period was the same. A range of controlling variables age, sex, prior criminal history and length of sentence were included in the analysis. The results were presented as odds ratios and survival curves. They were robust and meaningful at least  $p < .05$  and often  $p < .01$  or  $p < .001$ . Each hypothesis was reported on and explained in the results and all outcomes were considered and explored.

## **Discussion**

This systematic review set out to determine the effects of prison visits on several offender outcome variables, namely wellbeing, prison rule-breaking behaviour and recidivism. Together, results of the studies scrutinised found that a number of positive

outcomes are associated with prisoners receiving visits from their families, intimate partners and children. However, the strength of conclusions that could be drawn for the different outcome variables measured varied due to the quality of the studies reviewed, the variability of the measures being used and the lack of specific research in each area.

A summary of the overall findings and a discussion of the evidence provided for each of the research questions considered and each of the outcome variables reviewed is now presented.

### **Do prison visits improve prisoners' wellbeing?**

Of the studies identified in this review six were related to this specific research question. Two studies explored visits from children and depression for incarcerated mothers. Poehlmann (2005) found that those receiving fewer face to face visits with their children had higher levels of depression. Pinese et al (2010) provided further support for the link between depression and visits. Their findings showed that severe depression was associated with mothers not receiving visits from children when they were in prison. Both these studies are rated medium quality scoring 15 and 14 respectively as a consequence the finding that visits from children reduce women's depression in the prison environment can be viewed as relatively robust. It would however benefit from further high quality studies to support these findings.

In terms of stress for incarcerated mothers Houck and Loper (2002), however, found that for some mothers receiving visits increased their stress and anxiety which impacted upon their adjustment to the prison environment. Tuerk and Loper (2006) failed to find a relationship between visits and reduced parental stress, although contact via letters did result in reduced stress. Letter writing may have more impact on stress

reduction as it allows for considered contact that may reduce the parent's stress, while visits may be a source of stress in their own right. However, the results of this study should be reviewed with caution as it was included in the low quality category. This conflicting evidence makes it difficult to consider the benefits of visits overall for female prisoners.

Monahan et al (2011) studied male adolescents and found that those receiving more visits from their parents experienced a quicker reduction in depressive symptoms than those who did not. When those relationships were of a higher quality the adolescents had less symptoms of depression. While only one study considered this, the study is of high quality and the results can be viewed with reasonable confidence. It would be beneficial if further research was completed in this area to support the findings as one study alone is insufficient. However, the findings do suggest that prison visits moderate the negative effects of incarceration on depression for adolescents, therefore improving their wellbeing within the prison environment.

As identified by Bales and Mears (2008) the question of visits and men's wellbeing is not often asked. Wooldredge (1999) attempted to provide evidence for improved wellbeing, not specifically depression or stress, for adult males receiving visits; however several factors reduced the reliability of this study. Further research considering the impact of prison visits on adult males' depressive symptoms may be useful considering this is the largest incarcerated group. One other area related to this research question was not answered at all within this review as no studies were identified that considered the impact of prison visits on suicidal ideation and self harm behaviours. This area would also benefit from research.

## **Do prison visits reduce prisoners' rule-breaking behaviour within the prison environment?**

This specific research question was explored by three studies identified in this review. Jiang et al (2005) considered the impact of prisoners' children's visits on rule-breaking behaviour. Jiang and Winfree (2006) followed this up and considered the differential impact on male and female prisoners; while Hensley et al. (2002) explored the impact of conjugal visits on violent threats and behaviour within the prison environment. These studies suggest that visits do not have a positive impact on rule-breaking within the prison environment. Prisoners receiving visits from their children were more likely to engage in drug and property related rule-breaking. This result was counterintuitive and maybe related to increased visits allowing the opportunity to bring drugs and other banned items into the prison environment; this was not controlled for in the study. Participation in conjugal visits had no effect on prisoners' violent behaviour (Hensley et al., 2002) within the prison environment. The results for visits from children are from one high quality and one medium quality study and are thought to be reliable, while those related to conjugal visits were from a study judged to be low quality and are therefore unlikely to be reliable. Actual face to face visits between prisoners and their children do not seem to provide protection from rule-breaking behaviour in the prison environment. Telephone calls however do appear more beneficial (Jiang et al., 2005, Jiang & Winfree, 2006) and this may be related to the findings that relationship quality improves through telephone calls (Poehlmann, 2005). Once again drawing conclusions in this area is limited by the number of studies available. The exploration of rule-breaking may benefit from more studies in this area that consider different types of rule-breaking and different types of visits and contact.

### **Do prison visits link to reduced recidivism?**

Only one high quality study attempted to address this question – namely that by Bales & Mears (2008). Generally reconviction research is difficult to conduct (Friendship, Beech, & Browne, 2002). Many confounding variables are likely to impact upon the link between any one factor and recidivism. This research attempted to account for these variables and provided robust evidence to support the idea that an increase in prison visits predicts a reduction in reconviction rates. The results show that those prisoners who were visited had lower recidivism rates and lived longer in the community without re-offending than those who were not visited; and as the number of visits increased the likelihood of recidivism reduced. This result was not consistent for all types of visits and types of prisoner. The number of visits could not be isolated as a predictive factor for women's reconviction. Visits from partners reduced men's recidivism while visits from children heightened the risk of recidivism for fathers. Overall, visits appear positive in terms of a reduction in recidivism, however these results may only reflect the strength of the interpersonal relationships; with visits being one measure of that. The researchers considered this but remained comfortable with their results that visits were a specific factor in their own right. The findings of this study are robust but once again drawing strong conclusions is limited by the lack of other studies in this area.

What happens during a visit is likely to be an area that should be explored further. Fathers' increased recidivism linked to increased visits from their children may be linked to a lack of shame related to imprisonment. It could be a reflection of the normality of prison life that is demonstrated by the children being involved in the sentence. Perhaps fathers who receive visits from their children are those for whom

offending is a lifestyle. The evidence that visits from intimate partners reduces recidivism may be linked to the mechanisms by which relationships reduce recidivism (Sampson et al., 2006). Visits maintain the link to social obligations and the self identity associated with a relationship, they maintain a prisoner's connection to their partner, weakening the influence of antisocial peers and allowing female partners to continue to influence the prisoner's behaviour. However, these results do not demonstrate effects for female prisoners and these differences require further exploration.

### **Methodological Limitations of Studies Reviewed**

Due to the criteria set, all but one of the studies included in the review are based on North American samples. This sample population may not allow generalisability to a UK prison population which tends to include a higher proportion of white prisoners than the American samples. In terms of the sample the research only considered heterosexual intimate relationships which excludes a whole section of the population and discounts the importance of one type of relationship within a prisoner's social support network. The participants are not consistently the same age or the same gender, which further confounds the outcome creating difficulties generalising results to the wider population.

In addition to problems with the samples used, the studies included in the review measured a number of different outcomes ranging from measures of wellbeing and prison behaviour to recidivism. These methodological differences between the studies are likely to account for the range of positive results reported. The main differences between the studies were the definitions of the areas being measured and the tools of measurement used. For example, 'prison visits' is not in itself a unified concept. Who visits, the type of visit and the length and frequency of visit is not consistent across the

studies. The studies chosen did not use the same measurement methods, apart from two studies that considered depression. However, even these studies did not analyse the data in the same way. This discrepancy between units of measurement and the subsequent analysis means that any findings can only be synthesised in a descriptive manner.

### **Review Limitations**

There are limitations to the methodology used in the review itself. Only including papers that appeared in full in peer reviewed journals limited the scope of the review; as a consequence more studies of relevance may have been missed. This review including the article searches and the development of inclusion/exclusion criteria was conducted by a single researcher. Some decisions related to the search terms used were pragmatic in order to avoid extensive time reviewing papers. These decisions may have led to relevant papers being missed. As a result the review may have limited reliability as, on average, a single researcher misses 8% of suitable papers (Centre for Reviews and Dissemination, 2009). The reliability of the review is also problematic due to the limited number of studies included in the review and the variety of outcomes being measured the original research questions cannot be answered with authority. This highlights a need for more high quality research exploring the impact of prison visits on wellbeing, prison rule-breaking and recidivism before conclusions are drawn.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the limitations, the review supports previous research and reviews that suggest prison visits have positive effects and that policy should continue to develop methods of increasing the likelihood of prisoners receiving family visits. However, evidence for the strength of the relationship between visits and positive outcomes for



prisoners is mixed. The review highlighted a difference for males and females, with findings suggesting that women did not benefit in terms of reduced recidivism from increased prison visits. This is significant to practice as it would suggest clinicians and professionals involved in the policy of prison visits should consider gender specific factors. As the evidence related to recidivism was limited to one study however, concluding that women do not benefit from visits in terms of recidivism but men do, maybe premature. This area would benefit from further research before reaching such conclusions.

There were also concerns related to visits from children that suggest improvements in prisoner wellbeing for women, but increased recidivism for men whose children visit. Conjugal visits did not receive enough support for their positive properties to consider them in relation to current prison policy. However, the paucity of research in these areas once again suggests viewing the results with caution.

Overall, this review has highlighted that there is a lack of high quality research into the role of prison visits on offender behaviour. It is therefore recommended that future research should focus on reliable outcome measures, studies within the UK and other countries of relevance, and consider why specific types of visits have different outcomes for prisoners.

## CHAPTER 3

# HOW PRISONERS AND THEIR PARTNERS EXPERIENCE THEIR RELATIONSHIP AND VIEW ITS ROLE IN THE LIKELIHOOD OF REOFFENDING

### Abstract

Positive interpersonal relationships are known to have an impact on reducing re-offending behaviour for men. However, little is known about the experience of these relationships for offenders and their partners. This study aims to explore the couples' experience of their relationship through the prison sentence, the impact of their relationship on offending behaviour and the processes by which this may occur. Participants were recruited from a prison based programme that supports couples to develop skills to strengthen their relationships. The couples took part in individual interviews. The analysis of their stories resulted in the emergence of 4 main themes which described how they experienced *having a special connection* that they were motivated to maintain. How they faced *challenges and threats* to that connection and developed *reciprocal behaviours* that allowed them to meet the challenges and how they *maintained a belief in the future*. The implications of these findings are discussed.

### Introduction

The development of this study arose from the observation of positive interactions between prisoners and their partners within the prison environment. For example, Hampel and Vangelisti, (2008), found that when asked, “what gives meaning

to your life?’’ romantic relationships are often near the top of the list. Despite difficult circumstances and separation, prisoners and their partners often maintain mutually supportive relationships. Home Office data suggests the maintenance of good family relationships helps to reduce re-offending (May, Sharma & Stewart, 2008). The maintenance of ‘good quality’ relationships through a prison sentence is related to the successful development of the relationship post release (La Vigne, Naser, Brooks & Castro, 2005), while the maintenance of ‘poor quality’ relationships has the opposite effect. Longitudinal research with 500 young men (Sampson, Laub & Wimer, 2006), provided evidence to suggest that marriage was associated with a 35% reduction in the odds of an individual engaging in crime. This relationship between marriage and recidivism suggests that encouraging prisoners to maintain their long term relationships may be a useful tool in the reduction of re-offending.

### **Prisoners’ Relationships**

The involvement of two people in an intimate interpersonal relationship ensures a complex dynamic. This dynamic can provide an enduringly positive experience that is sometimes tempered by periods of extreme difficulty. The experience of a prison sentence is likely to be a difficult period in a relationship. Segrin and Flora (2001) explored relationship quality as a protector against loneliness. They took a sample of 96 married prisoners and asked them to complete measures of loneliness, marital satisfaction and commitment. They also asked them a series of questions about their relational history. Prisoners reported considerable variability in perceptions of relational histories as well as in the experience of loneliness. The authors concluded that possessing a satisfying and committed marriage reduced feelings of loneliness. The

suggestion is that the relationship provides social support which is beneficial during incarceration.

Social support, while positive, does not offer a complete explanation when considering the benefits of interpersonal relationships. Most couples would base their understanding of their relationship in terms of love. According to Sternberg's (1986), Tripartite theory, love comprises three components; intimacy - which promotes closeness; passion - arousal that motivates interactions; and commitment - the cognitive short term decision that the couple love each other and the long term decision to stay together. The theory suggests that agreement on the balance of these three areas constitutes relationship success. When exploring relationships further it is likely that during the life course of a relationship, as the couple move through challenging experiences together, there is more to relationship success than love.

### **Relationship Quality**

Relationship research considers what constitutes quality in relationships and explores a number of factors that are related to relationship success. Collins and Feeney (2000), explored support seeking and care giving and found that when one member of the couple increases support seeking behaviour the level of care giving provided by their partner increases. Those with avoidant attachment styles did not so readily engage in support seeking which reduced the level of care they received. The authors then explored the links between attachment styles and relationship functioning further (Feeney & Collins 2003). They explored the motivations for care giving and discovered that there are many linked around helping and reciprocity, social norms and emotional responses. These motivations were related to the perceptions the partner had of the

relationship. The type of motivation directly influenced the care that was given. An interesting finding was that responsive care giving predicted perceptions of healthy relationship functioning at the time and in the future. Campbell, Simpson, Boldry and Kashy (2005), considered perceptions of relationship-based conflict and support and explored their association with relationship satisfaction and future quality of the relationship. They found that anxiously attached individuals perceived more conflict and reported a tendency for conflicts to escalate. Perceptions of more frequent conflict negatively impacted on the sense of satisfaction and relationship futures of anxious individuals, whereas perceptions of greater support had the opposite effects. High anxiety eroded relationships over time. Relationship quality is subjective and often those judging the quality of a relationship are biased by their own values.

### **Relationship Satisfaction**

Relationship satisfaction as an area of research may provide better insight into how relationships endure and how partners may support more positive behaviour in each other. Lessin, Lessin, Eckstein and Kaufman (2005), suggest five ways in which relationship satisfaction can be measured; interaction - defined as how often couples talk, have fun, carry out duties and eat together; emotion - defined as how passionately they feel attraction, affection, apprehension, anguish and anger between each other; expression - defined as how often they disclose their feelings to each other and how they do this; clarity - defined as understanding what goes on between them and the patterns of behaviour that motivate them; and contact - defined as how they support, influence and physically touch each other. Relationship Satisfaction is viewed as one of the elements that, together with investment size and quality of alternatives, influence commitment. Due to the circumstances of the sentence, prisoners and their partners do

not actually have the opportunity to continue to practice the key elements that contribute to relationship satisfaction, which may then influence the maintenance of the relationship.

## **Commitment**

Commitment has emerged as a key concept in the maintenance of relationships. Rhoades, Stanley and Markman (2010), considered four elements of commitment and their associations with relationship adjustment and stability in a group of unmarried couples. The elements were; desire to maintain a relationship, the perceived constraints they were aware of, material constraints such as sharing debt etc, and felt constraint, the sense of feeling trapped. They suggested that relationships endure despite fluctuating levels of satisfaction and commitment may explain continuance through difficult times. Commitment in terms of material constraint is particularly powerful in the continuance of the relationship while felt constraint is associated with the termination of relationships.

Hampel and Vangelisti (2008), used prototype theory to investigate an interaction pattern model for commitment expectations. They found that couples were easily able to generate “if-then” contingencies e.g. “if I am going through a hard time then my partner will support me”. Through a process of analysing these statements they found a number of prototypical patterns related to expectations of commitment including devotion, self disclosure, empathy, trust, respect and faithfulness. Their findings suggest that couples share an understanding of commitment and have expectations of each other based on this.

## **Forgiveness and Other Factors**

If relationships endure over time it is likely that partners will engage in behaviours that offend each other and will result in some requirement for forgiveness. Karremans and Van Lange (2008), considered the psychological role of forgiveness in determining fluctuations in cognitive interdependence, a sense of viewing the partner as part of the self. They found that cognitive interdependence changed as a function of forgiveness levels within a relationship over and above the influence of commitment. Individuals view themselves as more closely related in a cognitive sense to their partner if they are able to forgive them for transgressions within the relationship. Linardatos and Lydon (2011), suggest that the development of this relationship identity is functional in that it predicts relatively spontaneous, pro-relationship responses in the face of relational threat.

The literature exploring relationships is extensive and to provide an exhaustive review of the elements of relationship quality considered is outside of the scope of this introduction. Some other areas of interest include the exploration of the key elements of connection; Cutrona, (2004), reviews this and suggests that the connection associated with romantic love defies the principles of rational social exchange that can be applied to friendships in that it is motivated by both pleasure and pain. Other relevant areas of research that impact on the quality of relationships include the understanding of closeness and the importance of shared goals. Fitzsimons and Fishbach (2009), demonstrated that when individuals are motivated towards a goal they draw closer to others that could be instrumental in achieving that goal.

## **Impact on Offending**

While there are many elements that impact upon the maintenance of the relationship understanding and measuring them does not necessarily explain how positive long term relationships reduce re-offending. Sampson, Laub and Wimer (2006), described 4 possible mechanisms through which marriage could be causal in reducing re-offending; marriage creates social obligations that increase the costs of crime; marriage causes significant changes in routines and patterns of association with others; the female partner exerts direct social control; and marriage leads to a change in self identity, perhaps to a more 'responsible' person. Whilst the impact of marriage is well researched through various methods, prisoners are often in long term relationships that are not formalised through marriage, these relationships may still have a positive influence on behaviour while the mechanisms through which they do this may differ slightly.

Exploring offenders' perceptions of relationships could clarify what they believe may be protective in terms of re-offending. Research that explores prisoners' perceptions with regard to relationships rarely considers partner perspectives. When considering relationship qualities researchers have discovered that talking to both partners improves the accuracy of the prediction of the stability and commitment of that relationship (Attridge, Berscheid & Simpson, 1995). Therefore it is likely that talking to both partners will provide richer information about the mechanisms through which long term marital type relationships may impact upon desistance.



## **Rationale**

In the Criminal Justice System little intervention is engaged in with offenders to enable them to maintain and improve their existing intimate relationships. In general the focus is placed upon working with offenders who have been abusive to their partners rather than improving already protective relationships to enable them to survive custody and to perform a protective role. Where intervention does occur it is conducted with the offender in isolation and fails to engage the partner. National Offender Management Service, Wales is piloting a programme, Building Stronger Families. The aim is to strengthen the relationship between an offender and his partner. The interventions work with groups of couples, where both parties are willing to engage and there is no history of domestic abuse. The intervention assumes that by improving skills in the basic areas in which people tend to experience conflict the relationship will be strengthened and the offender will be protected from future offending.

As prison intervention rarely involves partners these programmes provide a unique opportunity to gain insight into couples' perceptions about the impact of their relationship on criminal behaviour. In order to inform the practice it is important to explore their individual and shared experiences of the relationship and how it is experienced during the prison sentence.

## **Research aim and questions**

This study aims to explore the experience of significant interpersonal relationships through the prison sentence, the likely impact of relationships on offending behaviour and the processes by which this may occur. Specifically the following four research questions will be addressed:

- to gain offender and partner experiences about their relationship with each other
- to gain offender and partner experiences about their experience of the relationship during the prison sentence
- to explore the impact of the relationship experience on offending behaviour
- to gain offender and partner experiences about the processes by which impact on offending behaviour may occur.

### **Methodological approach**

#### **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

This method has been chosen as it is particularly apposite for interpreting the experience of individuals' relationships. This approach is informed by the phenomenological branch of philosophy which believes that certain forms of knowing are more constructive than others (Willig, 2001). This methodology is concerned with the world as we experience it, the way in which objects and subjects appear in our consciousness as we engage with the world (Willig, 2001) "the research participant's account is the phenomenon with which the researcher engages." (Willig, 2001, pp.53). Larkin and Thompson (2012) describe this as '*giving voice*' to the participant's concerns and '*making sense*' of those concerns through psychological interpretation. IPA was developed by Smith (Willig, 2001) to incorporate reflexivity into the process of exploring the research participant's experience, i.e. the phenomenological analysis by the researcher is their interpretation of the participant's experience. This analysis involves gathering the data and interpreting it, the analysis is subjective. However, this subjectivity is dialogical, systematic and rigorous in its application (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

## **Reflexivity**

When exploring the experiences of participants it is important to understand that what is reported by the participants and perceived by the researcher are not direct reflections of the situation but interpretations of the situation that have been mediated by historical, cultural and linguistic factors (Willig, 2001). In order to effectively represent the meaning of data the researcher must consider “reflexivity”. This is recognition by the researcher that they are involved with the study and as a consequence influence the outcomes (Willig, 2001). Qualitative researchers describe the same phenomena in different ways based on their own personal values and beliefs (personal reflexivity) and the method of analysis they use (epistemological reflexivity). This means that any research findings are open to other, potentially equally valid interpretations (Willig, 2001). In this study the author grew up in the same area with a similar background to some of the participants. However, as the author my role as a psychologist in the prison service created an expectation of how prisoners and their partners would behave. This bias was discussed with a supervisor and the impact minimised where possible through reflective practice. Through the course of the interviews other factors emerged such as feelings of admiration and protection for some of the participants and these factors should be considered by the readers of this study. A reflective diary was kept following interviews and during analysis of the transcripts to record these issues.

## **Ethical Issues**

Conducting research with prisoners has inherent power inequalities. Prisoners often face pressure to engage in programmes, which creates pressure for participants to

engage in research. It is difficult to eliminate this coercive element. The researcher attempted to reduce the power imbalance by emphasising the voluntary nature of participation and the absence of any impact refusal would have upon progression through the individual's sentence. The programme included a separate interview to ensure the partners were not coerced to engage with the programme and this was utilised to introduce the research element. The study was explained in clear language and informed consent sought on two occasions. Issues relating to confidentiality were managed within HM Prison Service security requirements, and all participants reminded that this study fell under those requirements (please see consent form and written research explanation Appendix 3). Ethical approval was granted through the prison service ethics process and the University of Birmingham process (Appendix 4).

### **Participants and Criteria for Selection**

The sample was a purposive sample of prisoners and their partners who were involved in long term committed and positive interpersonal relationships. The Building Stronger Families programme provided the opportunity to approach 25 couples across two prison sites and request their participation in the current study. All participants had self referred to the programme and were reporting a significant intimate relationship they wished to maintain or improve. The participants and their partners were selected for the programme using the programme manual selection process. This process takes account of the partner's views and allows for abusive relationships and offence supporting partners to be screened out prior to the programme. This process ensured homogeneity within the sample in terms of the participants' view of their relationships as worthwhile, the fact that the male partners were in prison at the time of the research and the relative harmony of the relationships.

The participants were self-selecting. All participants involved in the programme were invited to take part in the research, following the commencement of the group intervention they were participating in. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study verbally and in writing and informed consent obtained to contact them post programme (Appendix 3). Those that responded positively, 12 couples, were contacted on completion of the programme. The partner was contacted first and if they accepted then the prisoner was contacted and separate individual interviews of approximately an hour's duration were arranged with the partner first and separately with the prisoners. Of the 12 couples six agreed to be interviewed. All of these were then met with to be interviewed. One couple met the researcher to engage in the interview and then decided not to participate due to difficulties in their personal circumstances. One couple, although interviewed, were not included in the analysis as the interview revealed information which impacted upon their suitability to be included in the research. This resulted in four couples being interviewed and their data being included in the analysis. Due to the nature of the prisons from which the sample was drawn all participants lived within a small geographical area, seven of the individuals were white British and one was of mixed ethnic background. The age, sentence length of the male partner and length of the relationship at time of interview are detailed in Table 1.

**Table 1 Prisoner and partner characteristics (names anonymised)**

<b>Male prisoners</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Length of</b>	<b>Female partners</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Length of</b>
<b>name</b>		<b>sentence</b>	<b>name</b>		<b>relationship</b>
Neil	20	18 months	Ellen	19	6 years
Craig	23	4 years 6mths	Julie	25	2 years
Adam	36	2 years	Laura	25	7 years
Karl	22	9 months	Jenny	21	2 years

## **Interview Schedule and Procedure**

The qualitative analysis consisted of interviews conducted separately with each partner by the first researcher. Interviews with the prisoners were conducted in interview rooms within the two separate prisons and interviews with the partners were conducted in the partners' homes. All of the interviews were conducted over a two month period and each couple was interviewed within the same three day period. The interview began with an engagement discussion to relax the participants. This lasted approximately five minutes and was concerned with general exploration of the participant's background and their current circumstances. Then six question areas (Appendix 5) were explored to investigate the experience of the participants within their relationships and in relation to offending behaviour. The questions were chosen to allow the couple to build the narrative of their relationship; exploring the beginning, current circumstances and their expectations for the future. The purpose of the questions was to allow them to give the information they felt was important rather than direct them to talk about specific themes that the researcher had chosen. Additional probe questions were used as necessary and recorded. These questions focused on asking participants 'how they felt' and 'how they thought' about the experiences they described. In general the process was non directive. Care was taken when interviewing the male participant to ensure that the interviewer's questions were not influenced by the information provided by the female partner. Where possible the interviewee chose the direction of the discussion and reference was not drawn back to the opening questions by the interviewer. In this manner, the themes of the discussion were generated by the participants. The interview was recorded on a digital audio device. This approach to interviewing is the most appropriate method as the aim of the study is to gain an

understanding of each participant's experiences of their relationship and its impact upon recidivism. The audio taped interviews were transcribed by the author and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

## **Treatment of the Data**

### **Analytical Approach**

The analysis of the transcripts involved both mechanical and interpretative processes. The mechanical stage involved the first author transcribing the eight interviews and organising the data to ensure the participants' contributions were identifiable. The interpretative stage involved applying IPA through continual re-reading and re-organisation of the individual transcripts to draw out the experiences, concerns and understanding of the participants. The first step of the IPA analysis involved reading and annotating the transcripts repeatedly to gain familiarity with the data and promote consistency of analysis. The data generated was then coded on a line by line basis, these codes were then clustered using IPA methodology and analysed using the techniques described by Larkin and Thompson (2012). The codes referred to each participant's experiences. This experiential material was then explored on a single case basis to identify emergent themes. To facilitate this process the data for each participant was transferred to spreadsheets and for each emergent theme a page was generated. When this process was complete for all participants the cases were compared to explore convergence and divergence between couples and across the sample. Throughout this process the researcher moved towards a more interpretive exploration of the themes, using the spreadsheets to interact with the data and explore what the concerns and experiences might mean to the participants. When the emergent themes

were established descriptions of the themes were developed which allowed for specific themes to be explored in relation to each other and then developed into a structure that allowed the emergence of the major themes and an explanation of their relationship to each other. At each stage discussion with the supervisor provided verification for the emergent themes and development of the major themes into which they were organised.

## **Results**

This section provides a narrative account of the findings including verbatim quotes from the participants. There were 4 major themes that emerged from the analysis of the transcripts of the interviews:

- Having a special connection
- Challenges and threats
- Developing reciprocal behaviours
- Maintaining a belief in the future

The four themes represent the main concepts that coin a range of emerging sub themes. Table 2 provides an over view of the super-ordinate themes and the sub-themes that became part of each one.

**Table 2: Themes that emerged from the analysis**

<b>Having a special connection</b>	<b>Challenges and threats</b>	<b>Developing reciprocal behaviours</b>	<b>Maintaining a belief in the future</b>
Connection	Isolation/Loneliness	Commitment	Hope v Fear
Knowing each	Restriction	Feeling	Explanations of



other	Guilt/Shame/Responsibility	valued/valuing	behaviour
Relationship	Powerlessness	each other	Involvement of
journey	Insecurity	Reassurance	others
Shared Identity	Loss	Managing	
Positive Identity		conflict	
Protection		Influence	
Security/Stability		Coping	

Explanations of the sub-themes, their components and how they are related to each participant as individuals and couples are detailed in the appendices (Appendix 6 & 7). The four main themes are each considered here with representative examples extracted from the interviews. All names are fictionalised to maintain anonymity.

### **Having a Special Connection**

This theme consists of a number of elements that emerge from all of the participants interviews. The couples experience almost an instant emotional and physical *connection* to each other that grows over time into something they view as unique. This occurs as part of the *relationship journey* through a sense of *knowing each other*, *shared identity*, *positive identity*, *protection* and *security/stability*. The theme emerges in the way in which the couple feel linked to each other and does not necessarily include tangible elements, sometimes the feeling is abstract while maintaining its own identity within the relationship. Julie describes this in simple terms that provide the basis of this indefinable quality that all of the participants express in some way.

Julie: I honestly couldn't tell you I just know he's the one I think, it's just different I don't know we just really bond you know we just there's something there/we just bonded really you know strong (pause) the bond is strong.

Julie's partner is able to illustrate the immediacy of the *connection* and the happiness that all the participants describe when they are with their partner:

Craig: I wanted to be with her as soon as I met her as soon as she come into that pub. I knew there was something between us and ah that's why I kind of jumped into getting her number/ every time I was around her (pause) I would just feel you know excitement and happy.

Adam reinforces the original indefinable quality of the *connection* while providing evidence that some of this *connection* is felt as a result of a shared positive regard, something this man and his partner have not experienced with anyone else both having had very difficult upbringings.

Adam: I look at these old people who you hear about on the TV/ Ned and his wife they've been together 75 years/ I feel the same way for Laura as an old man and his wife feel for each other I can't really pinpoint it, it's just everything good about Laura I can feel rolling off her in waves I suppose she can see it about me.

Karl brings some of these sub themes together through his description of emotional and physical *connection* and its development through the *relationship journey*.

Karl: I thought she was beautiful straight away and she was just, it was just her personality and that she was cool, like we got on straight away she's like a girl version of me really so I just liked everything about her like/Yes, from the start we clicked like that like, mad, and just kept getting stronger and stronger and just got closer and closer, and I don't know it's like my love just keeps growing for her and she's told me she said she didn't think it was possible to love me any more, but she said she just loves me more and more everyday like and that makes me feel good as well, that's the exact same way I feel about her.

Jenny, Karl's partner describes almost identical sentiments as Karl and this is also common to all the couples, their experience of the *connection* is mirrored in their partner's interview. Jenny also provides another interesting insight in that their *special connection* is reflected back to them by the expressed views of others.

Jenny: His family know that he, how much I mean to him and all his family say how much happier he is since he's been as well, because he had a bad relationship before he got with me so they can all see the difference in him he's a lot happier and when his family tell me that it's really nice to hear it.

Although often it seems indefinable they actually have a lot of reference points that draw this theme of 'having a special connection together'. The manner in which they experience the *connection* is expressed through a number of different minor themes that converge to create a full explanation of the sense of a special connection. Ellen describes her experience of the connection through the *shared identity* of humour and a sense of *knowing each other*. Her experience is common within the interviews.

Ellen: We make each other laugh I think, he makes me laugh anyway, and I think because we know each other so well now like, because I am quite a shy person/I don't like getting to know people kind of thing and obviously you don't have to try or anything/but I think I can't really explain when it's just we're together it's just like nothing else really matters.

Ellen's partner is able to expand on that sense of *knowing each other* in a light hearted way to the point that they can predict each other's behaviour. This level of knowing each other to the point of predicting behaviour and emotions is also common throughout the interviews.

Neil: I just feel so comfortable she knows me, she um knows, she knows me to the point where I'm scared, I'm scared how much she knows me because she probably knows me, more than I know myself/If you said ok there's, Tomato Sauce, Brown Sauce and Curry sauce or whatever, she knows I would probably mix two of them and then, but I wouldn't do that.

Each participant in different ways explains this connection and how it manifests in a positive view of themselves and their partner that provides a *positive identity* for the relationship and a sense of *stability* of the relationship and for the individual. Neil in a more serious moment illustrates this point.

Neil: It's trying to find stability, it's like that a relationship to have some sort of stability in our lives, to um know that someone out there that cares, like you know, I had my girlfriend. I had someone who loved me, she did make me feel special, she did make me feel like yes I've something good. I've got something going for myself someone's still with me and I've obviously still got something,

like you need that to carry on/ I think it is helping me to maintain a stable relationship well maintain a stable relationship with myself.

Laura describes why this *stability* may be important and where some of the instant *connection* emerges from in terms of the shared past experiences that contribute to a *shared identity*.

Laura: Well we've got similar backgrounds um Adam was in foster homes um in children's homes. I was in foster homes so because we spoke a lot before obviously we went into a relationship with our past experiences and because we were quite close together we had so much in common, that also brought us together as well.

For Laura's partner the *connection*, through the experience of *shared identity* of their past experiences and the concept of *knowing each other* allow him to undo the effects of some of his past experience and develop his *positive identity* of their relationship.

Adam: I was afraid to talk to women and be open with women because of the way women had treated me in the past, but once this come up it was like another door opened and well we literally spoke about anything and everything

There is a sense for each participant that this connection *protects* them allowing them to feel *safe*. Generally they describe *feeling protective* towards each other, wanting to protect the other partner from emotional pain, through difficult experiences and physically or emotionally from other people. Adam tells the story of the birth of one of the children to illustrate this that casts him in the role of a hero and adds to his *positive identity*. Ellen illustrates how her partner made her feel at the beginning of the

relationship and how this sense of *feeling rescued* translated into an actual behavioural safety change.

Ellen: I think I was just I had a lot of things going on at home as well so he was just like my knight in shining armour, kind of thing, so he was just everything basically which he still is now/I did used to get into trouble quite a lot and everything, and when I met him like kind of I stopped going out on the street and drinking and all that stuff and then, so it was just like it was a way out.

Julie's partner Craig describes wanting to protect Julie in many ways as a result of their past experiences and Julie then views his hiding the offending behaviour from her as a form of *protection*. This illustrates how through their shared history the *connection* has developed through a sense of *feeling protected* and *protective*.

Craig: When she became pregnant though we didn't do a lot most times because I didn't want to be driving around in the car, I was protective I didn't want to do anything that would upset her so after the first one, the miscarriage, there was a lot more pressure since that happened.

Julie: What I didn't know I couldn't tell, do you know what I mean I couldn't be in trouble because out of everyone involved I was, I think I was the only one who wasn't arrested because he kept me out of it so I didn't know what was going on and I think that at the time he thought that was the best thing to do because he was doing it anyway regardless (pause) and you know he just wanted to keep me out of it.

This theme of 'having a special connection' appears crucial to providing the motivation for the maintenance of the relationship throughout the prison sentence. This

sentiment is expressed throughout the interviews. Craig illustrates this through his description of the strength of the relationship.

Craig: To be able to come into prison and do a 4 ½ year sentence which is 2 years 3 months and still be strong you know even though you can't physically you know be in contact with each other, but you can only talk. It's a lot harder that way but I still think we're strong, stronger than ever definitely/ if I'd come in and thought it was going to break down, I would never have stayed with her this long anyway even if she wanted to, I wouldn't (pause) put her through all this you know/obviously we love each other anyway and you know, she all the good times we've had together she remembers them and that's why she wants to be with me because you know I've always been nice, good to her and I've always looked after her and that's why she wants to ah she would have waited for me no matter how long it would have been.

This journey to a strong sense of 'having a special connection' develops from an initial emotional and physical instant connection, through a process of open communication, learning to know each other better than anyone else and shared experiences, emotions, humour and tastes or interests. These developing connections are maintained by wanting to protect each other and a positive view of themselves, their partner and the relationship and shared goals for the future. In fact all of the participants, especially the male participants express an extremely positive almost idealistic view of their partner. This theme of connection emerges as the foundations of the relationship, the solid base that enables them to endure the difficulties created by the offending behaviour and the sentence. Although solid the foundation is still threatened

and the second theme is concerned with the sentence and offending as a fact. The experience creates threats and challenges to the special connection.

### **Challenges and Threats**

Surprisingly, given the participants circumstances, this theme comprises of fewer emerging less ubiquitous themes within the interviews than those emerging in the connection cluster. This theme consists of a number of elements that emerge in a more idiosyncratic pattern within the participants interviews. However, the super-ordinate theme is still evidenced across the sample. The minor themes in this super-ordinate theme are related to the subjective feelings of *isolation, loneliness, restriction, guilt, shame, responsibility, powerlessness, insecurity* and *loss*. Sometimes these emerge in relation to the prison sentence and sometimes in relation to the offending behaviour.

Ellen describes how *powerlessness* is experienced by her in terms of what she views as her partner's self destructive offending not just of the *loss* of him being in prison.

Ellen: That he was gone (pause) like, what he's done like, obviously kind of every time he's gone I've been really ashamed, about it like, it's embarrassing, but its more just its more like 'why?' and the fact of what he is doing to himself, that upsets me more than what he is doing, because it's just like he could not do it like it's just frustrating. Yes its more than him going I think it's more what he is doing to himself, really.

Ellen expresses the frustration of being unable to influence change and being able to make him see what she can see. While for the men in prison they experience



*powerlessness* differently. Craig feels the experience as being unable to help his partner, a common theme in the men's interviews, or to influence the upbringing of his child.

Craig: Yes, you worry about a lot of things there's nothing you can control I can't control anything I'm a controller, not that I control anything anyway because Julie was the boss, but it's a lot harder now because you want to be out there you want to help, you want the baby to be raised the way you want him to be raised and at the moment now he's being raised the way her parents raised her, so by the time I get out there's nothing that I can do.

This *powerlessness* spills into *insecurity* for the male participants, this insecurity may be part of their character but it seems exacerbated by the prison sentence. Karl best explains the experience that the male participants all seem to be struggling with in different degrees. They all believe in their partners' fidelity but they fear the impact of the sentence over time.

Karl: I know how close we are together, but this place just makes me think she's going to leave me and stuff like. I'm always asking her, but I know she won't, but I know she's going to be there, it's just scary that I think she won't, like.

The male participants also express their *insecurity* less obviously within their interviews there is fear that their partner's will cope 'too well' without them and not need them. Adam reveals this in the way he is critical of decisions that Laura makes without him.

Adam: She's decided now to get them a bike, a bike each for Christmas, and I said to her, what you've got to realise is they are going to want to go on these

bikes at the same time/and there's no way she's going to be able to control two kids at the same time, one of them is going to want to go that way and the other one going to want to go that way.

Jenny experiences her own *insecurity* as a result of the *loss* of Karl through the sentence but she also recognises and accepts the way in which Karl struggles. Her description illustrates the *loneliness* that all of the participants experience.

Jenny: I'd worry if we were not together or if he left me I do worry about that because obviously I could see what it would be like now that he's in prison and I've always been an independent person and obviously I have never fallen for someone like I have for Karl and now being without him I've never felt so unconfident/ he worries that I'm coping too well that I'm going to leave him ha ha that I don't need him anymore he worries that I'm getting lonely and I'm just going to find someone else to replace him/but it's only him I'm lonely for but he's obviously going to worry in there/we are not thinking of just ourselves. I feel sorry for myself. I know I'm finding it hard with the kids but I get upset thinking of him in there on his own and I think sometimes I've got the kids to 'cwutch' up to at night and when I'm lonely I go to the kids and put them in my bed and I think he's laying in bed and he only hasn't got that, so I get upset thinking of him in there and then I know that he gets upset that I'm out here on my own and worries about me being lonely.

For Ellen her partner Neil's *insecurity* which stems from his sense of *loss* leads to her feeling *powerless* to cope with her partner's emotions which then creates

*restrictions* in her life even though she is not in prison. This adds to her anger and frustration through the experience.

Neil: I don't live really and truly, she knows it upsets her as much as much as me it's like um (pause) she, we are trying to get on with whatever we're doing that day in our lives but like all I can think of is her 'what's she up to, what's she doing' you know that.

Ellen: But now he'll ring me the next day. Who did you see? Did any boys look at you? Did any boys touch you? Did any boys do whatever? Just over the top and I'd say I probably get more attention walking down the street by a white van man beeping the horn. Silly things like that he's insecure with, yes he has got more (pause) like that over this last sentence, he's really got on my nerves at times/He talks about the impact on him, but obviously you know, (pause), it's horrible being stuck in there whatever. We mainly talk about when I want to go out or I go out or something then he would say how hard it is, you know for him to be like that and I'm like it is hard on me when I am actually out, because I'm still restricted in what I do and everything and everything I do, I got to think about you when you're not here and everything else.

This *restriction* is also practical Laura is alone with her children and the sentence means that she cannot work and the family income is restricted.

Laura: Um, obviously it all starts with Adam being home I can't um I can't go out to work at the moment until Adam is home, um I am a carer. Um, Alan has been in a half day school um until September now so obviously I haven't been able to go out to work, because I've been a full time Mum, um but it's a fact that

as soon as I get a job now it'll put things, it's about money really, money makes the world go around doesn't it.

While for Julie and Craig it is the *restriction* to their privacy and their personal interaction that they feel is part of the experience of prison visits, something they had not encountered before as this was their first prison experience.

Julie: Obviously you appreciate that you can see them, but it's not the same as you take the baby and he's running around and you know Craig can't get up and play with him as much and it's not so private.

Craig: It's a lot harder when you can't you know sometimes when you couldn't hug each other and kiss each other I hate that.

All of these subthemes are important in the experience but there is an underlying sense of *loss* that particularly impacts upon all of the participants emotionally. Jenny best illustrates how this plays out over a typical week, between the days that they get to spend all day together on the relationship course they are engaged in.

Jenny: It does boost us like we see each other on a Monday and we'll be buzzing all day Monday, really happy, and then Tuesday we would be a little bit happy, Wednesday would be alright, but Thursday would be quite down and Friday quite depressed by Sunday I'm crying and ripping my hair out because I'm so depressed. Then on Sunday night then I get butterflies and feel sick and shaky I can't sleep, so Sunday night then I'm really really anxious to see him and then Monday comes again and we're happy.

Her partner Karl is also able to illustrate the *loss* of the sexual relationship and what that means to them. His sentiments are echoed by all of the participants who talk about this *loss* it is not about missing sex it is about missing the close connection with their partner.

Karl: When we are like making love whatever, that's sometimes we've both even look at each other, we've cried like do you know what I mean, because that's, we feel really close like, and that's what I hate as well, I've told her that as well, it's not the fact that I'm not having it, it's doing my head in, it's just the fact that we are really close together/so it does affect me.

For Ellen the experience of the sentence and the sense of *loss* is compounded by her sense of *isolation*. Her family does not approve of her partner and this makes the whole experience more difficult for her.

Ellen: I thought I was going insane basically it was such a horrible, horrible time. I don't think he realises how bad it was because he was the one just going and I'm the one screaming my head off going nuts at home like/ I know what my family thinks I can't really go to them and say this is happening, so it's kind of on my own like so you know.

Although not expressed by all of the female participants there is a sense of isolation and loneliness and this emerges through the sense of *loss* that is also understood by their partners. Laura illustrates this through her explanation of having to do everything alone.

Laura: It just affects me and it hurts um, just for the fact that I miss him and he's not here um, for the fact that were not together and that we're not doing things

like we used to, for the fact that I not only have to um do everything on my own and do everything for the children and keep the house going and everything, whereas we've always done things together um and I think he knows he knows what I have to do when he's not here and that makes him feel sad for the fact that he's not here, helping me and the fact that I'm on my own doing everything.

With all of these difficulties the male partners also have to deal with the *guilt and shame* of having put their partner in this situation. The female partners understand this and try not to make this worse.

Julie: Oh, he was devastated, he knew he'd let me down and the baby and he was just (pause) beside himself really at the time/he felt he'd let me down and the baby everyone really, you know his friends, his family.

This understanding and the manner in which both partners manage the difficulties links into the next theme which explores how the couple have developed reciprocal behaviours to ensure they protect their special connection through the threats and challenges of the relationships.

### **Developing Reciprocal Behaviours**

This theme has many subthemes and is complex within the interviews, but seems to represent the reciprocal behaviours that are developed through the relationship that strengthen the special connection and are then transported into the manner in which they cope throughout the sentence. As with the first super-ordinate theme of 'having a special connection' the minor themes in this super-ordinate theme are ubiquitous. They are related to *commitment, feeling valued and valuing each other, reassurance, managing conflict, influence and coping*.

Sometimes the *commitment* is overtly expressed and is established before the prison sentence. When this is the case it seems that the mutual story and the positive memory of formal *commitment* is a factor in maintaining the relationship.

Jenny: we went on holiday with all my family and a lot of friends in a big big bus to a caravan park and it was heaving in there. We went in the clubhouse and he got on the karaoke and he sang our song, Aerosmith I don't want to miss a thing, and he proposed to me and he had the ring and I didn't know, so that was lovely.

However, for all couples there is a strong sense of *commitment* in whatever manner it is expressed. Julie explains how commitment shapes how they approach the sentence.

Julie: Yes you got to be really optimistic with things like that, because at the end of the day I was sticking with him no matter what (pause) and you just got to accept things sometimes haven't you and have to be optimistic until, until, you know the outcome.

For the male participants this *commitment* gives them a sense of permanence which in itself seems *reassuring*.

Karl: I don't know it's just the things we say to each other we tell each other we are going to be together forever, I want to marry her, I'm going to marry her the way she tells I believe her and the way I tell her she obviously believes it as well.

Ellen explains the *commitment* she has made and the way in which she changes her behaviour to *reassure* her partner of her *commitment* to him while he is in prison and to ensure that he knows everything about her life. Later comments from Ellen make it clear that she will only alter her behaviour while he is in prison suggesting some temporary willingness to do things that she would otherwise view as unreasonable.

Ellen: Sometimes I don't want to go out, anyway sometimes it would be because he didn't want me, well most of the time it was because he didn't want me to, but I would think to myself and I would say to them I have made the decision to be with him while he's in prison, so I have to deal with what he does/I'd prefer him to be happy in there than be constantly paranoid. Yes, just things like that really, just talk to him every day and whatever and see him when you can and everything really, you obviously can't be, um, vague about things either you have to, you know, they make sure they know everything like what you doing or like. If I said now what you been doing today and I said nothing he'd have to know what nothing means, you know, I think it is understandable, what other people think that's a bit possessive, but I think yes it's possessive if he was here and he was like that, but when he's in prison/because I think, well I've stayed with him so if I am going to stay with him, then I'm going to have to deal whatever's happening really.

Ellen's behavioural change is appreciated by her partner Neil, there is a sense that this communication helps him to *feel valued* a theme which is very important to all participants in this study. Throughout the interviews it is clear that they continually find ways to *value each other* and that *feeling valued* through their partner's words and



behaviour helps them to maintain their connection and manage very difficult experiences within the relationship.

Neil: I got loads of letter and I think all different communication is good, you know if you're speaking to them, writing to them, it's all good, because it shows how much you got love how much you care and you know words can make it/I like the fact that she's um loyal. She'll do what she says most of the time um na, she a really and truly I'm very lucky to have someone like Ellen, and you hear all the time on movies and this and that, but I'm really lucky because obviously I've been in jail twice. I've put her through things she shouldn't have gone through shouldn't have had to go through.

For all of the participants contact is *reassuring* and visits are maintained whatever the financial cost to the female participants and however unsatisfying they are for both parties. The *reassurance* can be as simple as the description given by Laura of the *reassurance* she gains from visits. While for her partner Adam the *reassurance* comes from letters in response to his fears that are triggered by the experience of other prisoners in the environment.

Laura: It's seeing that he's OK its seeing him that he's fit and well more than anything, that he's surviving and um for him to see the children so he's not missing anything so he can see them growing up without him you know so he gets to see us all because we miss him just as much as he misses us and I think visits are very important.

Adam: Robert's just been sentenced for 7 years, been married to his wife for 10 years, she's just basically sent him, do you know what a Dear John letter is?

She's sent him a Dear John, and every time a thought comes into my head like that I go on the phone and talk to Laura about what this persons told me and Laura every time she writes a letter to me and on the back, Adam my darling me and you are forever, me and you will always be forever, it's me you and our children, and when I read that, that just makes me feel all warm inside I suppose, safe, secure, and happy.

For these couples though there is evidence that they are realistic about the way in which they can manage the relationship. They do not only *reassure* they take time to *re-evaluate* the relationship, make decisions about the future and put the offending in the past and *influence* change. Julie is pragmatic about how she is accepting what has happened, but wants to move on from it. This helps her to *cope* she has re-evaluated how they used to communicate and has begun to *influence* Craig. This simple level of influence is evident in Craig's interview.

Julie: I want to put it in the past because you can't change things can you it's done/we don't want to focus on it you know we want to focus in the future not so much the past because he knows what he's done and he can't take it back can he and you know he is sorry for what he's done so/I've always said to him, you know I said I don't want you to ever like I said I don't want you to ever lie to me again. I always want to know if there's something's bothering you, to tell me you know don't think that you've got to keep it to yourself.

Craig: Julie's more of a person to tell you what she thinks ha ha well she hates me keeping it all inside, you know, she'd rather me tell her what I think and I

have told her that I'm going to be more you know, I told what I thought when I came in and I've been more open than I was when I was out there.

For some couples this *influencing* has extended to setting an ultimatum to change. Ellen describes how they have learned important lessons about *managing conflict*, but how she has reached a limit and has resolved to leave him if he does not stop gambling. Neil has taken her seriously and seems to feel that he needs the ultimatum to help him to change.

Ellen: I do think that course did help us a lot, because we can see then what we're doing wrong and what we need to stop/ I just said like that if anything happened and you don't get help, then I can't be with you, because I can't go through all that again, like you know, working for money which is just gone and then you still got to pay bills I can't do that again.

Neil: She even said on a visit 'if you do anything else again, I hate doing it, but that's going to be us' and she had to say that she's her own woman and she needs to say whatever's on her mind, she needs to put it to me. I can't go on like so she needs to put it to me, like I said I've put her through so much so yes.

They are not the only couple who have reached this point in their relationship. Laura and Adam reached this point before and Adam has worked hard to change. For them the influence Laura wields is complex and ongoing and has become almost a management strategy on her part. They both describe how this has developed through their relationship and during the course of the interviews it is evident that both of them know this will be an ongoing feature through the sentence and into the future. Adam provides one of many examples.

Adam: I suppose because we've been together for so long she seems to know, certain triggers will make me want to go and use, and she'll sit down next to me and she'll just flick through her purse, she's so clever at doing it, and she'll pass me, do you know the old bank receipts you get saying how much you've taken out of the bank, the withdrawal slips basically and Laura's got a habit of taking a lighter to them instead of ripping them up she takes a lighter to them and they just go black, the ink covers over or something, then she passes me the credit card and then she passes me this old ID card of myself and I look at that and she knows what she's doing, ha and I look at that, and that just stops me wanting to use, straight away, straight away

All of the couples talk about complex arrangements for communication that help them to *cope* through the sentence. Craig explains the phone calls he makes to remain connected to Julie's day but also to help her to manage with doing everything for their child alone. There is a sense from both their interviews that this routine is *reassuring* for both of them.

Craig: I used to talk to her in work and then I'd ring her back later on, then just before she left work, to see what the day was been and she'd ask me and I'd just think you know of things we used to do in the past and bring it up and to keep her (pause) you know spirit up and then I'd ring her when she'd got home in the night then just to check on the baby and see how everything's going in the house.

Jenny and Karl provide a really clear example of how being there for each other and providing support for each other help them both to *cope* through the sentence.

Jenny: He makes me stronger when he tells me he's proud of me and that I am doing well because some days I feel I can't cope anymore and I need someone to just come and get the kids and to pick me up and look after me sort of thing and when he's on the phone telling me I'm doing well and he's proud of me and I'm on top of things I tend to do it more, ha ha, because I feel like I can so he makes me feel like I'm doing well and I do it then so he's keeping me strong even though he's inside really.

Karl: I know like she's going to be there and that's what makes it better for me, do you know what I mean, I know I'm going to get out of here, and she does make, she if it weren't for her like then I'd be a mess here, because she is the only thing that keeps me going like/if I didn't have that my head would be a mess.

This theme best illustrates the complexity of long term adult relationships. The manner in which couples adapt to difficult circumstances by drawing on their shared experience of coping and being willing to review and change the methods that they use to maintain their connection. The sub-theme of *coping* by focusing on the future together and knowing they are there for each other links into the final theme that explores the manner in which the couples maintain a belief in the future.

### **Maintaining a Belief in the Future**

The final theme in some ways is the most complex while consisting of the least number of emerging themes. The minor themes in this super-ordinate theme are related to the experience of *hope and fear* for the future bolstered by *explanations for the offending behaviour* that help them believe it will not happen again and the *involvement*

*of others* and the way in which they support the couple or not. This theme is one in which the participants seek evidence that supports their desire to have faith in the future. Without the other super-ordinate themes of 'having a special connection' and 'developing reciprocal behaviours' participants would not be likely to have a belief in the future of their relationship that needs reinforcement in this way.

In general the female participants find ways of explaining their partners' behaviour that make sense to them. The male participants do not often find *explanations for their behaviour*, perhaps because they do not need to as their partners do this for them. For Ellen there is sense that if her partner did make excuses she would find it difficult to respect him in the same way. She is clear that his past has lead to his offending and this helps her to be the compassionate person in his life that he needs.

Ellen: When I say to him you do this because this has happened in the past/it makes sense to me, whereas he doesn't ever like you know, some people make excuses for everything, he doesn't he doesn't make excuses for anything. I'm not saying I make excuses for him it just kind of explains to me and gives me reasons why those behaviours are happening.

Julie explains her partner's behaviour as his need to support her and their child. She thinks that desperation lead to the offence.

Julie: He was basically desperate for money and we'd just had the baby and we were living here and we wanted to move out. He had a job and it was poor money and I was on maternity leave and we were just desperate for money and that's the only way he could see you know of getting it really so it was totally out of character, as I said, it's not something it's not who he is at all.

Jenny suggests a *higher purpose* for the offending and *shares responsibility* herself, which helps her to deal with its consequences.

Jenny: I don't think bad of him or blame him for being there because he hit the person sticking up for my younger brother so like he was protecting my family so like I would never put him down for being in where he is because he done it for the right reasons/he wasn't going round like a thug and acting like an irresponsible person he was protective he seen what was happening and my brother needed protecting and he was there and he protected him.

For Laura her explanation helps her to believe that her partner is maintaining the change to his drug using behaviour that he began two years previously. This belief is essential to her keeping faith in the future.

Laura: He was clean and obviously he wasn't using um, it's different for the fact of I knew it wasn't him, as in if he hadn't been spiked none of this would have happened um, he lost his head basically um, so I know this time it's not his fault so that's why I think I can cope with it a lot better as well you know.

For the female participants their carefully constructed beliefs around the offending and hopes for the future are affected by the impact of the views that their families have about the relationship and about their partner. For Julie this makes it easier as her family are supportive while for Ellen this makes things more difficult and she has to remain loyal to her partner while understanding her family's position. She manages this by not talking to her family about her partner, there is a sense that if she did she might have to accept some of their views and this would make her careful balance difficult to maintain.

Julie: They love him he's like one of the family really he's just like another one of my mother's sons (pause) so yes they know him just as well as I do.

Ellen: Like when my dad and step mother, they could not stand him from the first time and they whenever you know this happened or because I'm moving in with him now, there's going to be a big drama/ they don't understand why am I with him, but there's nothing I can say to explain they've never really seen us together, they don't know anything, so they just see what he's done and that's it really you can't really blame them for, yes but we don't really say anything about that really

The *explanations of the behaviour* and the careful management of the *involvement of others* help the participants to *hope* for the future but despite this they are not unrealistic and the *hope* is often tempered with *fear*. The female participants often look for evidence that their *hope* is not in vain. For Ellen this is about evidence that Neil sees the need to change and is behaving differently although in her tone there is the *fear* that this will not happen.

Ellen: I think he realises, because when we went to his probation and he said to him, his probation worker, that he wanted to get help for his gambling, which he has never ever done before. So it's little things that I can see that is changing which I was surprised about. So yes I can see good changes in him.

For Laura it is the faith that Adam has changed, there is a sense that she cannot allow herself to let *fear* become part of the equation. She needs to believe unequivocally in order to continue to look to the future.



Laura: Because he's changed, because he's had enough of everything that's happened, and he just wants to enjoy life and be home and enjoy being with me and the children, he doesn't want to be taken away from that again.

For Julie and Jenny their *hope* is based on this being their first experience of a prison sentence, their realisation that it has been very difficult for their partners and their belief that Craig and Karl now know what they have to lose.

Julie: Um, I think to be honest with you I think me and the baby alone are going, I know it didn't stop him before but he never lost it, did he and when he went to prison/ I don't believe he would do it again at all after everything we've been through and he knows what he's lost I think he knows, he knows not to do it again.

Jenny: Because of how hard it's been you don't often see a man crying and I've seen it a lot since he's been in there and I can see how hard it is for him that he wouldn't offend again/yes I know I'm sure he won't do this again. I know how much its torturing him being in there and I know he wouldn't put himself there again and I know he won't do it to me and the kids again either because he's really close to his boy and its really hurting him not being there with him, he cries a lot for him and I know he wouldn't do it to us again.

The male participants' expressions of *hope* also vary for Adam, who is older than the other participants, he views this as his last chance and his *hope* is that he will be able to look back on his life and see that he did get it right.

Adam: I don't want to be doing this no more like I said I'm no spring chicken this is my last and only chance of becoming the age of 60, 70 and looking at my grandchildren and thinking, thank god, you got it right in the end, in the end huh.

Karl's hope is expressed through the effort he has put into change while he is realistic enough to experience fear.

Karl: When I've had a drink and whatever, if someone says something to me and I spark pretty quickly, but that's why we spoke about those things and we are not going down town drinking anymore and just stuff like that, just stuff that's going to prevent me coming back and doing offences I won't be doing anything like that, I'm doing a anger management course now, so I won't be coming back here, she knows that.

While for Craig visualising the future helps him to focus on maintaining his belief in their life together, but the fear is still there.

Craig: So once we get out, we get a house and then we get married and then we'll have another kid, I think she wants a little girl you know stuff like that you know keeps you going throughout and you've got to have intimacy between you/ you got to keep time for each other even with a kid otherwise you're just going to drift apart and I don't want that to happen I don't want to drift apart you know.

In the end Neil sums up the way in which all of the participants share the way they want their future to be. The way in which they want what is best for their partner and the knowledge that they both need to have the same thing.

Neil: I'd like kids, house, car, holidays, regular holidays (pause) and I want her to live life, I want to feel, I want her to be happy, I want her to laugh, I want to exercise those muscles within when you laugh, I want to really you know just feel life really/If you are with someone who wants a stick and you want a bone it's not going to really go, if both of you wants a stick we are both going to help each other to get there, it's as simple as that really.

This theme brings together all of the other themes in a complex and careful balance of beliefs that the participants continually reinforce and maintain. They seek evidence for a positive future and where necessary avoid the negative views of others to ensure that they maintain a positive focus. For the female partners it is important that they feel that their partner is willing to change for them, for the male partners it is the ability to change that they hope for.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

This study was designed to explore four research questions. The first two questions considered the offender and their partner's experiences of their relationship with each other and their experiences during the prison sentence. The couples engaged fully in the process and provided a rich account of their experience which was particularly evident in the emergence of the first two themes; *having a special connection* and *challenges and threats*. The development of the understanding of the participants' experiences through the different elements of the relationship helped to establish the findings in relation to the third and fourth research questions that considered; the impact of the relationship experience on offending behaviour and the processes by which impact on offending behaviour may occur. The final themes

‘developing reciprocal behaviours’ and ‘maintaining a belief in the future’ provide some insight into the processes that influence behaviour in the relationship.

There is a wealth of research that considers the many elements of relationship quality and the functions that intimate interpersonal relationships serve. The theories are vast the names and descriptions for the qualities discussed are diverse. Relationship quality is subjective and it is easy to judge prisoners and their partners as failing to achieve quality in their relationships. Nevertheless, the emergent themes follow a pattern that fits with the descriptions in the previous literature in terms of relationship quality and satisfaction.

Due to the circumstances of the sentence prisoners and their partners do not actually have the opportunity to continue to practice fully all of the key elements that contribute to relationship satisfaction; interaction, emotion, expression, clarity and contact (Lessin et al, 2005), which may then influence the maintenance of the relationship. However, this research connects the couples within this study to the general literature on relationships. The themes of ‘having a special connection’ and ‘developing reciprocal behaviours’ while using different labels provide positive evidence on the five measures of relationship satisfaction (Lessin et al, 2005). The couples in this study describe their ‘interaction’ as fun and frequent, outside of prison they do a lot together as a couple and talk easily. They describe the ‘emotion’ component through their instant physical attraction, continued affection, apprehension when seeing each other and anguish when they cannot. Their anger is born of frustration when they cannot influence or protect each other. For all of the couples ‘expression’ of how they feel for each other is overt and reciprocated and they also have ‘clarity’ in that they understand what goes on between them and the patterns of behaviour that motivate

them. On the last measure 'contact' they describe high levels of support, an ability to influence and be influenced and frequent physical contact outside of prison and wanting this during the sentence. Based on this it is reasonable to assume that relationship satisfaction is generally high within this group. This satisfaction is not necessarily current and may be derived from past shared relational experience and future expectations. Nevertheless, relationship satisfaction is a goal that seems to maintain the relationship over time. An understanding of the development of the satisfaction experienced within the relationships is overtly expressed through the first emerging theme.

### **Having a Special Connection**

The first theme of '*having a special connection*' seems to describe the first two elements of Sternberg's (1986) Tripartite theory; intimacy and passion that motivates the maintenance of the relationship through the sentence. This theme emerges as the way in which the couple feel linked to each other, through an initially intense emotional and physical connection. The sense of intimacy is built on the manner in which the couples feel that they have knowledge of each other that is special and quite exclusive to them. This develops into a shared identity through all of the elements of sharing experienced by the participants. Individuals attain a positive self identity from the relationship, view the relationship as having a positive identity of its own or define a very positive identity for their partner. This theme emerges into a sense of being preserved from harm or wanting to preserve the other partner from harm and influences the offender's motivation to avoid offending in the future.

The development of this theme is concerned with the distance they have metaphorically travelled within the relationship experience, bringing intimacy and passion together. This emerges into the belief that they have something worth protecting. Linardatos and Lydon (2011) suggested that the development of this relationship identity is functional in that it predicts spontaneous, pro-relationship responses in the face of relational threat. The couple believe in their connection and this motivates them to protect it and each other throughout the prison sentence. Despite this functionality and the rational description of the development of a special connection there is also evidence of Cutrona's findings (2004); the 'connection' associated with romantic love between the prisoners and their partners is motivated by pleasure and pain and defies the principles of rational social exchange. The pain is explored within the second theme.

### **Challenges and Threats**

The second theme of '*challenges and threats*' is to some degree underplayed in the interviews by the participants and this seems to be due to a need to maintain a positive outlook to ensure that they can cope emotionally with the prison sentence. These individuals have developed adaptive behaviours and they seem to live up to them constantly. However, the challenges are over and above those experienced by most couples. This is evident in the sense of loss and loneliness and the isolation of not having others to turn to. While these themes emerge in terms of challenges and threats to the relationship, the essence of this was missing the partner and feeling lonely without them. It did not have the quality of enduring loneliness and was not particularly more evident in the interviews of the male participants. This supports Segrin and Flora (2001), these couples are within satisfying and committed relationships which seem to

protect them from the extreme feelings of loneliness and isolation that less fortunate prisoners experience during incarceration.

When exploring the threats and challenges, the individuals own personal difficulties and background issues become more evident within the transcripts. Early interactions with others generate expectations and beliefs about what relationships are like (Collins & Read, 1990). Many of the participants in this study had negative early relationship experiences that could have resulted in mistrust of others being there to support them when needed. While participants seem to be relatively secure in their adult attachment within the relationship generally, there is clear evidence of insecurity arising during the prison sentence that becomes a particular challenge for the couples. This suggests that the security and the stability engendered through their connection is threatened and pre-relationship attachment styles may emerge without daily contact.

This level of insecurity links into the theme of restriction for the female partners as they engage in 'safety behaviours' to prevent conflict within the relationship. This theme is more than psychological restriction. The prison sentence affects the female participant during the process of visits where they are also subject to the mistrust of the system and almost become part of the prison sentence. Comfort (2003), described a very negative experience that visitors to one American prison experienced and suggested that the process of visits was almost a secondary form of imprisonment for the female partners of prisoners. While not so extreme in this study, secondary imprisonment does come through in the transcripts. Participants are restricted to their homes and from work by the pressures of coping alone. These pressures lead to the sense of powerlessness experienced by some of the participants and guilt and shame for the offenders. This

guilt and shame is not as a result of offending, but as a result of the problems they have caused to their partner.

Understanding these threats and challenges is useful for considering the manner in which prisoners and their partners can be supported to improve and maintain their relationship through the sentence. The couples understand these issues and have developed successful strategies to ameliorate the difficulties.

### **Developing Reciprocal Behaviours**

When faced with these challenges relationship satisfaction in itself does not explain the lasting nature of these relationships and does not account for the influence each partner may have within a relationship. The couples in this study maintain as much interaction and contact as they can to continue to promote relationship satisfaction during the sentence. Their relationship survival strategies are complex and fascinating. The participants in this study demonstrate real skill in how they adapt to maintain their relationships over time. This process of adaptation provides insight into how the relationship is maintained and how partners influence each other. As relationship maintenance is important to reduce recidivism this theme further develops an explanation of how the relationship can influence behavioural change.

Rhoades, Stanley and Markman's (2010) suggest that four elements of commitment accounted for relationship adjustment and stability in a group of unmarried couples. Three of these elements; desire to maintain a relationship, perceived constraints and material constraints appeared to be implicit within the studied relationships. This fits with research that suggests that commitment is best measured through implicit association tests Slotter, Finkel, De Wall, Pond, Lambert, Bodenhausen and Fincham



(2011). However, all of the female participants were overt in their declarations to maintain the relationship through the sentence. Making this decision and stating their desire seemed to provide them with a reason to adjust behaviours in order to achieve this.

Adapting their behaviour to maintain relationship satisfaction provides hope for the offenders in terms of behaviour change. As each partner adjusts their behaviour the patterns within the relationship become more reciprocal. The fact that the female partners are pro-social and do not express any views that suggest they will become less so suggests that the male partners will become more pro-social as a relationship maintenance strategy. This is supported by La Vigne, et al's (2011) findings that pro-social relationships reduce re-offending while antisocial relationships have the opposite effect. This developing reciprocity fits with the findings of Hampel and Vangelisti's (2008), prototype theory studies and offers a method in which protection from re-offending could be increased. They found that couples were easily able to generate "if-then" contingencies e.g. "if I am going through a hard time then my partner will support me" related to self disclosure, empathy, trust, respect and faithfulness that set the scene for expectations within the relationship. Some of the couples in this study have developed "if-then" contingencies related to offending that may be useful to influence change.

These couples may also have natural qualities that enable them to cope that could be encouraged as protective factors in other couples. The theme of conflict was not salient within the study, managing conflict emerged but it was perhaps more interesting that conflict was not viewed as of concern. Fincham (2001), stated that perceptions of daily relationship events strongly coloured how partner's motives and

intentions were viewed and that this can have consequences for the future of the relationship. Those who view arguments as leading to the eventual end of the relationship are less happy within the relationship. The couples in this research supported this outcome in that they gave little weight to conflict within their relationship, they did report conflict but not as a major concern, suggesting that they did not view the relationship as being endangered by conflict.

Campbell et al (2005), attribute this to less anxious attachment within a relationship. The couples in this study appear to be supporting each other to change negative early patterns of attachment. They provide consistent support for each other and behaviour change that reduces the potential for negative relationship events. This reduces avoidant attachment behaviours, such as a lack of comfort with closeness and emotional intimacy and may eventually reduce anxious attachment behaviours, such as worry and rumination of being rejected by partners. Campbell et al (2005) found that anxious individuals viewed the supportive behaviours of their partners more positively than securely attached individuals. This may explain the high level of feeling valued as a concept in this research. Female partners are effectively, having to show a high level of support during the sentence and this may make the more anxious men feel very cared for. Both partners also have to seek more support from each other which results in increased support giving which could actually improve their skills in this area.

Feeney and Collins (2003) found that care giving within relationships is complex and that responsive care giving predicted the recipient's perceptions of healthy relationship functioning at the time and in the future. The patterns established within the relationships considered in this study support this. The couples in this study are motivated to support each other through their emotional connection and the sense that

they are valued in the relationship and want to show the other person that they are valued. The way in which they value each other and their memories of how they have valued each other in the past helps them to continue to perceive the relationship as healthy. It is interesting that research has shown that partners of more anxious individuals disclose less to them (Bradford, Feeney and Campbell, 2002). While in this research all partners viewed it as important to disclose everything in order to provide reassurance to each other. Maybe this is because they understand the source of the anxiety and have realised that a high level of disclosure is an effective and acceptable strategy. Increased communication if it survives into their behaviour post sentence is likely to be effective in continuing to improve the relationship. However it may need refining to ensure it is what both partners enjoy and need.

Some of the coping strategies that the couples use are cognitive and involve a positive focus on the future, a sense of wanting to move on and this was evident both in their comments within the interview and their minimising of ‘challenges and threats’. This links into the final theme.

### **Maintaining Belief in the Future**

This theme seems to be the most poignant within this study. The couples have developed specific strategies that help them to maintain their belief in the future. They have invested time and effort into the relationship and have built commitment through shared homes and families. They acquire good things in the relationship and feel love for each other. These are not things to be given up lightly. The female partners are making sacrifices to remain in the relationship due to consequences of the offending behaviour. To remain compassionate and supportive they need to maintain their belief

in themselves as good people and their partners as non-typical offenders who will not put them through this again. The evidence they seek for this exists within the theme of 'developing reciprocal behaviours' such as commitment, support, reassurance and feeling valued, but it seems that they need to go one step further to believe not only in the now but in the future. The mechanisms by which they do this are complex.

Sharing their hopes and goals for the future seems to be the starting point. The couples while realistic edge towards optimism and according to Srivastava, McGonigal, Richards, Butler and Gross (2006) they are right to do this. Believing in positive relationship outcomes generally results in positive events and Fitzsimons and Fishbach, (2009), demonstrated that when individuals are motivated towards a goal they draw closer to others that could be instrumental in achieving that goal. However, this is difficult to do when experiencing the effects of the prison sentence and this is especially true if there is evidence of repeated shared goal violation as the result of offending.

In order to manage their hope the female partners seem to have developed explanations of the offending that allow them to believe that this is the last time it will happen. When the evidence is more weighted towards it happening again e.g. where their partners have offended before or have substance misuse issues, they seem to expend more effort on developing the explanations. Although not mentioned directly by the participants one of the elements needed to maintain the shared identity of a relationship following transgressions is forgiveness (Karremans & Van Lange, 2008). Individuals view themselves as more closely related in a cognitive sense to their partner if they are able to forgive them for transgressions. Fluctuations in cognitive interdependence talked about by Karremans and Van Lange (2008), are seen in the transcripts as times participants talk about 'we' or 'I'. They use 'we' when they are

recounting positive memories and revert to 'I' and 'him' when there are elements which cause them to experience more frustration and anger. This suggests they have not fully forgiven their partners for certain things. Despite this even when they do not seem to have forgiven their partner they still provide explanations for his behaviour that allows understanding and continued support. The male participants seem to understand that to retain this compassion they cannot excuse their behaviour directly themselves. Both individuals within the couple realise the balance is precarious and this willingness to provide explanations may reach a limit. This suggests that a more complex mechanism than forgiveness alone is operating. Each partner is playing their part in the process in order to ensure that their most important interpersonal relationship survives into a shared future. It would be easy to judge this balancing act as naive and maladaptive, but when considering the relationship satisfaction experienced over the whole course of the relationship and the many benefits experienced by the couple, it could be viewed as an adaptive relationship strategy.

## **Limitations**

This study has limitations in that relationships are very complex and not all of the questions that could be asked to explore the protective experience of interpersonal relationships could be asked or answered in the time available. The questions that were asked yielded a wealth of rich responses from the participants and this analysis could not fully do justice to the information provided. There is a wealth of literature related to relationships and some of the findings emerge within this research, however there is likely to be evidence in the transcripts for many more themes if the focus of the analysis was changed. Nevertheless, the analysis as it stands provides a rich source of

information for practitioners wishing to support prisoners and their partners in the maintenance of their relationships with a view to reducing re-offending.

### **Implications for Practice**

The study whilst not designed to establish whether the maintenance of the relationship can reduce re-offending was able to explore how relationships could be supported and maintained. Practitioners who believe that supporting prisoners to maintain relationships is a useful approach to reducing re-offending may find the following suggestions useful. The first area to be considered for practitioners is to avoid negative judgements of offenders' descriptions of their relationships. Offenders who have not committed offences within their relationships do not have to account for their relationship behaviours and a better strategy would be to explore the strengths in the relationship with the couple and build on this. A non-judgemental and compassionate approach (Gilbert, 2010) should be aimed for and a sense that we are working with building on an already positive base rather than trying to eradicate negative behaviours may be more successful.

Within this study many components of relationship satisfaction emerged with very many idiosyncratic ways of maintaining satisfaction in difficult circumstances. Teaching partners the components of relationship satisfaction, exploring their "if-then" contingencies and discussing individualised ways of maintaining this could be very useful as a starting point for improving relationship quality. Teaching partners to be realistic about conflict; the normality of arguing and not setting expectations that seek to reduce it, but rather changing the threat that it holds, is also likely to be a more realistic and achievable strategy for many couples under extreme stress.

Increasing the offenders' emotional connection to their partner increases their guilt which may reduce offending behaviour. Supporting couples' patterns of communication is crucial in developing and maintaining this connection. It is not only the prisoner who is the support seeker. He may be the only form of emotional support his partner has and regular phone contact is critical to this. If communication arrangements work for the couple then that should not create suspicion with those working with the offender. Where possible more relaxed extended visits should be considered as physical contact with time for communicating is reassuring and supportive to both partners, countering some of the challenges they face. Helping couples to consider the way in which they communicate during the prison sentence and encouraging them to take the positives of this forward when they leave prison is also important. The couples are adaptive they compensate for the lack of physical contact through increased detailed communication and it may be useful to acknowledge this and build it into future behaviour. Finally, it seems important to allow for strategies that include compassion and provide explanations for the offending, this seems to serve an important function in the maintenance of optimism that may be directly linked to future behavioural change for the male partner through a desire to live up to the view the female partner holds of him. Maruna, LeBel, Mitchell and Naples (2004) suggest that individuals start to believe that they can successfully change their lives when those around them believe that they can.

### **Concluding Remarks**

In this study there is support for the mechanisms described by Sampson, et al (2006) that operate within marriage or long term committed relationships. The participants recognise the costs they experience from crime when they are separated

from someone they love and their obligation to their partner also results in the experience of guilt related to this. The relationships have previously resulted in lifestyle change and the female partner exerts some direct influence that could change behaviour. There is also evidence that leads to a change in self identity. Sampson, et al (2006), suggest that this shift in identity maybe to a more 'responsible' person. However, this research suggests a more complex shift to a more positive self identity and a shared identity; over and above an increase in feeling protective and responsible for the other person. This research also suggests another mechanism is at work. The offenders' partners believe in them and present an optimistic view of the future. This hope is built on a compassionate view of the offending, a willingness to look for and give weight to evidence of change and a willingness to be on the offenders' side. This seems to be a mechanism by which difficult past experiences can be resolved and the offender can move towards a more positive future. Sampson, et al (2006) believe that these mechanisms can help reduce re-offending. Whilst the nature of this study conducted during the prison sentence does not allow for support of their theory, this study does illustrate the experiences of the participants' within their relationships and their experience of the relationship during the prison sentence. It provides insight into the possible impact of the relationship experience on offending behaviour and offers explanations of the process by which this could occur. Given the complexity of intimate relationships further work in this area could yield many more interesting insights.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **A REVIEW OF THE RELATIONSHIP SCALES QUESTIONNAIRE**

#### **Introduction**

This paper critiques the psychometric assessment the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ), also referred to in the literature as the Relationship Styles Questionnaire, developed by Griffin and Bartholomew (1994). This is a 30 item self report questionnaire that is used to measure four attachment patterns within relationships. The patterns, the authors purport, have emerged from the general psychological theory that has built upon Bowlby's (1973, 1980, 1982) attachment theory and explored adult attachment (Hazan & Shaver, 1987). Adult attachment behaviour is not as easy to observe as the attachment behaviour of children. However, there is evidence to suggest that such observation is viable. For example, Fraley and Shaver (1998) tried to explore the ecological validity of adult attachment theory. They asked couples separating at an airport to complete a set of relationships questionnaires and then watched them unobtrusively as they left each other. Their analysis provided some support for observable behaviours related to attachment styles. However the majority of research explores the manner in which attachment styles predict the nature and quality of adult close relationships. The concept of adult attachment styles has demonstrated considerable predictive validity in a number of areas including jealousy, wellbeing, relationship satisfaction and support (Shaver & Hazen, 1993). As a consequence adult attachment as a construct has evidence based support.

## **Attachment Styles**

The main tenet of attachment is that close relationships are regulated by internal working models which organise thoughts, affects and behaviours related to the partner and to oneself (Kurdek 2002). The adult attachment patterns measured by the RSQ are derived from the work of Hazan and Shaver (1987) who first considered that the patterns of attachment demonstrated in childhood could be seen in adult relationships. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) tested a four category model which demonstrated the utility of the specific styles for understanding individual differences in interpersonal functioning. The results support the presence of four categories they had hypothesised; Secure, Fearful, Pre-occupied, and Dismissing. Each category is based on a combination of positive and negative views of self and others. For example, those who are securely attached demonstrate a positive view of themselves and others while those who are pre-occupied have a positive view of others and a negative view of themselves. The patterns are effectively strategies for managing a sense of security in intimate relationships and each pattern is deemed to be categorised by specific levels of emotional regulation and interpersonal behaviour. Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) demonstrated that the patterns of attachment could be measured using a self report questionnaire. They also found that the different attachment styles related to different types of problems being reported by those who fit each profile.

Dutton, Saunders, Starzomski and Bartholomew (1994) describe how the attachment styles link to emotions and behaviour. The secure pattern is defined in terms of an individual reporting a positive model of themselves and also a positive model of other people. Individuals scoring high in this attachment pattern are deemed to be confident and comfortable with intimacy in their close relationships. This pattern is

expected to be negatively associated with emotional reactivity and abuse in intimate relationships. The fearful pattern is defined in terms of an individual reporting a negative model of themselves and others. Individuals scoring high in this attachment pattern are thought to desire social contact and intimacy. However, their ability to maintain and benefit from this is impaired by pervasive interpersonal distrust. These individuals are likely to experience anxiety about abandonment in their relationships and subsequently this attachment style is expected to be positively related to anger, jealousy and general affective instability. The pre-occupied pattern is defined in terms of a negative view of the self and a positive view of others. Individuals who score high on this attachment style try to gain their intimate partner's approval in order to experience a sense of self worth. These individuals may desire intimacy but similar to 'fearful' individuals they are also prone to being anxious about the possibility of abandonment by their partners. Subsequently this type of attachment pattern is also expected to be positively related to anger, jealousy and affective instability. The dismissing pattern is defined in terms of a positive view of the self and a negative view of others. Individuals scoring high in this attachment pattern minimise the importance of attachment and are emotionally distant in relationships to maintain their positive view of themselves. This emotional detachment reduces the likelihood of jealousy, anger and emotional outbursts in intimate relationships.

### **Overview of the RSQ**

Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) considered that adult attachment research lacked an integrated approach to measurement. They stated that if attachment style predicts behaviour then an accurate measurement tool of attachment is essential. They used the self and other model originating in Bowlby's (1973, 1980, 1982 cited in Griffin

& Bartholomew, 1994) earlier literature and discussed how it underpinned the four categories of attachment tested by Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991). This theory and their understanding of the concepts helped develop the RSQ.

Despite the RSQ's wide use within attachment literature it does not have a manual. Instructions for the use of the questionnaire are listed on Bartholomew's website (<http://www.sfu.ca/psyc/faculty/bartholomew/selfreports.htm>). The Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP) Revised Psychometric Assessment Manual: Version 4 (2007) also provides manual information such as an explanation of the measure and its administration.

The RSQ consists of 30 items (Appendix 8). Respondents are asked to rate, on a 5 point Likert scale, the extent to which each statement describes their feelings about romantic relationships. The scale anchors are: 1 = Not at all like me, 3 = somewhat like me, 5 = very much like me. The secure and dismissing patterns have 5 items and 4 contribute to the fearful and pre-occupied patterns (Appendix 9). On completion of the scale, the items representing each subscale are summed. The scores for each attachment pattern are derived by taking the mean of the items representing each attachment style. The following norms are reported in the SOTP manual (Rallings, Ray, Wakeling & Webster, 2007); Secure:  $M = 16.4$ ; Fearful:  $M = 13.5$ ; Pre-occupied:  $M = 10.6$ ; Dismissing:  $M = 16.1$ . Unfortunately the standard deviations are not reported. The normative group consists of 40 non-violent, non-criminal men from the Canadian Correctional Services. The respondents receive a continuous rating for each attachment pattern. The RSQ was not designed to be used as a categorical measure of attachment style. Categorical measures do not demonstrate good predictive qualities (Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1994).

The RSQ items were drawn from three other attachment questionnaires; Hazan and Shaver's (1987) attachment measure, Bartholomew and Horowitz's (1991) Relationship Questionnaire (RQ), itself was developed using the Hazan and Shaver (1987) measure and Collins and Read's (1990) Adult Attachment Scale. Where the items overlapped one of the conceptually identical items was included. As the tool was developed in this way, in addition to the 4 RSQ category sub-scales; the RSQ can be used to obtain the 3 adult attachment styles purported by Hazan and Shaver (1987); secure, avoidant and anxious, and the dimensions reported by Collins and Read (1990); closeness, dependency and anxiety.

### **Psychometric Properties of the RSQ**

The development of the RSQ has been theory driven, rather than data driven, and as a consequence the authors conducted follow up studies in which the properties of the test were considered. The studies demonstrated that the two dimensions (self and other) provided an organising framework for the three different measurement approaches (self report, interview and friends' report). This has been supported by other authors. Kurdek (2002) stated that in addition to the patterns of attachment the RSQ can be used to determine the underlying dimensions of the scale i.e. self and other, through factor analysis of the items, or by using the scores from the 4 prototype items to create linear combinations.

This critique will attempt to use both published and unpublished information to consider its content, reliability and validity and research base, in addition to the use of the RSQ in the clinical field.

## **Characteristics of a Good Test.**

In terms of whether the RSQ is a robust tool for use in an applied setting a review of the data collected for SOTPs within the Prison Service is useful as it has been collected consistently and on a large scale. In 2009 data on the full test battery for over 8000 men was collated which included the administration of the RSQ (Barnett, 2009). The Prison Service psychometric battery is subject to an ongoing programme of validation, managed by the SOTP Research and Evaluation team. The Prison Service psychometrics are placed into three categories; Strong support, Moderate support, Little support, according to how well the validity and the reliability of the tool is determined. The RSQ has been placed in the category of Little support as determined by Barnett (2009). According to the review, the RSQ met the criteria for use with sex offenders. It was tested on over 200 people and demonstrated convergent validity with the four attachment patterns (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). However, it failed to meet the targets demonstrating test-retest reliability, internal consistency, construct and discriminant validity and relationship with recidivism.

The criteria applied by the prison service are very specific to sexual offending and recidivism. The RSQ was not developed to be used with this population, nor to discriminate between recidivists and non-recidivists. The concept of attachment and its links to recidivism is in itself difficult to quantify. Therefore in order to explore the test more objectively this review will go on to consider it in the context of the criteria of a good test provided by Kline (1986). A test may be described as a good test if it has the following characteristics; the data is based on at least interval level, it is reliable, it is valid and it has appropriate norms. The RSQ does not have specific norms, however, this review will explore each of the other areas in turn.

## **The Test Construction**

The level of data provided by the RSQ is interval data, there is no true zero point but each number represented on the Likert scale has an equal and meaningful relationship to the other numbers. The RSQ therefore meets Kline's first test and this allows for statistical calculations to be completed that aid exploration of its validity and reliability. There are some issues inherent in the Likert scale that emerge when self report is used i.e. acquiescence, social desirability and central tendency bias. The RSQ is subject to reporting bias, as any tool using this type of scale is, however, the use of the scale to provide an attachment pattern rather than an attachment category limits the problems of bias to some degree. As with other classical tests data is summed and means taken for each scale, therefore the more items that an individual endorses, the higher the level of the attachment style the individual is deemed to have. As a consequence individuals responding differently may have very different profiles but achieve similar scores. With regard to the RSQ the numbers of items in the scales are small and the specific profiles narrow. Although the behaviours of individuals with the same score may vary, their attachment profiles are unlikely to be very different psychologically.

## **Reliability**

A measure is said to be reliable if it repeatedly measures a construct in a consistent manner. This can be assessed in a variety of ways. Test re-test scores on a psychological tool should yield the same score for the same individual at different time periods, in the absence of any intervention designed to change the underlying construct. In order to demonstrate this type of reliability the measure should demonstrate

correlations that exceed .7 (Kline, 2000). Attachment has been conceptualised as relatively stable across the lifespan, unless moderated by life experiences that disconfirm the original pattern over time. If the RSQ is reliable it should be able to demonstrate this stability through high reliability correlations at least over short periods. Scharfe and Bartholomew (1994) reported reliability data for the RSQ from previous research suggesting that the secure scale reached a reliable level (.71). However, the other scales were less reliable (fearful .64, pre-occupied .59, dismissing .49). They then explored the stability of the attachment concept with 77 couples. As part of the process they used the RSQ, the Peer Attachment Interview and the RQ (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). They conducted the process at time one and then eight months later (controlling for life events). They found that the concept of attachment demonstrated moderate stability. However, unreliability was reported with the self report measure. The RSQ demonstrated less reliability than interviews. For female participants the findings were; secure .53, fearful .58, pre-occupied .56, dismissing .45, while for the male participants the findings were; secure .39, fearful .58, pre-occupied .49, dismissing .51. Overall only 63% of the females and 56% of the males demonstrated the same attachment pattern on both measurement occasions. These low levels of reliability raise concerns in relation to the use of the RSQ when measuring a construct that should be relatively stable.

A further measure of reliability is internal consistency of the test items. A test should incorporate items that tap the domain in question. As a consequence of this they should be closely related, i.e. test items should demonstrate consistency with each other. For a test to demonstrate reliability an alpha score of above .7 (Kline 2000) is required. Griffin and Bartholomew (1994a) reported Cronbach alphas (averaged over partners) of



.50, .73 and .73 for the secure, anxious and avoidant attachment scales as suggested by Hazan and Shaver (1987) and alphas ranging between .73 and .78 for Collins and Read's (1990) dependency, anxiety and closeness scales. This provides some evidence that the measure taps the domain of attachment. However, for their own factors they report lower alphas ranging between .41 for secure to .70 for dismissing (Griffin & Bartholomew 1994b). Further studies of internal consistency have been completed by Ognibene and Collins (1998). They measured attachment in relation to support seeking and coping. Their sample consisted of 81 undergraduate students. They obtained the following alpha ratings for the subscales; secure .37; fearful .75; preoccupied, .72; dismissing, .62. The reliabilities are low for the secure and dismissing scales therefore the internal consistency for the RSQ does not meet the criteria suggested by Kline (2000) as a characteristic of a good test.

Segal, Needham and Coolidge (2009) measured the attachment patterns of two hundred and fifty younger and older adults (2009) using the RSQ and the Measure of Attachment Qualities (MAQ; Carver, 1997, cited in Segal et al., 2009). The internal reliability (Cronbach's alpha) was analyzed for each RSQ scale in the full sample (Secure .40, Fearful .74, Preoccupied .58, Dismissive, .65), among younger adults (Secure .53, Fearful .79, Preoccupied .58, Dismissive .66), and among older adults (Secure .18, Fearful, .65, Preoccupied, .52, Dismissive, .63). They determined that in general, these internal reliabilities were adequate for the Fearful and Dismissive scales in each sample but not for the Secure and Preoccupied scales in each sample. For the MAQ (Carver, 1997) they reported superior internal consistencies to those reported for the RSQ and concluded the MAQ had psychometric advantages.

Barnett (2009) explored the internal consistency of the RSQ using a custody sample of 3822 adult males. The analysis determined that the internal consistencies of the RSQ subscale scores are variable and at times quite low. The information reported that the scales range between .30 and .59 with Secure and Dismissing appearing to have the greater internal consistency.

The RSQ is a classical test. The classical method of scoring does not guarantee that measurement precision will be equally distributed across the domain of interest. The psychometric properties also depend on the number of scale items and the properties of the sample being studied. There are a number of possible reasons for this lack of internal consistency. The RSQ items are not all measuring a uni-dimensional concept but rather 2 fundamental underpinning elements, those of view of self and view of others that interact in order to contribute to the 4 scales. In addition, when looking at the scales, it is possible to predict a lack of internal consistency. As an example the fearful scale has 4 items that relate to fear of being close and 1 item that relates to seeking closeness. Pairing these opposite views with the self/other concept makes each factor less cohesive. Low reliability scores can also sometimes be related to low numbers of scale items. The RSQ has very short scales which limits its capacity to demonstrate reliability. However, there is no evidence that adding items will improve consistency and the pre-occupied scale, which has only 4 items, generally demonstrates higher alpha scores.

Further scaling problems for the RSQ have been explored using item response theory (IRT) analysis (Fraley, Waller & Brennan, 2000). The overall finding is that the scale, along with a number of other measures of attachment, could be improved. Fraley et al. (2000) state that IRT consists of models designed to represent the relationship

between an individual's item response and an underlying latent trait. The authors purport that IRT can provide a framework for relating attachment organisation to observed scores on self report scales. The outcome of the analysis for the RSQ was mixed. The study found that items showed evidence of good fit and the scales (except Secure) had uniform measurement precision. However, this measurement precision was low. Overall the IRT assessment suggested that the psychometric properties of the RSQ could be significantly improved and that the Experiences in Close Relationships scales (Brennan, Clark & Shaver, 1998, cited in Fraley et al. 2000) was actually a better existing measure of attachment. However, IRT assumes a uni-dimensional construct is being measured and, as already discussed; the self and other model measured by the RSQ does not fit this assumption. Nevertheless, the study does call into question the ability of the RSQ to reliably measure trait stability and change (Fraley et al., 2000).

## **Validity**

The essence of validity is that the construct being assessed is real and the tool is actually measuring the construct it sets out to measure. The RSQ starts from a position of strength in that the construct it attempts to measure, attachment, is well researched within the field of psychology and has been applied to a considerable number of novel situations. Many researchers accept that attachment exists and influences behaviour in a variety of contexts including in intimate relationships. There is little specific research into the content validity of the RSQ in terms of interclass correlation. However, 18 of its items correspond directly to the Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) model of adult attachment and therefore it has face validity. The use of the RSQ in attachment research has led to a considerable knowledge base developed by eminent researchers who

explore domestic violence and sexual offending. This widespread use of the measure suggests content validity.

The authors of the RSQ have tried to provide evidence for the validity of the attachment model. Using a sample of undergraduates and heterosexual couples, Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) conducted three studies in which they used self report, friend report, romantic partner report, trained judges' ratings of peer and family attachment to validate the 2 dimensions underlying the 4 category model. Griffin & Bartholomew (1994) employed various methods of statistical analysis when investigating the construct. They used structural equation modelling and confirmatory factor analysis to consider convergent and discriminatory validity (together equating to construct validity) and to explore whether the underlying dimensions could be measured reliably. In the first study they demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity for the self/other model. In the second study they related the latent attachment dimensions to outcome variables and found that positive self models of individuals were related to direct measures of positive self concepts and that positive other models were related to direct measures of positive interpersonal orientation. This allowed them to suggest that in addition to construct validity the self/other model had predictive validity. In the third study they also demonstrated predictive validity in that the attachment styles predicted later self esteem. In all, their findings were supportive of discriminant validity (measures of different constructs were independent) and convergent validity (different measures of a construct being highly related) for the self/other model of attachment.

The sample studied by Griffin and Bartholomew (1994) was relatively small; study 1 was based on sixty nine undergraduates, study 2 was based on seventy seven undergraduates and study 3 (in which the RSQ was used) included seventy eight

heterosexual couples. However, the diversity of assessments used provided a robust methodology that together with their similar findings throughout the sample populations suggests reliable findings. The authors themselves admit that due to theoretical and empirical reasons they are less confident that the individual attachment patterns would demonstrate convergent and discriminant validity when assessed through confirmatory factor analysis. They suggest that an implicit self report measure based on socially desirable alternative characteristics for each pattern would provide better results.

Although the initial studies involving the RSQ were based on small and relatively unrepresentative samples, the RSQ has been used in many studies which seek to measure adult attachment and consider its influence on behaviour in different groups. Segal, Needham and Coolidge (2009) measured the attachment patterns of 144 younger and 106 older adults. The participants completed the MAQ (Carver, 1997) and the RSQ. The study found that correlations between the two measures were in the expected directions and that this provided modest evidence for their convergent validity. There were also differences in relationship attachment styles for younger and older adults suggesting some ability of the measures to discriminate between age groups.

Kurdek (2002) explored the scales of the RSQ using confirmatory factor analysis by considering how the items fit different models of attachment. They used a sample of over 160 couples which included gay, lesbian and heterosexual couples. They did not find that the items on the measure fit Griffin and Bartholomew's (1994) four factors, however, they did find evidence for the self/other model. The self/other concept of attachment is therefore measured by the RSQ which supports its construct validity. They then looked at whether the self/other model was robust enough to account for the variance between commitment – the intent to continue in a relationship and satisfaction

- the positive affect experienced in relationships. The study controlled for personality variables and found that those with positive self and positive other views reported more commitment and satisfaction in their relationships, demonstrating discriminant validity. The authors determined that the RSQ yields psychometrically sound scores of attachment styles. They had also tested the Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 1990) and not found psychometrically sound scores. This research supports the measurement of attachment within the wider population and identifies similar patterns in non-heterosexual relationships which suggest a wider utility for the RSQ.

There is also some support for the validity of the RSQ with samples of offenders. A considerable amount of research uses the RSQ within a battery of psychometrics to explore concepts within interpersonal violence. Johnson, Gilchrist, Beech, Weston, Takriti and Freeman (2006) developed typologies of UK domestic violence offenders. They considered attachment dysfunction as a proximal correlate of domestic abuse and used the RSQ to explore this. Their analysis of the data, collected from two hundred and thirty men who had offended against their partners, provided a four factor model; psychopathology, interpersonal dependency, macho attitudes and narcissism. The fearful and pre-occupied scales of the RSQ loaded well onto interpersonal dependency (.65 and .67 respectively). The following typologies were then developed through cluster analysis; low pathology, borderline, narcissistic and antisocial. The borderline category had significantly higher scores on the fearful and pre-occupied scales of the RSQ than any other cluster. This group had also experienced the most abuse in childhood, had the most suicidal ideation, lowest self esteem, most external locus of control and highest levels of anger. This adds to the evidence for the overall validity of attachment and the RSQ's ability to measure this effectively.

Interestingly the secure and dismissing styles do not appear to load and this may be related to their reduced reliability.

The authors of the RSQ do not focus on providing data related to concurrent validity which is achieved when the test and the outcome measure are done at the same time, or predictive validity where the test is administered and the outcome is measured in the future. They were focussed on the concept of attachment rather than the properties of the RSQ. There is data to support the concurrent validity of the RSQ as it correlates with the RQ provided by other authors. Dutton et al. (1994) found that the RSQ correlated positively with the RQ; .39 secure attachment, .45 dismissing, .60 fearful and .65 pre-occupied attachment demonstrating concurrent validity between the two measures. However, this is to some degree as expected given that the RQ was used in its development.

In terms of sexual offending behaviour the RSQ does not have predictive validity; it fails to discriminate between those who offend and those who do not based on their attachment profile. This may be because those who re-offend may not actually get caught, or that the reason for offending is not actually related to attachment style. To truly consider the predictive validity of the RSQ it must be able to demonstrate the ability to predict behaviours that are clearly associated with attachment i.e. secure attachment scores should predict satisfying committed relationships in which the individual is confident of having their needs met, while pre-occupied and fearful should predict difficult relationship behaviours, while dismissing should predict a lack of investment in relationships. This in itself is difficult to explore as relationships involve two people who each bring their own attachment pattern to the experience. The developers of the RSQ, Griffin and Bartholomew (1994), did provide some evidence for

its predictive validity. They demonstrated that eight months following completion of the measure self esteem levels could be predicted by the items relating to the self model. In other areas there is evidence for the predictive validity of the RSQ. However, the correlation between the RSQ and the outcome measures it is able to predict are limited by the reliability of the test. Within the prison population its reliability is limited as it failed to meet the criteria for test-retest reliability and for internal consistency. This means that when using the tool for prediction purposes there are likely to be a number of errors in prediction.

Dutton et al. (1994) used the measure to explore the associations between attachment and features of borderline personality organisation, anger, jealousy, trauma and psychological abuse. The measure (as hypothesised) demonstrated positive correlations between fearful and pre-occupied attachment styles with the other measures, negative correlations for secure attachment and no correlations for dismissing attachment style. Dutton et al. (1994) also report validity demonstrated by the RSQ. In their study the RSQ was administered to 120 male perpetrators of violence against their partners and 40 controls. The RSQ correlated with other measures that had already been shown to represent a profile significantly related to frequency of verbal and physical abuse. Fearful attachment was higher in men who also showed greater levels of anger, jealousy, trauma symptoms and borderline personality features. Fearful attachment as a concept is viewed as dysfunctional, and therefore its correlation with other high scores of dysfunction in other areas provides some evidence for concurrent validity. The fearful scale also correlated with a direct measure of emotional abusiveness. The level of fearful attachment was able to predict levels of abusiveness. Dutton et al. (1994) also



found that secure attachment was much higher for the control group which supported their hypothesis and also supported the validity of the measure.

### **Uses of the RSQ**

The authors of the questionnaire hypothesised that specific adult relationship styles, particularly those that were not secure would be linked to spousal assault through different mechanisms. In order to explore this they developed the RSQ by choosing the items they felt best met their needs from the other scales. The area of research they explored at the time was in its infancy and the RSQ received interest from other researchers developing the field of domestic abuse and sexual abuse. As a consequence the tool became widely used while less widely evaluated.

The Prison Service sex offender treatment programmes (SOTPs) and the domestic violence Healthy Relationships Programme (HRP) and Integrated domestic Abuse Programme (IDAP) rely on psychometric assessment batteries to assess offenders' treatment need, assign treatment programmes, and evaluate treatment outcome. The RSQ has become part of both test batteries. Its use in the partner violence programmes has arisen from the research initially engaged in by the test authors and further developed by other researchers interested in the field. There appears to be a direct relationship between attachment style and violent offending within relationships (Beech, 1998). Its use in the SOTP battery has emerged initially from the research of Hudson and Ward (1997). One of the areas of risk for sex offending is a lack of intimate relationship and while this can arise from a lack of relationship competency there is also evidence to suggest poor attachment behaviours create difficulties for offenders in this area (Hudson & Ward, 1997). Within sex offender and partner violence treatment the

RSQ is used pre and post treatment and it is hoped that the secure scale scores will increase through treatment while the fearful, pre-occupied and dismissing scores will decrease.

The RSQ has been used in studies that attempt to address many concepts, as it is also able to identify positive attachment within relationships. More recently the RSQ has been used to measure attachment to study outcomes related to treatment in order to improve treatment potential. These include studies with relation to developing a therapeutic alliance and related to treatment adjustment to trauma. Smith, Msetfi and Golding (2010) conducted a systematic review and concluded that those reporting secure attachment using various methods including the RSQ reported better therapeutic relationships in treatment. Forbes, Parslow, Fletcher, McHugh and Creamer (2010) investigated attachment style as a predictor of outcome for one hundred and three veterans attending treatment for Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). They found that the pre-occupied attachment style negatively predicted outcome after treatment.

### **Conclusion**

There are a number of confounding variables when exploring the RSQ. On the surface it has content validity and is a simple measure to administer and score. However it demonstrates poor reliability in terms of both test retest reliability and the internal consistency of the items on each scale. This lack of reliability impacts upon the RSQs validity and creates problems for its recognition as a good test.

However, the ability of many studies to demonstrate behaviours related to attachment patterns provides robust evidence for the construct of attachment. This subsequently provides evidence that supports the construct validity of the RSQ. The

prison service data contradicts this view in that it suggests a lack of construct validity for the tool. This discrepancy may be explained by the relationship between attachment and sexual offending not being a well defined concept. The studies that explore domestic violence are by their nature set within the context of a relationship. Relationship factors are therefore likely to be proximal correlates of offending behaviour. This is not the case with all sexual offending and the attachment scales identified by the RSQ may demonstrate higher reliability ratings and show stronger validity when explored for sexual offenders who offend within relationships. In addition to this, risk itself is a vague concept that does not lend itself to measurement and even psychometrics that set out to measure risk, which the RSQ does not try to do, do not generally do this well.

In order to explore the validity of the RSQ the inferences made from the test need to be appropriate, meaningful and useful. That is, test performance should equal observable behaviour. This does appear to be an area of strength for the tool, in that many studies are reporting predicted outcomes related to views of the self and others and relationship functioning. Success in showing psychometric properties for the self/other model as opposed to the four categories could mean that it would be better used if it was scored on two dimensions. However, individual attachment patterns relate to different interpersonal problems. Those with different attachment styles do not function in the same way (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). If the measure does not discriminate between the styles it may oversimplify the relationship between attachment and interpersonal functioning (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994) losing its utility.

There is a general consensus within attachment research that the RSQ is a valid measure as it appears to access the concept of adult attachment. Its use in research does

add to the knowledge base. However, caution is required when drawing inferences from its use as its psychometric properties are not consistent or robust.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

The aim of this thesis is to understand and explore the impact that positive interpersonal relationships have on reducing re-offending behaviour. In order to do this the three stages were completed; a systematic review, a research project and a review of a psychometric. This Chapter aims to summarise the aims and findings of each piece of research and highlight how it has contributed to the overall thesis aim, before addressing the implications for practice and limitations of this body of work.

#### **Summary of Findings**

As suggested by previous literature (May, Sharma & Stewart, 1998) this thesis found a number of positive outcomes related to maintaining relationships during the prison sentence. It also identified a number of processes through which positive interpersonal relationships could influence desistance from crime. Chapter 2 details the systematic review that initially considered the actual outcome data related to prison visits with family members and intimate partners and the impact of visits on wellbeing, prison behaviour and recidivism. The results while needing to be viewed with caution due to the lack of research in this area, suggested a positive impact. Chapter 3 details the research study that then explored some of the processes through which intimate interpersonal relationships; survive the prison sentence, support wellbeing and attempts to provide some depth to explain some of the positive results found in Chapter 2. Finally, Chapter 4 evaluates a psychometric tool, the Relationship Scales Questionnaire. The outcome of the evaluation suggests that it could be used in studies that explore those relationship processes further by measuring the attachment styles of prisoners and

their partners and the impact this may have on the visits experience and maintenance of relationships.

## **Chapter 2- Systematic Review**

The systematic review detailed in Chapter 2 established the existence of an up to date robust evidence base for the impact of prison visits. The review set out to determine the effects of prison visits on several offender outcome variables, namely wellbeing, prison rule-breaking behaviour and recidivism. The aims of the review were:

1. To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing – measured by stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours,
2. To determine if prison visits improve prisoners' behaviour in terms of rule-breaking within the prison environment,
3. To determine if prison visits reduce recidivism as measured by official records.

In order to answer these questions the review included studies whose participants were prisoners of both sex and all ages, who experienced prison visits. The results of the ten studies identified found that a number of positive outcomes are associated with prisoners receiving visits from their families, intimate partners and children.

Six of the studies considered were related to prisoner wellbeing. Two studies Poehlmann (2005) and Pinese et al (2010) found that mothers receiving fewer face to face visits with their children had higher levels of depression and that severe depression was associated with mothers' not receiving visits from children when they were in prison. The reduced level of depression associated with visits was also identified in a group of adolescents receiving visits from their parents. Monahan et al (2011) studied

male adolescents and found that those receiving more visits from their parents experienced a quicker reduction in depressive symptoms than those who did not. The overall finding of the review, while limited by the lack of studies available, suggested that prison visits moderate the negative effects of incarceration on depression for adolescents and women, therefore improving their wellbeing within the prison environment. However, in terms of stress for incarcerated mothers Houck and Loper (2002), found that for some mothers receiving visits increased their stress and anxiety which impacted upon their adjustment to the prison environment. Although this result should be viewed with caution the impact of visits from their children for women should be considered on an individual basis. The outcome of the review suggests that prison visits do impact on wellbeing, often positively, but the manner in which this occurs differs for each prisoner group.

Three studies identified in this review explored prison visits and rule-breaking behaviour. The results were less positive suggesting that visits do not improve rule-breaking behaviour. Jiang et al (2005) and Jiang and Winfree (2006) considered the impact of prisoners' children's visits on rule-breaking behaviour. While Hensley et al. (2002) explored the impact of conjugal visits on violent threats and behaviour within the prison environment. These studies suggest that visits do not have a positive impact on rule-breaking within the prison environment. Prisoners receiving visits from their children were more likely to engage in drug and property related rule-breaking and participation in conjugal visits had no effect on prisoners' violent behaviour (Hensley et al., 2002) within the prison environment. These findings require further exploration as increased rule-breaking is counter intuitive and the study considering conjugal visits was not considered to be robust and reliable.

More positively however, was the outcome of the one high quality study Bales and Mears (2008) that considered the impact of visits on recidivism. This research attempted to account for the confounding variables that make reconviction research difficult to conduct. They provided robust evidence to support the idea that an increase in prison visits predicts a reduction in reconviction rates. The results show that those prisoners who were visited had lower recidivism rates and lived longer in the community without re-offending than those who were not visited; and as the number of visits increased the likelihood of recidivism reduced. The outcome of the review suggests that prison visits do reduce recidivism as measured by official records. However, this result was not consistent across types of prisoner. The numbers of visits were not predictive in relation to women's reconviction; and for men, while visits from partners reduced recidivism, visits from children heightened the risk of recidivism.

Nevertheless, the outcome of the review offered considerable support to the aims of the thesis. The review suggested a number of benefits for male prisoners in maintaining contact with their intimate partners in terms of desistance from crime. The review adds to previous literature to provide evidence that positive interpersonal relationships that are maintained through a prison sentence through visits can help to reduce recidivism. This suggests that, in terms of furthering support for the development of these relationships, exploring the processes through which these relationships are maintained and the manner in which this effect on desistance may arise would be beneficial when working with prisoners and their partners.



### **Chapter 3- Qualitative Study**

The aim of the research study detailed in Chapter 3 was to explore the characteristics of positive supportive relationships with a group of offenders and their partners who were engaged with an intervention designed to strengthen these relationships. The research element of this thesis used this opportunity sample to explore with the couples their individual and shared experiences of the prison sentence, the impact of the sentence upon the relationship and the strategies used to maintain the relationship and influence and support each other. Exploring prisoners' perceptions of the qualities involved in their relationships is rare. Rarer still is the involvement of the prisoner's partner in the research. Considering the experience of both partners provided rich information that helped this thesis to evolve.

The research explored the experiences of four couples, prisoners and their partners who took part in individual interviews. The aims of the study were:

- to gain offender and partner experiences about their relationship with each other
- to gain offender and partner experiences about their experience of the relationship during the prison sentence
- to explore the impact of the relationship experience on offending behaviour
- to gain offender and partner experiences about the processes by which impact on offending behaviour may occur.

The study illustrates the experiences of the participants' within their relationships and their experience of the relationship during the prison sentence. It provides insight into the manner in which the relationship experience could impact on offending behaviour and offers explanations of the process by which this may occur.

The analysis of the participants' stories resulted in the emergence of four main themes. The first theme described how the couples experienced *having a special connection*. This theme emerged in the way in which the couple feel linked to each other physically and emotionally, their shared positive identity, the way they know each other and the protection and security they feel. This connection seemed to provide them with the motivation to maintain their relationship throughout the sentence. The second theme explored the *challenges and threats* to that connection that arose because of the prison sentence. This theme was downplayed by the participants, it included, among other elements, subjective feelings of isolation, loneliness, restriction and loss. The third theme considered the *reciprocal behaviours* that they developed to allow them to meet the challenges and influence each other and included; commitment, feeling valued, reassurance, influence and coping. These strategies were often cognitive and had adapted as the relationship evolved. This theme links into the final theme that demonstrated how couples *maintained a belief in the future* that supported their belief in each other. This theme engendered hope and fear, explanations for offending and the involvement of other people. This theme involves a complex cognitive balancing act that protects the female participants' belief in her partner as an atypical offender, therefore allowing her to believe he will not offend again.

In this study there is support for the assumptions of Sampson, et al (2006), that marriage or in this case long term committed relationships can operate to reduce offending through certain mechanisms. The participants recognise the costs they experience from crime when they are separated from someone they love and their obligation to their partner also results in the experience of guilt related to this. The relationships have resulted in some lifestyle change and the female partner exerts direct

influence that can change future behaviour. There is also evidence that leads to a change in self identity that goes beyond the view of Sampson, et al (2006). This research suggests a more complex shift to a more positive self identity and a shared identity; over and above an increase in feeling protective and responsible for the other person. It also develops the ideas of Maruna et al. (2004) that individuals believe they can change their lives when those close to them believe it, in that the offenders' partners believe in them and present an optimistic view of the future. This hope is built on a compassionate view of the offending, a willingness to look for and give weight to evidence of change and a willingness to be on the offenders' side. This is a mechanism by which difficult past experiences can be resolved and the offender can be encouraged to change.

When the findings of this study are put in the context of general relationship research the emerging themes link into the key elements of relationship quality and satisfaction (Lessin et al. 2005); suggesting that finding and maintaining a level of relationship satisfaction supports the maintenance of the relationship over time and ensures that the relationship is a positive motivator for change. The research element of the thesis contributed to the findings overall by revealing the manner in which couples protect their bond through the prison sentence. It identified the mechanisms and work and provided insight into how individuals influence each other in the path towards desistance. While the research cannot provide evidence that the male partner will not re-offend in future it was able to provide insight into how maintaining his relationship with his partner could be protective during the desistance process. The insights gained can help professionals to further develop an understanding of how prisoners can be supported to maintain those relationships further. During the research interviews each individual's adult attachment style was also significant within the dynamics of the

relationship they shared and affected the manner in which they coped with the sentence. This suggested the measurement of attachment as a useful consideration in future research as it could provide insight into the manner in which positive protective mechanisms within the relationships are related to individual attachment styles.

#### **Chapter 4- Psychometric review**

The Relationship Scales Questionnaire was decided upon as a psychometric to evaluate for the thesis as a result of the participants' research interviews. Interesting characteristics related to attachment were evident in the transcripts. In order for relationships to function over time it appears to be important that each participant is able to feel secure. The interviews for this thesis suggested that future research that considered the attachment styles of prisoners and their partners would aid the understanding of relationship maintenance and help to explore the meaning of visits in the maintenance process. Exploring attachment through further research with offenders and their partners requires a valid and reliable tool and it seemed appropriate to consider the properties of a tool frequently used in general relationships research.

As identified in the research component of this thesis the prison sentence can impact on relationship satisfaction, through the experiences of conflict and support and the increased opportunity for jealousy. The ability to demonstrate a secure attachment could therefore support the maintenance of long term relationships through these difficult circumstances. In order to understand attachment further and to consider the way in which it could be effectively measured for adults, the Relationship Scales Questionnaire (RSQ: Griffins & Bartholomew, 1994) was critiqued in Chapter 4. Establishing the validity and the reliability of this tool would allow for effective further

research into how individual attachment style may impact on the mechanisms that operate in prisoner's relationships during the sentence.

The critical analysis of this tool was not straight forward in that the complex structure of the RSQ does not lend itself to the demonstration of psychometric properties. Its internal consistency is affected by its being based on two opposing concepts; that of the self and other. This suggested that there are areas to consider before using the RSQ for reliable research purposes. The Evaluation suggests that the RSQ has content validity and is a simple measure to administer and score. However it demonstrates poor reliability in terms of both test-retest reliability and the internal consistency of the items on each scale. This lack of reliability impacts upon the RSQs validity and creates problems for its recognition as a good test. In the RSQ's favour many studies demonstrate behaviours related to attachment patterns providing robust evidence for the construct of attachment. This subsequently provides evidence that supports the construct validity of the RSQ in that many studies are reporting predicted outcomes related to views of the self and others and relationship functioning.

Overall the evaluation of the RSQ suggests that it is a valid measure; it appears to access the concept of adult attachment and its use in research has previously added to the knowledge base. Its use in future research is therefore supported, however, caution is required when drawing inferences from its use as its psychometric properties are not consistent or robust. The use of the RSQ in future research with offenders and their partners could be beneficial in developing the understanding of the characteristics underpinning the individuals behaviour within the relationship, the evolution of the relationship and the way in which relationships could be supported. This in turn may

indirectly provide further information related to the role relationships play in recidivism.

### **Implications for Practice.**

The systematic review supports previous research and reviews that suggest prison visits have positive effects and that policy should continue to develop methods of increasing the likelihood of prisoners receiving family visits. The review highlighted a difference for males and females, with findings suggesting that women did not benefit, in terms of reduced recidivism, from increased prison visits and that men did not benefit from visits from their children. However, women did benefit in terms of reduced depression, but some women experienced higher levels of stress. This is significant to practice as it would suggest clinicians and professionals involved in the policy of prison visits should consider gender specific factors and the way in which they may support prisoners in relation to the visits process. Special consideration should be given to the benefits of helping prisoners to manage their visits with children more effectively. This links into the view of Poehlman et al. (2010) they found studies that specifically considered visits documented positive outcomes for the child when the visits occurred as part of an intervention, but negative outcomes when the visits were not part of an intervention. This suggests well structured supported visits as part of an intervention may be beneficial for the whole family.

Those working with adolescents should recognise that visits from parents are critical to the wellbeing of young prisoners and this does not appear to be only as a result of 'good' parent child relationships. Sometimes the view among professionals is that relationships between young prisoners and their parents that are judged to be poor

quality should not be encouraged. However, in terms of wellbeing adolescents could benefit from parental visits irrespective of the quality of the relationship. The review did not provide any evidence that suggests that conjugal visits result in positive outcomes. There is therefore no incentive to consider introducing such a difficult to manage type of visit into current prison policy.

The research element of the thesis when combined with the findings of the systematic review added to the implications for practice. The first area to be considered for practitioners is to avoid negative judgements of offenders' descriptions of their relationships. This fits with the views of Ward and Law (2010) of rehabilitation as a capacity building process. If an offender is demonstrating an ability to maintain a long term relationship this is likely to be protective and building on the positive qualities of this relationship is rehabilitative. An effective strategy would be to explore the strengths in the relationship with the couple and build on this, demonstrating a belief in them is likely to develop their belief in themselves (Maruna, et al, 2004). A non-judgemental and compassionate approach (Gilbert, 2010) should be aimed for and a sense that we are working with building on an already positive base rather than trying to eradicate negative behaviours may be more successful.

The couples demonstrated idiosyncratic methods of maintaining relationship satisfaction in difficult circumstances and for managing the threat of conflict. Teaching partners the components of relationship satisfaction, exploring their "if-then" contingencies, and setting expectations in relation to conflict is likely to be beneficial in reducing stress. Reducing stress may increase the offenders' emotional connection to their partner which may reduce future offending behaviour.

In addition to formal intervention supporting couples patterns of communication is crucial in maintaining their connection. Where possible more relaxed extended visits should be considered as increased detailed communication developed in this way is likely to continue into future behaviour which supports the positive development of the relationship over time. Those working with offenders should also allow for strategies that include compassion and provide explanations for the offending. Maruna, et al. (2004) suggest that individuals start to believe that they can successfully change their lives when those around them believe that they can removing protective cognitive distortions may be counterproductive as the maintenance of hope may be directly linked to behavioural change for the male partner.

### **Limitations of the Thesis**

The findings of the thesis are interesting and provide indications for future practice and policy however these need to be balanced with the limitations of each element of the thesis. The main limitation of this thesis for the systematic review and the research element is that they are not necessarily based on representative samples. Both are only based on heterosexual couples, the systematic review identified research predominantly being based on North American samples which were not consistent in terms of age, gender or ethnicity; while the research study took its participants from an opportunity sample of relatively young couples, in a small geographical area with little representation of different ethnic backgrounds.

The studies included in the review also measured a number of different outcomes ranging from measures of wellbeing and prison behaviour to recidivism, using a range of methods and types of measurement. These methodological differences between the



studies are likely to account for the range of positive results reported. As a result any findings can only be synthesised in a descriptive manner. In addition to the limitations of the studies identified there are limitations to the methodology used in the review itself and the decisions made may mean that more studies of relevance may have been missed.

The research also experiences its own limitations. Relationships are complex and not all of the questions that could be asked or answered could be fitted into the time available. The questions that were asked yielded a wealth of rich responses to which the analysis could not do full justice. There is considerable relationship and desistance research and some of the findings relate to this, however, there is likely to be evidence in the transcripts for many more themes if the focus of the analysis was changed.

## **Conclusion**

The systematic review was designed to establish whether maintaining interpersonal relationships through the process of visits impacts upon future re-offending and other important areas of prisoner's experience such as wellbeing and rule-breaking. Once the importance of maintaining relationships in this way was established the research study attempted to consider the mechanisms operating within relationships that maintain them through a prison sentence. The research study was not designed to establish the relationships impact on re-offending only the manner in which it may do so, as previous research had established this relationship. Rather it attempted to understand the manner in which relationships operate to inform the development of interventions that can aid this process and maintain it. Finally the review of the attachment psychometric was important as the future measurement of individual

characteristics that might influence those mechanisms would be beneficial to develop research in this field. Understanding individual adult attachment styles could inform the development of specific features in adult intimate relationships that impact upon the maintenance of the relationships through the period of separation created by a prison sentence. Studying attachment styles could be beneficial in developing an understanding of the meaning of prison visits in the prisoner's relationships.

Overall, the systematic review suggested that prison visits have positive implications for prisoners. It did however; highlight the lack of high quality research into the role of prison visits on offender behaviour. It is therefore recommended that future research should focus on reliable outcome measures, studies within the UK and other countries of relevance, and consider why specific types of visits have different outcomes for prisoners. Exploring the finding that fathers' increased recidivism linked to increased visits from their children would also be an area of interest and that women are not protected from recidivism by visits would also be an area of interesting future research. As identified by Bales and Mears (2008) the question of visits and men's wellbeing is not often asked and has not been reliably considered. Further research considering the impact of prison visits on adult males' depressive symptoms and also self harm/suicidal behaviour may be useful considering men are the largest incarcerated group.

The research study provided an insight into how prisoners and their partners manage their interpersonal interactions in a way that maintains the relationship and provides support for each other. The concept of believing in the future provided information about the manner in which relationships can influence desistance. Given the complexity of intimate relationships further work in this area could yield many more

interesting insights. Studies that attempted to quantitatively measure some of the emerging themes within the research study would perhaps add weight to some of its findings. It would also be interesting to develop attachment research to consider its impact upon the maintenance of long term adult relationships under the difficult circumstances of a prison sentence and using the RSQ to measure attachment with prisoners and their partners could be justified.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1- Search strategy

#### Research question 1: Visit and wellbeing.

**Do prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing in relation to stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours?**

#### Resource searched:

Ovid MEDLINE(R) 2008 to April Week 1 2012,  Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1988 to 1995,  Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1980 to 1987,  Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1946 to 1979,  Ovid OLDMEDLINE(R) 1946 to 1965,  PsycINFO 1806 to April Week 2 2012

1. (prison\* and visit\* and self harm\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

#### - Search terms used:

- harm\*
- prison\*
- self
- self harm\*
- visit\*

Search returned: 1

**1 paper to be further reviewed for possible inclusion**

2. (prison\* and visit\* and suicid\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

#### - Search terms used:

- prison\*
- suicid\*
- visit\*

Search returned: 9

**9 results all excluded as they were obviously not relevant to the research question**

3. (prison\* and visit\* and wellbeing).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

- *Search terms used:*

- prison\*
- visit\*
- wellbeing

Search Returned:

2 results

**1 excluded due to Dissertation abstract and 1 obviously not relevant to the research question**

4. (prison\* and visit\* and stress\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

- *Search terms used:*

- prison\*
- stress\*
- visit\*

Search Returned:

24 results

Remove duplicates 22

**8 excluded as obviously not relevant to the research question and 14 to be further reviewed for possible inclusion**

5. (prison\* and visit\* and depression)

- *Search terms used:*

- depression
- prison\*
- visit\*

Search Returned:

26 results

**8 excluded as obviously not relevant to the research question and 17 to be further reviewed for possible inclusion**

All searches were then re-run using jail\* and incarceration instead of prison\* a number of those found no results the ones that did are listed here:

(jail\* and visits\* and suicid\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

*- Search terms used:*

- jail\*
- suicid\*
- visits\*

Search Returned:

2 results

**2 to be further reviewed for possible inclusion**

(jail\* and visit\* and depression).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

*- Search terms used:*

- depression
- jail\*
- visit\*

Search Returned:

2 results

**1 a duplicate from the prison\* search and one that was obviously not relevant to the research question**

(incarceration and visit\* and suicid\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

*- Search terms used:*

- incarceration
- suicid\*

- visit\*

Search Returned:

2 results

**Duplicates of the same paper and obviously not relevant to the research question**

(incarceration and visit\* and wellbeing).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

- *Search terms used:*

- incarceration
- visit\*
- wellbeing

Search Returned:

2 results

**1 duplicate and 1 obviously not relevant to the research question**

(incarceration and visit\* and stress).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

- *Search terms used:*

- incarceration
- stress
- visit\*

Search Returned:

7 results

**5 duplicates and 1 that was obviously not relevant to the research question and 1 to be reviewed for possible inclusion**

(incarceration and visit\* and depression).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

- *Search terms used:*

- depression
- incarceration
- visit\*

Search Returned:

17 results

**6 that were obviously not relevant to the research question 10 duplicates and 1 to be reviewed for possible inclusion**

This resulted in a total of 94 hits, 35 obvious exclusions were removed following review of the titles, 20 duplicates were removed during the initial searches, 9 further duplicates were identified when the results of all searches related to this research question were merged. This resulted in 30 papers to be reviewed from the abstracts.

### **Web of Science Searches**

1. Topic=(prison\* AND visit\* AND self harm)

Timespan=All Years. Databases=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH.

Lemmatization=On

Result 2

**1 duplicate of Psych info search and 1 excluded as obviously not relevant to the research question**

2. Topic=(prison\* AND visit\* AND suicid\*)

Timespan=All Years. Databases=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH.

Lemmatization=On



Result 7

**1 duplicate of Psych info search and 6 excluded as obviously not relevant to the research question**

3. Topic=(prison\* AND visit\* AND wellbeing)

Timespan=All Years. Databases=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH.

Lemmatization=On

Result 1

**Duplicate of psych info search**

4. Topic=(prison\* AND visit\* AND stress\*)

Timespan=All Years. Databases=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH.

Lemmatization=On

Result 19

**6 duplicates from psych info search 9 excluded as obviously not relevant to the research question, resulting in 4 additional papers to be reviewed as possible inclusions**

5. prison\* AND visit\* AND depression

Result 0

Substituting incarceration and jail for prison did not result in any additional hits for Web Of Science

### **EBSCO searches**

Prison\* and visit\* and depression -3 results 2 duplicates 1 poster abstracts

prison\* AND visit\* AND suicid\*- 2 results 1 duplicate 1 not relevant to prison visits

prison\* AND visit\* AND stress\*- 4 results 2 duplicates 1 poster abstract, 1 not relevant to prison visits

Substituting incarceration and jail for prison did not result in any additional hits All searches were run again using social support instead of visit\* this resulted in 4 additional papers to be further reviewed

**This research question resulted in 38 papers to be reviewed through reading of the abstracts.**

**On consideration of the abstracts:**

- **5 were excluded as they were discovered to be Dissertation abstracts**
- **13 were excluded as they were not related to prison visits**
- **2 were excluded as they were about the process of visits**
- **2 were excluded as they were measuring the impact of visits on the family not the offender**
- **2 were excluded as they were measuring the experience of prisoners' children**
- **1 was excluded as a qualitative study that did not measure visits**

**Overall 25 papers were excluded at the reading of the abstract stage resulting in 13 papers to be reviewed through full reading of the papers**






**Of these papers 13:**

- **1 was excluded as it did not measure wellbeing but recidivism and would be considered for research question 3.**
- **1 was excluded as it did not measure wellbeing but rule-breaking and would be considered for research question 2.**
- **1 was excluded as it measured the parent child bond and not elements of well being defined by this research question**
- **1 was excluded as it measured the outcome of a parenting classes rather than visits**
- **2 were excluded as descriptive field studies that did not try to explore relationships between visits and well being**
- **1 was excluded as it was attempting to measure stress related to future separation from their children for pregnant women in custody rather than the impact of actual visits**
- **Result: 3 papers met the criteria for the systematic review to answer research question 2.**

## **Research question 2: Visit and prison behaviour.**

### **Do prison visits improve prison behaviour in terms of rule-breaking?**

#### **Resource searched:**

Ovid MEDLINE(R) 2008 to April Week 1 2012,  Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1988 to 1995,  Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1980 to 1987,  Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1946 to 1979,  Ovid OLDMEDLINE(R) 1946 to 1965,  PsycINFO 1806 to April Week 2 2012  
1. (prison\* and visit\* and rule-breaking).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

#### **- Search terms used:**

- breaking
- prison\*
- rule
- rule-breaking
- visit\*

#### **Search Returned:**

1 result

#### **Not relevant to research question**

2. (prison\* and visit\* and violence).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

#### **- Search terms used:**

- prison\*
- violence
- visit\*

#### **Search Returned:**

22 results

**12 obviously not relevant to the research questions, 4 books, 1 experience of children not prisoners, 1 dissertation, 4 for further review**

3. (prison\* and visit\* and rule violations).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

- *Search terms used:*

- prison\*
- rule
- rule violations
- violations
- visit\*

### **Search Returned:**

1 result

### **Excluded as it was a dissertation abstract**

All searches were then re-run using jail\* and incarceration instead of prison\* and no additional results were generated.

**This resulted in a total of 24 hits, 13 obvious exclusions were removed following review of the titles, 2 dissertation abstracts, 2 duplicates were removed during the initial searches, 4 books. This resulted in 2 papers to be reviewed from the abstracts.**

### **Web of Science Searches**

All the searches were run again in Web of science only one produced results

Topic=(prison\* AND visit\* AND violence)

Timespan=All Years. Databases=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH.

Lemmatization=On

**Search returned: 9**

**All not relevant to the research question**

Substituting incarceration and jail for prison did not result in any additional hits for Web Of Science

### **EBSCO searches**

All searches run again in EBSCO resulted in one further paper

All searches run again using term social support instead of visit\* resulted in one further paper

**This research question resulted in 4 papers to be reviewed through reading of the abstracts.**

### **On consideration of the abstracts:**






- **1 was excluded as it concerned the experience of prisoners' children this resulted in 3 papers related to the research question to be read thoroughly.**
- **All 3 papers were relevant and met the inclusion criteria for the systematic review.**
- **Reading of the references did not result in any further papers to review.**

**Result: 3 papers met the criteria for the systematic review to answer research question 2.**

### **Research Question 3: Visit and recidivism**

**Do prison visits reduce recidivism as measured by official records?**

#### **Resource searched:**

Ovid MEDLINE(R) 2008 to April Week 1 2012,  Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1988 to 1995,  Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1980 to 1987,  Ovid MEDLINE(R) 1946 to 1979,   
Ovid OLDMEDLINE(R) 1946 to 1965,  PsycINFO 1806 to April Week 2 2012  
1. (prison\* and visit\* and recidivism).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

#### **- Search terms used:**

- prison\*
- recidivism
- visit\*

#### **Search Returned:**

20 results

**15 were excluded as dissertation abstracts leaving 5 for further review**

2. (prison\* and visit\* and reoffend\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

- *Search terms used:*

- prison\*
- reoffend\*
- visit\*

**Search Returned:**

2 results

**Both were duplicates**

3. (prison\* and visit\* and offend\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

- *Search terms used:*

- offend\*
- prison\*
- visit\*

**Search Returned:**

51 results

**25 were removed as obviously not related to the research question, 4 were removed as dissertation abstracts, resulting in 22 further papers to be reviewed**

All searches were then re-run using jail\* and incarceration instead of prison\* a number of those found no results the ones that did are listed here:

(jail\* and visit\* and recidivism).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

- *Search terms used:*

- jail\*
- recidivism
- visit\*

**Search Returned:**

5 results

**All duplicates**

(jail\* and visit\* and reoffend\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

**- Search terms used:**

- jail\*
- reoffend\*
- visit\*

**Search Returned:**

1 results

**A duplicate**

(jail\* and visit\* and offend\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

**- Search terms used:**

- jail\*
- offend\*
- visit\*

**Search Returned:**

11 results

**All duplicates**

(incarceration and visit\* and recidivism).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

**- Search terms used:**

- incarceration
- recidivism
- visit\*

**Search Returned:**

7 results

## **All duplicates**

(incarceration and visit\* and reoffend\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

### **- Search terms used:**

- incarceration
- reoffend\*
- visit\*

### **Search Returned:**

1 result

## **Duplicate**

(incarceration and visit\* and offend\*).mp. [mp=ti, ab, ot, nm, hw, ps, rs, ui, an, tc, id, tm]

### **- Search terms used:**

- incarceration
- offend\*
- visit\*

### **Search Returned:**

22 results

## **18 duplicates resulting in 4 further studies to review**

**This resulted in a total of 130 hits, 27 obvious exclusions were removed following review of the titles, 19 dissertation abstracts were removed, 45 duplicates were removed during the initial searches. This resulted in 39 papers to be reviewed from the abstracts.**

## **Web of Science Searches**

Topic=(prison\* AND visit\* AND recidivism)

Timespan=All Years. Databases=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH.



Lemmatization=On

**Search returned: 4**

**All duplicates**

Topic=(prison\* AND visit\* AND reoffend\*)

Timespan=All Years. Databases=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH.

Lemmatization=On

**Search returned 1**

**Duplicate**

Topic=(prison\* AND visit\* AND offend\*)

Timespan=All Years. Databases=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH.

Lemmatization=On

**Search returned 27**

**20 that were not related to the research question and the rest duplicates  
resulting in 0 additional papers to be reviewed as possible inclusions**

Substituting incarceration and jail for prison did not result in any additional hits for Web Of Science

**EBSCO searches**

Prison\* and visit\* and recidivism 0

Prison\* and visit\* and reoffend 0

Prison\* and visit\* and offend 8 duplicates

Replacing prison with jail/incarceration no additional results

All searches were run again using social support instead of visit\* this did not result in any further papers

**This research question resulted in 39 papers to be reviewed through reading of the abstracts.**

**On consideration of the abstracts:**

- 20 were excluded as they were not related to prison visits
- 6 were excluded as they were about the process of visits
- 1 were excluded as they were measuring the experience of prisoners' children
- 2 were excluded as a qualitative study that did not measure visits
- 1 was excluded as a book review
- 1 was excluded as a book
- 2 were literature reviews
- 3 were discussion papers
- Overall 35 papers were excluded at the reading of the abstract stage resulting in 3 papers to be reviewed through full reading of the papers.
- The reference sections were checked resulting in no further papers for review.

**On full reading:**

- 2 papers were excluded; 1 did not measure recidivism or re-offending but was included in Research question 1 as it referred to well being
- 1 measured visits by the prisoners out of the prison to their homes for home leave not visits to the prison by the family.

**Result: 1 paper met the criteria for the systematic review to answer research question 3.**

## Appendix 2

### Quality assurance results

Study	Design	Data	Results	Conclusion	Quality
	3 questions	2 questions	3 questions	1 question	rating
Pinese, Furegato & Santos (2010)	3	4	5	2	14
Houck & Loper (2002)	4	2	5	2	13
Poehlmann (2005)	5	4	4	2	15
Tuerk & Loper (2006)	4	2	4	1	11
Wooldredge (1999)	3	2	5	1	11
Monahan, Goldweber & Cauffman (2011)	5	4	6	1	16
Jiang, Fisher Giorlando & Mo (2005)	5	3	6	1	15
Jiang & Winfree (2006)	5	4	6	2	17
Henley, Koscheski & Tewksbury (2002)	4	3	4	1	12
Bales & Mears (2008)	5	4	6	2	17

## **Appendix 2- Data Extraction and Quality Assurance**

### **Data Extraction Sheet**

#### **General Information:**

Author(s): Pinese, C.S.V, Furegato, A.R.F. and Santos, J.L.F.

Article title: Demographic and clinical predictors of depressive symptoms among incarcerated women

Date published: 2010

Type of publication: Peer reviewed journal- Annals of General Psychiatry

Country of origin: Brazil

#### **Study Characteristics:**

Research question addressed:

1. To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing in relation to stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours.

Aims/objectives of study:

The study aims to understand the variables that are associated with depression in a sample of female prisoners.

Hypotheses:

Imprisonment leads to the development of depression and it is mediated by certain variables.

Study Design:

This was a cohort study which used descriptive exploratory research with a psychometric evaluation. Depression was measured and related to other variables through multivariate and bivariate analysis. The independent variables were age,

ethnicity, living with a partner, education level, co-morbidities, religion, eating habits, visitors, sleep and tobacco use.

The dependent variable depression was classified into four levels with cut offs; absence of depression (0-9), light depression/dysthymia (10-18), mild depression (19-29), severe depression (30 or more).

Participant recruitment procedure:

The selected prison held 310 female prisoners 10 were excluded as they were under a disciplinary regime. Of the 300 left 100 were randomly selected and asked to participate. After a full explanation of the study was given two participants did not consent and these were replaced by the random selection of two more.

Sample size:

100

### **Participant Characteristics:**

Age: The age range was 20-63 with most participants falling into the range 20-29 (52%)

Gender: Female

Length of time in prison: 11 participants were awaiting trial. Of the 89 convicted most had completed up to 2 years (58%) or 2-4 years (32%). This information was collected by the researchers but was not significant in the analysis.

### **Measures used:**

Measure of visits: Receiving or not receiving visitors reported during interview by the participant. No measure of frequency or who visits is recorded.

Measure of recidivism: Not applicable

Measure of well being/psychological functioning: The Beck Depression Inventory which evaluates depressive symptoms with 21 items using 4 levels of intensity ( $\alpha$  .81).

Measure of rule-breaking: not applicable

**Outcome data:**

Data reported: Variables that had *P* values smaller than 0.05 were considered significant. The absence of visits met this for participants suffering from severe depression.

Results for male prisoners: not applicable

Results for female prisoners: A strong association between not receiving visits and severe depression was shown. The relative risk ratio was 9.15 and  $p < 0.02$ .

Results for adolescent prisoners: not applicable

<b>Quality Assurance Screening Questions</b>	Yes = 2	Partially = 1	No/Cannot tell = 0
<p>Did the study ask a clearly focussed question?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Population</li> <li>-Intervention</li> <li>-Outcomes considered</li> </ul>		<p>The aim of the study was clear. The population was relevant in to the study as it was specifically considering the mental health of female prisoners. Hypotheses were less clear resulting in a partial rating as the expected outcomes were not explored.</p>	
<p>Was this a study that investigated a quantifiable relationship?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-why was the study designed in this way</li> <li>-was this the right research approach for the question</li> </ul>		<p>The design was appropriate for this type of research and was investigating a quantifiable relationship. However, the measure for visits was limited as type of visitor and frequency was not established. There was also some lack of clarity about why specific clinical variables were selected.</p>	
<b>Detailed Questions</b>			
<p>Was there a comparison group to compare the main group with?</p>		<p>There was no comparison group. The group were compared within themselves</p>	

<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the comparison group appropriate</li> <li>-are differences between the groups reported</li> <li>-could the differences explain the outcomes</li> </ul>		<p>on whether individual participants had visits or not. The study would have been improved by comparing pre-prison measures of depression.</p>	
<p>Were participants/observers/data collectors' bias accounted for?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the data was collected</li> <li>-were participants/observers aware of the expected outcomes</li> </ul>	<p>The data was collected through interview and psychometric measures. The participants were randomly selected. There were no specific expected outcomes. This reduced the likelihood of bias.</p>		
<p>Were all of the participants accounted for at the conclusion?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-what information is provided about follow up/what information is missing</li> </ul> <p>Was the data collected in the same way for all participants?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the data collected at the same</li> </ul>	<p>All of the participants were accounted for. Follow up of those who scored as depressed is explained.</p> <p>Data was collected within a 5 month window. Data collection is well explained and suggests the same experience for each participant</p>		



time/ in the same intervals -did participants receive the same amount of attention from researchers			
Did the study have sufficient numbers of participants to avoid chance findings? Consider: -if there is a power calculation	No power calculation was reported but the sample is large in relation to the whole prison population and the high relative risk ratio suggests sufficient numbers.		
How are the results presented and what are the main results? Consider: -are the results presented as a proportion of experiencing an outcome, or as a measurement or survival curve -how large is the result and how meaningful	Relative risk values identifying how much each variable increases the risk of depression. The visits variable is the second highest. This is especially meaningful as the highest variable change in eating habits is actually a possible symptom of depression.		
How precise are these results? Consider: -is the result precise enough to decide -if p values are reported are confidence intervals available		Relative risk ratios, p values and standard errors are reported. The standard error is high reducing the precision of the results. Reliance on self report may reduce precision.	

<p>Were all important outcomes considered so that results can be applied?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the population may differ from population of interest</li> <li>-how the local setting differs</li> <li>-consider outcomes for participants, family, policy makers, community</li> <li>-benefit out ways harm/cost</li> <li>-policy should change as a result</li> <li>-were gender differences explained</li> </ul>	<p>This study accounted for all of the important outcomes. Demographics were provided that linked the sample to the general population and the prison population and limitations were reported. Participants when identified as depressed were referred for support. This study did not present any ethical concerns that would suggest that the benefits of the study would be outweighed by harm.</p>		
			<b>Total : 14</b>

## **Data Extraction Sheet**

### **General Information:**

Author(s): Houck, K.D.F. and Loper, A.B

Article title: The relationship of parenting stress to adjustment among mothers in prison

Date published: 2002

Type of publication: American Journal of Orthopsychiatry

Country of origin: United States of America

### **Study Characteristics:**

Research question addressed:

1. To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing in relation to stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours.

Aims/objectives of study:

To examine stress related to parenting among a sample of female prisoners and to relate the stress to adjustment.

Hypotheses:

Differences in the amount of parenting stress predict prison adjustment for parents.

Study Design:

The design was a cohort study that was part of a larger longitudinal study. A comparison of relationships between parenting stress and anxiety, depression, somatization and institutional misconduct measured through psychometric analysis.

Participant recruitment procedure:

Women were invited to volunteer to participate in the larger longitudinal study. They were given the title of the study 'What it is like for women in prison' and provided informed consent to take part. Women who agreed were offered 'soda and cookies'.

Sample size: 362

### **Participant Characteristics:**

Age: The age range was 19-59 (Mean = 32.6 years, SD = 7.4)

Gender: Female

Length of time in prison: Sentences being served was reported but not length of time in prison- 1 year or less =10%, 5-10 years = 17.4%, 10-15 years = 7.7%, more than 15 years = 10.7%. However, the length of time in prison was included in the analyses and no relationships were found between this and any of the adjustment measures.

### **Measures used:**

Measure of visits: The participant answers a question in the test battery; 'During the last year, I have seen my child during visitation.' - about 1-4 times per month, about every other month, about 4 times during the year, about once this year, never

Measure of recidivism: not applicable

Measure of well being/psychological functioning: Parenting stress measured by an adaptation of the Parenting Stress Index (PSI: Abidin, 1995). Visitation stress was added to the PSI as a 7 item scale by the study authors and validated prior to use ( $\alpha$  .76). It measured discomfort felt by mothers regarding visit procedures and constraints. Adjustment was measured using the depression, anxiety, somatisation and global scales of the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogotis, 1993).

Measure of rule-breaking: Average number of offences committed per month since entering the institution and recorded on their prison record and the average severity level of offences (minor, moderate, major) as recorded on the prison record.

### **Outcome data:**

Data reported: Linear regression was used to consider the relationship between parent stress and adjustment (minority status was a covariate).

Results for male prisoners: not applicable

Results for female prisoners: Parenting stress was significantly associated with anxiety, depression, somatization and global symptoms. Analysis of individual beta weights for each regression analysis indicated that parenting stress concerning visitation was associated with elevated anxiety. Visitation stress (measured through the 7 item scale) was also associated with the global score on the BSI suggesting overall emotional adjustment difficulties.

Results for adolescent prisoners: not applicable

<b>Quality Assurance Screening Questions</b>	Yes = 2	Partially = 1	No/Cannot tell = 0
<p>Did the study ask a clearly focussed question?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Population</li> <li>-Intervention</li> <li>-Outcomes considered</li> </ul>		<p>The aim of the study was clear. The population was relevant in to the study. The hypotheses were less clear resulting in a partial rating.</p>	
<p>Was this a study that investigated a quantifiable relationship?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-why was the study designed in this way</li> <li>-was this the right research approach for the question</li> </ul>	<p>The study was designed to take advantage of a larger longitudinal study. The research approach and analysis was appropriate to the question and the aim was to consider a quantifiable predictive relationship. In terms of the research question being asked by this systematic review visits were not well defined but this was not of concern to the study.</p>		
<b>Detailed Questions</b>			
<p>Was there a comparison group to compare the main group with?</p> <p>Consider:</p>		<p>There was no comparison group for the whole study. However, where possible comparisons were made to the normative</p>	

<p>-was the comparison group appropriate</p> <p>-are differences between the groups reported</p> <p>-could the differences explain the outcomes</p>		<p>sample for the measures used. This allowed an understanding of the distress of the sample compared to the general population and a psychiatric population. This information helped the researchers to draw inferences from their study. A comparison of pre-prison stress and adjustment would have been useful, but was not possible.</p>	
<p>Were participants/observers/data collectors' bias accounted for?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-how the data was collected</p> <p>-were participants/observers aware of the expected outcomes</p>		<p>Participants were given general information that would not have made the expected outcomes obvious to them as it was part of a larger study. Introducing the incentive of 'soda and cookies' may have introduced bias' related to motivation to fully engage.</p>	
<p>Were all of the participants accounted for at the conclusion?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-what information is provided about follow/ what information is missing</p> <p>Was the data collected in the same way for all participants?</p>		<p>Although generally managed well some participants completed the questionnaires alone. All of the participants were accounted for. A strength of this study was that the researchers created a measure related to visitation stress that they developed from talking to the prison population and prior to</p>	

<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the data collected at the same time/ in the same intervals</li> <li>-did participants receive the same amount of attention from researchers</li> </ul>		<p>its use in this study. Participants involved in development of the measure were not involved in this study.</p>	
<p>Did the study have sufficient numbers of participants to avoid chance findings?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-if there is a power calculation</li> </ul>	<p>The study had sufficient numbers although no power calculation was reported.</p>		
<p>How are the results presented and what are the main results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-are the results presented as a proportion of people experiencing an outcome, or as a measurement or survival curve</li> <li>-how large is the result and how meaningful</li> </ul>	<p>The results of multiple regression analysis are clearly presented in detail and the process of attaining the results is explained in a clear step by step manner. Covariates of minority status and age are included in the calculations as they impact on the measures. Beta values are presented in a table. The result for anxiety and visitation is moderate.</p>		
<p>How precise are these results?</p>		<p>The exploration of visitation stress is part of</p>	



<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is the result precise enough to make a decision</li> <li>-if p values are reported are confidence intervals available</li> </ul>		<p>a wider research question and while results are significant at <math>p &lt; 0.5</math> the results are not as significant as those related to parent/child contact. Reliance of self report may impact on precision.</p>	
<p>Were all important outcomes considered so that results can be applied?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the population may differ from population of interest</li> <li>-how the local setting differs</li> <li>-consider outcomes for participants, family, policy makers, community</li> <li>-benefit out ways harm/cost</li> <li>-policy should change as a result</li> <li>-were gender differences explained</li> </ul>	<p>The authors were thorough in exploring the limitations of the study and considering a number of variables that may have impacted on the results. The authors considered a number of options for the meaning of their findings and suggested future research. They considered services that may help participants in terms of their mental health issues.</p>		
			<b>Total: 13</b>

## **Data Extraction Sheet**

### **General Information:**

Author(s): Poehlmann, J.

Article title: Incarcerated mother's contact with children, perceived family relationships and depressive symptoms

Date published: 2005

Type of publication: Journal of Family Psychology

Country of origin: United States of America

### **Study Characteristics:**

Research question addressed:

1. To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing in relation to stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours.

Aims/objectives of study:

To explore the link between separation from their children and depression for incarcerated mothers.

Do imprisoned mothers describe links between their experiences of separation from children and feelings of depression?

Are early and current relationship disconnections associated with maternal depressive symptoms during incarceration?

Are mother's early and current relationship disconnection associated with the mother-child relationship during maternal incarceration?

Is quality of the mother-caregiver relationship associated with frequency of mother-child contact during incarceration?

Hypotheses:

Multiple experiences of early relationship disconnection and trauma and limited visits and telephone contact with children during incarceration would be associated with elevated maternal depressive symptoms.

Mother's early relationship disconnections and trauma and limited visits and telephone contact with children during incarceration would be associated with less positive mother-child relationships.

Less warmth and more conflict in the mother-caregiver relationship would be associated with fewer visits and telephone calls from children during maternal incarceration.

#### Study Design:

This was a cohort study using a qualitative and quantitative approach. The data was collected through semi structured interview and psychometric assessment and quantitative outcomes were compared using hierarchical regression.

#### Participant recruitment procedure:

Mothers in minimum/medium security of a state prison were recruited through their attendance at a parenting programme. The facilitators informed them of the method of the study and they volunteered to participate. For each participant a toy was donated to the prison. Inclusion criteria were:

- At least one child between two and seven years
- Mother as primary caregiver prior to incarceration
- Mother retained rights to the child
- The child had not been placed in foster care
- The mother was incarcerated for at least two months
- The child was placed with a relative
- The caregiver and child lived in the state the mother was imprisoned in

Sample size: 98 (data analysed for 94) 85% of the available sample.

#### **Participant Characteristics:**

Age: Range 19-43.5 years (mean 28.33, SD 5.64)

Gender: Female

Length of time in prison: Months of sentence 3-120 (mean 48.84, SD 24.6)

Months served 2-60 (mean 19.44, SD 13.37)

**Measures used:**

Measure of visits: Self report of face to face visits with children in the last 2 months

Measure of recidivism: not applicable

Measure of well being/psychological functioning:

- Relationships with children and care givers- The Inventory of Family Feelings (Lowman, 1980)- not relevant to this research question.
- Early disconnections and trauma- Relationship and Disconnection Trauma index developed from semi structured interview and based on McClennan et al (1997)
- Maternal depressive symptoms- The Centre for Epidemiological Studies- Depression Scale (CES-D: Radloff, 1977). Twenty item four point scale with  $\alpha$  .85-.90

Measure of rule-breaking: not applicable

**Outcome data:**

Data reported: Multiple regression was used to explore the relationships relevant to the research questions. The only finding of relevance to this research question was the impact on frequency of visits on depression.

Results for male prisoners: not applicable

Results for female prisoners: The frequency of visits with children accounted for 5% of the variance for maternal depression.

Results for adolescent prisoners: not applicable

<b>Quality Assurance Screening Questions</b>	Yes = 2	Partially = 1	No/Cannot tell = 0
<p>Did the study ask a clearly focussed question?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Population</li> <li>-Intervention</li> <li>-Outcomes considered</li> </ul>	<p>Although complex the questions being asked were identified clearly and focused on the expected outcomes drawn from previous literature within the population of interest.</p>		
<p>Was this a study that investigated a quantifiable relationship?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-why was the study designed this way</li> <li>-was this the right research approach for the question</li> </ul>	<p>The study investigated a quantifiable relationship and used a range of methods to triangulate the results and explore the relationships clearly.</p>		
<b>Detailed Questions</b>			
<p>Was there a comparison group to compare the main group with?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the comparison group appropriate</li> <li>-are group differences reported</li> <li>-could differences explain the outcomes</li> </ul>		<p>There was no comparison group for this study. However within the group there were comparisons related to number of visits and the impact on depression.</p>	

<p>Were participants/observers/data collectors' bias accounted for?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the data was collected</li> <li>-were participants/observers aware of the expected outcomes</li> </ul>	<p>Participants were given general information that would not have made the expected outcomes obvious to them as it was part of a larger study. The information was collected in the same way for each participant.</p> <p>Introducing the incentive of toys was not likely to introduce bias as it was not an individual incentive. The data for 4 participants was removed due to extreme outliers.</p>		
<p>Were all of the participants accounted for at the conclusion?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-what information is provided about follow up/ what information is missing</li> </ul> <p>Was the data collected the same way?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the data collected at the same time/ in the same intervals</li> <li>-did participants receive the same amount of attention from researchers</li> </ul>	<p>All information was collected in the same way with equal attention. All participants were accounted for the 4 outliers that were removed were explained:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 had daily contact</li> <li>1 serving 14 years</li> <li>1 served 72 months</li> <li>1 had 90 arrests</li> </ul>		

<p>Did the study have sufficient numbers of participants to avoid chance findings?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-if there is a power calculation</li> </ul>		<p>The sample was sufficient but relatively small and very restricted by the inclusion criteria. From the sample the researchers were attempting to answer many research questions and a larger sample would have offered more confidence in the results. There is no indication of the available population in the prison although 85% of participants who met the inclusion criteria were in the sample.</p>	
<p>How are the results presented and what are the main results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-are the results presented as a proportion of people experiencing an outcome, or as a measurement or survival curve</li> <li>-how large is the result and how meaningful</li> </ul>	<p>The range and mean number of visits is reported and bivariate correlations are reported for each variable. The visits variable correlated significantly with the trauma index and with depression. In hierarchical regression beta values were reported. Visits accounted for 5% of the variance in depression, with fewer visits related to higher depression. Contextual controls were included suggesting the result</p>		

	is meaningful.		
<p>How precise are these results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is the result precise enough to make a decision</li> <li>-if p values are reported are confidence intervals available</li> </ul>		<p>The p values are reported but not confidence intervals. Self report reduces the precision of the results although the psychometrics used had high internal consistency suggesting reliability.</p>	
<p>Were all important outcomes considered so that results can be applied?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the population may differ from population of interest</li> <li>-how the local setting differs</li> <li>-consider outcomes for participants, family, policy makers, community</li> <li>-benefit out ways harm/cost</li> <li>-policy should change as a result</li> <li>-where gender differences explained</li> </ul>	<p>The researchers explained the similarities and differences in demographic characteristics between this sample and other prison samples. The limitations of the study were considered and well explained.</p>		
			<b>Total: 15</b>



## **Data Extraction Sheet**

### **General Information:**

Author(s): Tuerk, E.H. and Loper, A.B.

Article title: Contact between incarcerated mothers and their children

Date published: 2006

Type of publication: Journal of Offender Rehabilitation

Country of origin: United States of America

### **Study Characteristics:**

Research question addressed:

1. To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing in relation to stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours.

Aims/objectives of study:

To explore how the amount of prior contact and the type and frequency of current contact are associated with prisoners feelings of attachment, parental competence and stress.

Hypotheses:

Higher contact prior to incarceration is associated with higher contact during incarceration

Those who have higher contact are expected to have lower stress as related to parental competence and attachment, but greater stress related to visits.

The opposite effects will be seen for those with less contact

Study Design:

This was a cohort study using archival data from a larger longitudinal study and psychometric analysis. The quantitative data was analysed through regression analysis.

Participant recruitment procedure:

Women were approached who were part of a larger study (714 participants) that measured the baseline mental illness amongst incarcerated women. The women approached were mothers who had at least one child under 21 years. They were given the title of the study 'What it is like for women in prison' and provided informed consent to take part. Women who agreed were offered 'soda and cookies'. They were asked to complete a parenting stress index, once consent was given archival information from the larger study was also used.

Sample size: 357

**Participant Characteristics:**

Age: Range 18-50 years (mean 32.2, SD 7.3)

Gender: Female

Length of time in prison: This information was not included in the research paper.

**Measures used:**

Measure of visits: The participant answers a question in the test battery; 'During the last year, I have seen my child during visitation.' - about 1-4 times per month, about every other month, about 4 times during the year, about once this year, never

Measure of recidivism: not applicable

Measure of well being/psychological functioning: Parenting Stress Index for incarcerated women (PSI-IW: Houck & Loper 2002) an adaptation of the Parenting Stress Index (PSI: Abidin, 1995).

Measure of rule-breaking: not applicable

**Outcome data:**

Data reported:

Hierarchical multiple regression analysis was used to explore the relationship between contact with parenting stress.

Results for male prisoners: not applicable

Results for female prisoners: The variable of interest for this review increased visits, was not significantly associated with parental stress.

Results for adolescent prisoners: not applicable

<b>Quality Assurance Screening Questions</b>	Yes = 2	Partially = 1	No/Cannot tell = 0
<p>Did the study ask a clearly focussed question?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Population</li> <li>-Intervention</li> <li>-Outcomes considered</li> </ul>	The aim of the study was clear. The population was relevant in to the study. The hypotheses were also clearly described.		
<p>Was this a study that investigated a quantifiable relationship?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-why was the study designed this way</li> <li>-was this the right research approach for the question</li> </ul>		<p>The study was designed to take advantage of a larger longitudinal study. The research approach was appropriate to the question and the aim was to consider a quantifiable relationship. In terms of the research question being asked by this systematic review visits were not well defined resulting in partial rating as to how useful this research would be in answering research question 1.</p>	
<b>Detailed Questions</b>			
Was there a comparison group to		There was no comparison group for the	

<p>compare the main group with?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the comparison group appropriate</li> <li>-are differences between the groups reported</li> <li>-could the differences explain outcomes</li> </ul>		<p>whole study. A comparison of pre-prison stress and adjustment would have been useful, but was not possible.</p> <p>Comparison between the variables of interest and stress was achieved within the sample.</p>	
<p>Were participants/observers/data collectors' bias accounted for?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the data was collected</li> <li>-were participants/observers aware of the expected outcomes</li> </ul>		<p>Participants were given general information that would not have made the expected outcomes obvious to them as it was part of a larger study.</p> <p>Introducing the incentive of 'soda and cookies' may have introduced bias' related to motivation to fully engage.</p>	
<p>Were all of the participants accounted for at the conclusion?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-what information is provided about follow up/what information is missing</li> </ul> <p>Was the data collected in the same way for all participants?</p> <p>Consider:</p>		<p>Although generally managed well some participants completed the questionnaires alone. All of the participants were accounted for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 53 were excluded for not producing valid results according to 4 validity measures in the PSI-IW</li> </ul>	

<p>-was the data collected at the same time/ in the same intervals</p> <p>-did participants receive the same amount of attention from researchers</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38 were excluded due to insufficient demographics</li> <li>• 36 insufficient data</li> <li>• 29 responded for a child over 21 years</li> </ul>	
<p>Did the study have sufficient numbers of participants to avoid chance findings?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-if there is a power calculation</p>	<p>The study had sufficient numbers although no power calculation was reported.</p>		
<p>How are the results presented and what are the main results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-are the results presented as a proportion of people experiencing an outcome, or as a measurement or survival curve</p> <p>-how large is the result and how meaningful</p>		<p>The results of multiple regression analysis are clearly presented and the process of attaining the results is explained. However the results section did not seem to answer all of the hypotheses with clarity. Beta values are presented in a table. Few control variables were considered.</p>	
<p>How precise are these results?</p> <p>Consider:</p>		<p>The exploration of visitation stress is part of a wider research question and</p>	

-is the result precise enough to decide -if p values are reported are confidence intervals available		results were not significant. Reliance on self report may impact on precision.	
Were all important outcomes considered so that results can be applied? Consider: -how the population may differ from population of interest -how the local setting differs -consider outcomes for participants, family, policy makers, community -benefit out ways harm/cost -policy should change as a result -where gender differences explained		The authors were thorough in exploring the limitations of the study but failed to consider a number of variables that may have impacted on the results. The authors considered a number of options for the meaning of their findings including findings that did not support their hypotheses and suggested future research.	
			<b>Total: 11</b>

## **Data Extraction Sheet**

### **General Information:**

Author(s): Wooldredge, J.D.

Article title: Inmate experiences and psychological well-being

Date published: 1999

Type of publication: Criminal Justice and Behavior

Country of origin: United States of America

### **Study Characteristics:**

Research question addressed:

1. To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing in relation to stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours.

Aims/objectives of study:

To explore how well being is associated with programmes, visits and victimisation.

Hypotheses:

Healthy attitudes correspond with greater programme participation, more frequent visits and no experience of victimisation.

Study Design:

This was a cohort study using psychometric data to explore the relationships under investigation.

Participant recruitment procedure:

The data was collected from adult male prisoners. A sample was selected by the principal researcher and approached. Those who volunteered to take part were from 3 prisons in Ohio. The response rate was 81%, 75% and 76% of the targeted population in each of the three facilities. Data collection was through self report questionnaires therefore those with literacy issues were excluded and those in psychiatric units were also excluded.



Sample size:

581

**Participant Characteristics:**

Age: Range 16-61 (mean 28.65, SD 7.81)

Gender: Male

Length of time in prison: Prior months served range 0-304 (mean 20.51, SD 40.17)

**Measures used:**

Measure of visits: Visits in the last month but no explanation is given of how this information was collected.

Measure of recidivism: not applicable

Measure of well being/psychological functioning: Sum of response to 7 self report questions related to self perceptions of insecurity, stress, depression, anger, low self esteem and loneliness on a 4 point scale. Larger values reflected poorer wellbeing.

Measure of rule-breaking: not applicable

**Outcome data:**

Data reported: The results of Ordinary Least Squares regression were used to explore the hypotheses although the measure of wellbeing used did not necessarily represent healthy attitudes.

Results for male prisoners: A significant relationship was identified between prisoner wellbeing and increased engagement in programmes, increased numbers of visits and decreased incidents of victimisation ( $p < .01$ ).

Results for female prisoners: not applicable

Results for adolescent prisoners: not applicable

<b>Quality Assurance Screening Questions</b>	Yes = 2	Partially = 1	No/Cannot tell = 0
<p>Did the study ask a clearly focussed question?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Population</li> <li>-Intervention</li> <li>-Outcomes considered</li> </ul>		<p>The aim of the study was overly complex within the introduction. The population was relevant to the study. The hypotheses were clearly described. The discussion related to concepts that were not measured in the research.</p>	
<p>Was this a study that investigated a quantifiable relationship?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-why was the study designed in this way</li> <li>-was this the right research approach for the question</li> </ul>		<p>The research approach was appropriate to the question and the aim was to consider a quantifiable relationship. However, the measurement of wellbeing did not necessarily measure a clear concept of wellbeing. In terms of the research question being asked by this systematic review visits were not well defined resulting in partial rating as to how useful this research would be in answering research question 1.</p>	
<b>Detailed Questions</b>			
Was there a comparison group to		There was no comparison group for the	

<p>compare the main group with?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the comparison group appropriate</li> <li>-are differences between the groups reported</li> <li>-could the differences explain the outcomes</li> </ul>		<p>whole study. Comparisons were conducted within the group in terms of visits.</p>	
<p>Were participants/observers/data collectors' bias accounted for?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the data was collected</li> <li>-were participants/observers aware of the expected outcomes</li> </ul>		<p>Participants were given general information that would not have made the expected outcomes obvious to them. However, those with literacy issues were excluded.</p>	
<p>Were all of the participants accounted for at the conclusion?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-what information is provided about follow up/what information is missing</li> </ul> <p>Was the data collected the same way?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the data collected at the same</li> </ul>		<p>The data was collected via the same method for all participants, within a 30 minute time window. All of the participants were accounted for although the rationale for original selection of participants was unclear and missing data was not reported in the study.</p>	

time/ in the same intervals -did participants receive the same amount of attention from researchers			
Did the study have sufficient numbers of participants to avoid chance findings? Consider: -if there is a power calculation	The study had sufficient numbers although no power calculation was reported.		
How are the results presented and what are the main results? Consider: -are the results presented as a proportion of people experiencing an outcome, or as a measurement or survival curve -how large is the result/how meaningful	The results of OLS regression analysis are clearly presented and the process of attaining the results is explained. Beta values are presented in a table. Control variables were considered and included in the analysis. The result is large $p < 0.01$ .		
How precise are these results? Consider: -is the result precise enough to make a decision -if p values are reported are confidence		The precision of the results is affected by the measures used which are unclear. Reliance of self report may also impact on precision. P values are reported without confidence intervals. The	

intervals available		variance contributed by each variable is not reported separately.	
<p>Were all important outcomes considered so that results can be applied?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the population may differ from population of interest</li> <li>-how the local setting differs</li> <li>-consider outcomes for participants, family, policy makers, community</li> <li>-benefit out ways harm/cost</li> <li>-policy should change as a result</li> <li>-where gender differences explained</li> </ul>		<p>The author of the study recognised some of the limitations of the study and presented the findings appropriately. However, the findings were then linked to the psychological phenomena personal control that had not been measured in the research. Suggestions for future research were put forward.</p>	
			<b>Total: 11</b>

## **Data Extraction Sheet**

### **General Information:**

Author(s): Monahan, K.C, Goldweber, A. and Cauffman, E.

Article title: The effects of visitation on incarcerated juvenile offenders: How contact with the outside impacts adjustment on the inside.

Date published: 2011

Type of publication: Law and Human Behaviour

Country of origin: United States of America

### **Study Characteristics:**

Research question addressed:

1. To determine if prison visits impact on prisoners' wellbeing in relation to stress, depression and suicidal or self harm behaviours.

Aims/objectives of study:

To consider how visitation from parents impacts on youth's mental health during the first two months of incarceration.

- Does visitation from parents influence juveniles' patterns of depressive symptoms during adjustment to incarceration?
- Do youth who receive more parental visits have lower depressive symptoms than youths who receive fewer parental visits?
- Does the quality of the adolescent-parent relationship moderate the impact of parental visitation on youth depressive symptoms?

Hypotheses:

No specific outcomes direction was anticipated or reported

Study Design:

This was a cohort study using psychometric measures to explore the variables of interest.

Participant recruitment procedure:

All new arrivals to one facility over a two year period were invited to take part in the study. Informed consent was sought from the participant and from their parents.

Sample size: 373 engaged but data 276 were used as the others did not have visits records.

**Participant Characteristics:**

Age: Range 14-17

Gender: Male

Length of time in prison: The participants were at the beginning of their sentences and interviewed within a 60 day period.

**Measures used:**

Measure of visits: Visits were taken from official data from baseline to month 2 calculated at number per week

Measure of recidivism: not applicable

Measure of well being/psychological functioning: Two hour baseline interview within 48 hours of admission. Weekly follow up interviews for three weeks. Then monthly follow up.

The Centre for Epidemiological Studies- Depression Scale (CES-D: Radloff, 1977). Twenty item four point scale with  $\alpha$  .85-.90

Measure of rule-breaking: not applicable

**Outcome data:**

Data reported:

Patterns of depressive symptoms over the first two months of incarceration were measured using growth curve modelling and then the different variables were tested using additional models.

Results for male prisoners: not applicable

Results for female prisoners: not applicable

Results for adolescent prisoners:

Those receiving visits reported a more rapid decline in depressive symptoms than those who did not. No difference at the first interview over time those receiving visits more rapid decline in symptoms. Parental visits accounted for 8% variance in depressive symptoms. Those receiving more visits experienced a more rapid reduction in depressive symptoms. The effects of visits and relationship quality accounted for 11% of variance suggesting the effects of visits as independent from the effects of relationship quality.



<b>Quality Assurance Screening Questions</b>	Yes = 2	Partially = 1	No/Cannot tell = 0
<p>Did the study ask a clearly focussed question?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Population</li> <li>-Intervention</li> <li>-Outcomes considered</li> </ul>	<p>The population was relevant to the study.</p> <p>The research questions were clearly described. Although no directional hypotheses were identified this was because little was known of the impact of visits on the population and the area of interest depression.</p>		
<p>Was this a study that investigated a quantifiable relationship?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-why was the study designed this way</li> <li>-was this the right research approach for the question</li> </ul>	<p>The research approach and analysis was appropriate to the question as the aim was to consider a quantifiable changing relationship. The methods of measurement were thorough.</p>		
<b>Detailed Questions</b>			
<p>Was there a comparison group to compare the main group with?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the comparison group appropriate</li> <li>-are differences between the groups</li> </ul>		<p>The participants receiving visits within the study were compared with those who did not receive visits. There were no differences on demographics for these groups. All participants were</p>	

<p>reported</p> <p>-could the differences explain the outcomes</p>		<p>compared on the number of visits they received and this proved effective within the sample.</p>	
<p>Were participants/observers/data collectors' bias accounted for?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-how the data was collected</p> <p>-were participants/observers aware of the expected outcomes</p>	<p>Participants were given general information that would not have made the expected outcomes obvious to them. The data was collected from the same source and within the same time frame for each participant. The data was collected regularly and was current for all measures. Some controlling variables were considered. Differences in groups of participants were identified and built into the analysis.</p>		
<p>Were all of the participants accounted for at the conclusion?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-what information is provided about follow up/what information is missing</p> <p>Was the data collected the same way?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-was the data collected at the same</p>	<p>The data was collected via the same method for all participants, within the same time frame. All of the participants were accounted for in the study. Missing data was discussed and participants without visit records were excluded. Missing data related to depression was subject to full information maximum likelihood methods.</p>		

time/ in the same intervals -did participants receive the same amount of attention from researchers			
Did the study have sufficient numbers of participants to avoid chance findings? Consider: -if there is a power calculation	The study had sufficient numbers although no power calculation was reported.		
How are the results presented and what are the main results? Consider: -are the results presented as a proportion of people experiencing an outcome/a measurement/survival curve -how large is the result and how meaningful	The results of the growth curve analysis are clearly presented and the process of attaining the results is explained in detail. The models are presented in tables. Control variables were considered and included in the analysis. Parental visits accounted for 8% of the variance in depressive symptoms.		
How precise are these results? Consider: -is the result precise enough to decide -if p values are reported are confidence intervals available	P values are reported with confidence intervals. The variance contributed by each variable is not reported separately.		

<p>Were all important outcomes considered so that results can be applied?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the population may differ from population of interest</li> <li>-how the local setting differs</li> <li>-consider outcomes for participants, family, policy makers, wider community</li> <li>-benefit out ways harm/cost</li> <li>-policy should change as a result</li> <li>-where gender differences explained</li> </ul>		<p>Other factors that may impact upon depression were not accounted for and the sample came from one custodial facility which may impact upon generalisability. Visits from other family and friends was not controlled for which may have affected results. Each hypothesis was reported on and explained in the results and all outcomes were considered and explored. The authors also reported clearly on the limitations of the study. The authors also refer to impact on visitation policy.</p>	
			<b>Total: 16</b>

## **Data Extraction Sheet**

### **General Information:**

Author(s): Jiang, S., Fisher-Giorlando, M. and Mo, L.

Article title: Social support and inmate rule violations

Date published: 2005

Type of publication: American Journal of Criminal Justice

Country of origin: United States of America

### **Study Characteristics:**

Research question addressed:

2. To determine if prison visits improve prisoners' prison behaviour in terms of rule-breaking

Aims/objectives of study:

To examine the relationship between social support and prisoner rule violations

Hypotheses:

Six social support variables were expected to reduce rule violations these were; marital status and 5 process elements; calls made/received from children, mail sent/received from children, visits by children, participation in programmes and participation in religion. Other hypotheses were explored that were not of interest to this review

Study Design:

This was a cohort study that compared rule violation with elements of social support. Prison visits from children was viewed as one element of a number that constituted social support and the effects of visits on prison behaviour were assessed.

Participant recruitment procedure:

The data on prison rule-breaking was collected on archived data for randomly selected prisoners who agreed to take part in a nationwide study in the United States. The data on

social support was collected from interview. The sample was taken from 275 separate prisons. Participants without children and those sentenced to Life were excluded.

Sample size:

9107

**Participant Characteristics:**

Age: Mean 35.05 SD 9.44

Gender: Male and Female

Length of time in prison: Sentence mean 296.78 months, SD 590.74

**Measures used:**

Measure of visits: Visits by children; never = 1, less than once a month = 2, at least once a month = 3, at least once a week = 4, almost daily = 5.

Measure of recidivism: not applicable

Measure of well being/psychological functioning: not applicable

Measure of rule-breaking: Rule-breaking behaviour was split into 3 categories; overall rule violations per month, violent violations per month and drug property violations per month. Each category was calculated since admission to prison from official records.

**Outcome data:**

Data reported: Those who received visits from children were more likely to engage in drug and property rule-breaking. This was not significant for overall or violent rule violation.

Results for male prisoners: this was not explored separately

Results for female prisoners: this was not explored separately

Results for adolescent prisoners: not applicable

<b>Quality Assurance Screening Questions</b>	Yes = 2	Partially = 1	No/Cannot tell = 0
<p>Did the study ask a clearly focussed question?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Population</li> <li>-Intervention</li> <li>-Outcomes considered</li> </ul>	<p>The population was relevant to the study.</p> <p>The research questions were clearly described and the hypotheses were clearly identified.</p>		
<p>Was this a study that investigated a quantifiable relationship?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-why was the study designed in this way</li> <li>-was this the right research approach for the question</li> </ul>	<p>The research approach was appropriate to the question and the aim was to consider a quantifiable relationship. The methods of measurement were thorough. The data collection method allowed for a considerable amount of information to be captured and analysed.</p>		
<b>Detailed Questions</b>			
<p>Was there a comparison group to compare the main group with?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the comparison group appropriate</li> <li>-are differences between the groups</li> </ul>		<p>The participants receiving visits within the study were compared with those who did not receive visits. All participants were compared on the number of visits they received and this proved effective</p>	

reported -could the differences explain the outcomes		within the sample. Ranges of confounding variables were controlled for.	
Were participants/observers/data collectors' bias accounted for? Consider: -how the data was collected -were participants/observers aware of the expected outcomes	Archival data was collected for all possible participants and participants were randomly selected from this population. Differences in groups of participants were identified and built into the analysis.		
Were all of the participants accounted for at the conclusion? Consider: -what information is provided about follow up/what information is missing Was the data collected the same way? Consider: -was the data collected at the same time/ in the same intervals -did participants receive the same amount of attention from researchers		The data was collected via the same method for all participants, within the same 4 month time frame. All of the participants were accounted for in the study. However, time frames were not included in this report.	
Did the study have sufficient numbers	The study had sufficient numbers although		



<p>of participants to avoid chance findings?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-if there is a power calculation</li> </ul>	<p>no power calculation was reported.</p>		
<p>How are the results presented and what are the main results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-are the results presented as a proportion of people experiencing an outcome/a measurement/survival curve</li> <li>-how large is the result and how meaningful</li> </ul>	<p>The results of the Hierarchical General Linear Model multilevel analysis are clearly presented. The models are presented in tables. Control variables were considered and included in the analysis.</p> <p>Unfortunately the result of interest to this research was limited and counter intuitive.</p>		
<p>How precise are these results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is the result precise enough to decide</li> <li>-if p values are reported are confidence intervals available</li> </ul>	<p>P values are reported without confidence intervals. The percentage that significant variables alter rule-breaking by was reported separately. The results were not split for gender.</p>		
<p>Were all important outcomes considered so that results can be applied?</p>		<p>Each hypothesis was reported on and explained in the results and all outcomes were considered and explored. The</p>	

<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the population may differ from population of interest</li> <li>-how the local setting differs</li> <li>-consider outcomes for participants, family, policy makers, community</li> <li>-benefit out ways harm/cost</li> <li>-policy should change as a result</li> <li>-where gender differences explained</li> </ul>		<p>authors also reported clearly on the limitations of the study. The authors also refer to impact on visitation policy. Gender differences were not explored.</p>	
			<b>Total: 15</b>

## **Data Extraction Sheet**

### **General Information:**

Author(s): Jiang, S. and Winfree, L.T.

Article title: Social support, gender and inmate adjustment to prison life

Date published: 2006

Type of publication: The Prison Journal

Country of origin: United States of America

### **Study Characteristics:**

Research question addressed:

2. To determine if prison visits improve prisoners' prison behaviour in terms of rule-breaking

Aims/objectives of study:

To provide quantitative data to explore social support and adjustment for female prisoners in comparison with male prisoners.

Hypotheses:

Characteristics for social support will relate to rule violation, the effect of social support will vary by gender

Study Design:

This was a cohort study that compared rule violation with elements of social support. Prison visits from children was viewed as one element of a number that constituted social support and the effects of visits on prison behaviour were assessed.

Participant recruitment procedure:

The data on prison rule-breaking was collected from archived data for the prisoners who agreed to take part in a nationwide study in the United States. The data on social support both internal and external was collected from interview. 12,269 male and 3116 female prisoners

were chosen from a stratified sample. The sample was taken from 275 separate prisons. 1100 prisoners refused to participate.

Sample size:

14,000

**Participant Characteristics:**

Age: Male mean 33.37, female mean 34.21

Gender: Male 12,269 participants, female 3116 participants

Length of time in prison: Sentence male mean 351.14 months, female mean 202.61 months

**Measures used:**

Measure of visits: Visits by children Yes = 1, No = 0.

Measure of recidivism: not applicable

Measure of well being/psychological functioning: not applicable

Measure of rule-breaking: Rule violations per month for each participant since admission to prison from official records collected for all 13 types of recorded rule violations. Summed and divided to obtain a rate.

**Outcome data:**

Data reported:

In terms of visits from children, the variable of interest in this review, there was no significant impact upon prison behaviour.

Results for male prisoners: no significant results related to visits

Results for female prisoners: no significant results related to visits

Results for adolescent prisoners: not applicable

<b>Quality Assurance Screening Questions</b>	Yes = 2	Partially = 1	No/Cannot tell = 0
<p>Did the study ask a clearly focussed question?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Population</li> <li>-Intervention</li> <li>-Outcomes considered</li> </ul>	<p>The population was relevant to the study.</p> <p>The research questions were clearly described and the hypotheses were clearly identified.</p>		
<p>Was this a study that investigated a quantifiable relationship?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-why was the study designed in this way</li> <li>-was this the right research approach for the question</li> </ul>	<p>The research approach was appropriate to the question and the aim was to consider a quantifiable relationship. The methods of measurement were thorough. The data collection method allowed for a considerable amount of information to be captured and analysed.</p>		
<b>Detailed Questions</b>			
<p>Was there a comparison group to compare the main group with?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the comparison group appropriate</li> <li>-are differences between the groups</li> </ul>		<p>The development of the sample was well constructed. The participants receiving visits from their children within the study were compared with those who did not receive visits. The Yes/No approach was</p>	

reported -could the differences explain the outcomes		limited. Ranges of confounding variables were controlled for.	
Were participants/observers/data collectors' bias accounted for? Consider: -how the data was collected -were participants/observers aware of the expected outcomes	Archival data was collected for all possible participants. The data was collected from the same source and within the same time frame for each participant. All available participants within a time frame were asked to participate resulting in a very large cohort. Controlling variables were considered and included in the analysis and results for different groups reported separately. A wide range of controlling variables were considered. The study controlled for age, race, crime history, length of sentence and drug use as these factors have been shown to impact upon prison rule-breaking behaviour.		
Were all of the participants accounted for at the conclusion? Consider:	The data was collected via the same method for all participants, within the same 4 month time frame. All of the participants		

<p>-what information is provided about follow up/what information is missing</p> <p>Was the data collected the same way?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-was the data collected at the same time/ in the same intervals</p> <p>-did participants receive the same amount of attention from researchers</p>	<p>were accounted for in the study.</p>		
<p>Did the study have sufficient numbers of participants to avoid chance findings?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-if there is a power calculation</p>	<p>The study had sufficient numbers although no power calculation was reported. All of the available data was collected from a nationwide sample.</p>		
<p>How are the results presented and what are the main results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-are the results presented as a proportion of people experiencing an outcome/a measurement/survival curve</p> <p>-how large is the result and how meaningful</p>	<p>The results of the logistic regression are clearly presented. The process of attaining the results is explained in detail. The models are presented in tables. Control variables were considered and included in the analysis. Unfortunately the result of interest to this research was non-significant.</p>		

<p>How precise are these results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is the result precise enough to decide</li> <li>-if p values are reported are confidence intervals available</li> </ul>	<p>P values are reported without confidence intervals. The variance contributed by each variable was reported separately. Each group was also reported separately.</p>		
<p>Were all important outcomes considered so that results can be applied?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the population may differ from population of interest</li> <li>-how the local setting differs</li> <li>-consider outcomes for participants, family, policy makers, community</li> <li>-benefit out ways harm/cost</li> <li>-policy should change as a result</li> <li>-where gender differences explained</li> </ul>	<p>Each hypothesis was reported on and explained in the results and all outcomes were considered and explored. The authors also reported clearly on the limitations of the study. The authors also refer to impact on visitation policy. Gender differences were also explored.</p>		
			<b>Total: 17</b>



## **Data Extraction Sheet**

### **General Information:**

Author(s): Henley, C., Koscheski, M. and Tewksbury, R.

Article title: Does participation in conjugal visitations reduce prison violence in Mississippi? An exploratory study

Date published: 2002

Type of publication: Criminal Justice Review

Country of origin: United States of America

### **Study Characteristics:**

Research question addressed:

2. To determine if prison visits improve prisoners' prison behaviour in terms of rule-breaking

Aims/objectives of study:

To explore the relationship between threatened and actual violence and conjugal visits

- Do those who engage in conjugal visits have lower levels of threats of violence?
- Do those who engage in conjugal visits have lower levels of actual violence?

Hypotheses:

No specific outcomes were predicted

Study Design:

This was a cohort study that measured the relationship between conjugal visits and violence/threats of violence in the prison environment.

Participant recruitment procedure:

The data was collected from 256 male and female prisoners who volunteered to take part from 2 prisons in Mississippi, all the prisoners in randomly selected units were asked to take part. The response rate for men was 30% and for women was 33%.

Sample size:

256

126 male and 130 female

**Participant Characteristics:**

Age: Collected but not reported

Gender: Male and Female

Length of time in prison: collected but not reported

**Measures used:**

Measure of visits: Had the prisoner engaged in conjugal visits Yes/No no measure of number of visits or length of visits

Measure of recidivism: not applicable

Measure of well being/psychological functioning: not applicable

Measure of rule-breaking: self report of prison violence based on 8 questions about violent behaviour

**Outcome data:**

Data reported:

Correlations were conducted and the results were that conjugal visits do not have a significant impact on threats of violence or actual violence.

Results for male prisoners: The non-significant results were consistent for men

Results for female prisoners: The non-significant results were consistent for women

Results for adolescent prisoners: not applicable

<b>Quality Assurance Screening Questions</b>	Yes = 2	Partially = 1	No/Cannot tell = 0
<p>Did the study ask a clearly focussed question?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Population</li> <li>-Intervention</li> <li>-Outcomes considered</li> </ul>	<p>The population was relevant to the study.</p> <p>The research questions were clearly described and the hypotheses were clearly identified.</p>		
<p>Was this a study that investigated a quantifiable relationship?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-why was the study designed in this way</li> <li>-was this the right research approach for the question</li> </ul>		<p>The research approach was appropriate to the question and the aim was to consider a quantifiable relationship. However, the measurement strategies were weak; there was no attempt to measure the number of conjugal visits or the length of time participants had been engaged in the programme. The study was reliant upon self report for violence and the questions asked did not capture low level violent acts. Sexual assault was also included but this was only one question and did not</p>	

		differentiate between behaviours.	
<b>Detailed Questions</b>			
<p>Was there a comparison group to compare the main group with?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the comparison group appropriate</li> <li>-are group differences reported</li> <li>-could the differences explain the outcomes</li> </ul>		<p>The self selected sample was small compared to the population and differed from the general population. The differences between those who engaged in visits and those who did not could have accounted for the results</p>	
<p>Were participants/observers/data collectors' bias accounted for?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the data was collected</li> <li>-were participants/observers aware of the expected outcomes</li> </ul>		<p>The data was collected from the same source and within the same time frame for each participant. The researchers had considered literacy issues. There is little explanation of whether participants were aware of the outcomes.</p>	
<p>Were all of the participants accounted for at the conclusion?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-what information is provided about follow up/what information is missing</li> </ul> <p>Was the data collected in the same way</p>	<p>The data was collected from the same source for each participant and all available participants were approached. All of the participants were accounted for in the study.</p>		

<p>for all participants?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the data collected at the same time/ in the same intervals</li> <li>-did participants receive the same amount of attention from researchers</li> </ul>			
<p>Did the study have sufficient numbers of participants to avoid chance findings?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-if there is a power calculation</li> </ul>	<p>The study had sufficient numbers although no power calculation was reported.</p>		
<p>How are the results presented and what are the main results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-are the results presented as a proportion of people experiencing an outcome/ a measurement/survival curve</li> <li>-how large is the result and how meaningful</li> </ul>		<p>The results of the correlation are relatively clearly presented. Control variables were considered and included in the analysis. The result is not meaningful in that the variables were not measured well.</p>	
<p>How precise are these results?</p>		<p>P values are reported without</p>	

<p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is the result precise enough to make a decision</li> <li>-if p values are reported are confidence intervals available</li> </ul>		<p>confidence intervals. The measures used were not well developed and were imprecise.</p>	
<p>Were all important outcomes considered so that results can be applied?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the population may differ from population of interest</li> <li>-how the local setting differs</li> <li>-consider outcomes for participants, family, policy makers, community</li> <li>-benefit out ways harm/cost</li> <li>-policy should change as a result</li> <li>-where gender differences explained</li> </ul>		<p>Some variables were considered and included in the analysis and results for different groups reported separately. Each hypothesis was reported on and explained in the results and the outcomes were considered and explored to some degree. The researchers recognised and reported the limitations of their study and presented the results accordingly.</p>	
			<b>Total: 12</b>

## **Data Extraction Sheet**

### **General Information:**

Author(s): Bales, W.D. and Mears, D.P.

Article title: Inmate social ties and the transition to society

Date published: 2008

Type of publication: Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency

Country of origin: United States of America

### **Study Characteristics:**

Research question addressed:

3. To determine if prison visits reduce recidivism as measured by official records

Aims/objectives of study:

To provide support for the assumption that social ties reduce recidivism through testing the impact of visits on two year recidivism rates.

Hypotheses:

Prisoners visited in the previous twelve months were less likely to be reconvicted, that increased frequency of visits lowered or delayed recidivism, that visits from family and most specifically a spouse lowered or delayed recidivism, that visits closer to release were more beneficial and that effects would differ dependent on the characteristics of each prisoner.

Study Design:

This was a cohort study in which archival data was accessed for a 4 month period

Participant recruitment procedure:

Archival data was used

Sample size:

7000

**Participant Characteristics:**

Age: Mean age 34.5 SD 9.7

Gender: Male and female

Length of time in prison: Mean 39.9 months, SD 31.2

**Measures used:**

Measure of visits:

- One or more in 12 months prior to release
- Number of visits in 12 months prior to release
- 7 categories of the type of visitor, whether or not they visited and frequency in the last 12 months
- Greater weight to visits in month of release

Measure of recidivism: reconviction for offence committed in the 2 year period following release

Measure of well being/psychological functioning: not applicable

Measure of rule-breaking: not applicable

**Outcome data:**

Data reported: A logistic regression analysis was conducted and the results were reported as odds ratios. The results suggest that those prisoners who were visited had 30.7% lower odds for recidivism than those who were not visited. For each additional visit that took place the odds were lowered by 3.8% on average, although the effects of the first visits were higher. For each additional month that visits were received the odds lowered by 4.8%. Survival curves were constructed and those who received visits but did re-offend survived longer in the community prior to re-offending compared to those who did not receive visits. When exploring the differences between who visited and recidivism, the higher frequency of spousal visits was associated with lower recidivism. The higher frequency of child visits was



associated with higher recidivism which had not been anticipated by the researchers. However, as anticipated visits closer to release lowered the likelihood of recidivism further.

Results for male prisoners: These effects were seen for men but and were not significant for white men which was a factor that was not anticipated.

Results for female prisoners: These results did not apply to the female sample

Results for adolescent prisoners: not applicable

<b>Quality Assurance Screening Questions</b>	Yes = 2	Partially = 1	No/Cannot tell = 0
<p>Did the study ask a clearly focussed question?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Population</li> <li>-Intervention</li> <li>-Outcomes considered</li> </ul>	<p>The population was relevant to the study.</p> <p>The research questions were clearly described and the hypotheses were clearly identified.</p>		
<p>Was this a study that investigated a quantifiable relationship?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-why was the study designed in this way</li> <li>-was this the right research approach for the question</li> </ul>	<p>The research approach was appropriate to the question and the aim was to consider a quantifiable relationship. The methods of measurement were thorough. The data collection method allowed for a considerable amount of information to be captured and analysed.</p>		
<b>Detailed Questions</b>			
<p>Was there a comparison group to compare the main group with?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-was the comparison group appropriate</li> <li>-are differences between the groups</li> </ul>		<p>The participants receiving visits within the study were compared with those who did not receive visits. All participants were compared on the number of visits they received and this</p>	

<p>reported</p> <p>-could the differences explain the outcomes</p>		<p>proved effective within the sample.</p> <p>Ranges of confounding variables were controlled for.</p>	
<p>Were participants/observers/data collectors' bias accounted for?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-how the data was collected</p> <p>-were participants/observers aware of the expected outcomes</p>	<p>Archival data was collected for all possible participants. The data was collected from the same source and within the same time frame for each participant. A wide range of controlling variables were considered.</p> <p>Differences in groups of participants were identified and built into the analysis.</p>		
<p>Were all of the participants accounted for at the conclusion?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-what information is provided about follow up/what information is missing</p> <p>Was the data collected the same way?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <p>-was the data collected at the same time/ in the same intervals</p> <p>-did participants receive the same amount of attention from researchers</p>	<p>The data was collected via the same method for all participants, within the same 4 month time frame. All of the participants were accounted for in the study.</p>		

<p>Did the study have sufficient numbers of participants to avoid chance findings?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-if there is a power calculation</li> </ul>	<p>The study had sufficient numbers although no power calculation was reported. All of the available data was collected from the whole state of Florida.</p>		
<p>How are the results presented and what are the main results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-are the results presented as a proportion of people experiencing an outcome/a measurement/survival curve</li> <li>-how large is the result and how meaningful</li> </ul>	<p>The results of the logistic regression and the survival curve analysis are clearly presented and odds ratios reported. The process of attaining the results is explained in detail. The models are presented in tables. Control variables were considered and included in the analysis. The result is large and meaningful.</p>		
<p>How precise are these results?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-is the result precise enough to make a decision</li> <li>-if p values are reported are confidence intervals available</li> </ul>	<p>P values are reported without confidence intervals. The variance contributed by each variable was reported separately. Each group was also reported separately.</p>		
<p>Were all important outcomes</p>	<p>Each hypothesis was reported on and</p>		

<p>considered so that results can be applied?</p> <p>Consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-how the population may differ from population of interest</li> <li>-how the local setting differs</li> <li>-consider outcomes for participants, family, policy makers, community</li> <li>-benefit out ways harm/cost</li> <li>-policy should change as a result</li> <li>-where gender differences explained</li> </ul>	<p>explained in the results and all outcomes were considered and explored. The authors also reported clearly on the limitations of the study. The authors also refer to impact on visitation policy. Gender differences were also explored.</p>		
			<b>Total: 17</b>

## APPENDIX 3

### INFORMATION SHEET

#### How prisoners and their partners believe their relationship may help to prevent re-offending.

**Why is this study being done?** I would like prisoners and their partners to take part in a study that will look at the strengths they share in their relationships. This involves you taking part in an interview that will ask you to talk about your relationship. I hope to learn about your strengths and share them with other couples who want to move away from offending.

**Why am I being asked to take part?** You have received this information as your involvement in Building Stronger Families shows that you care about each other and want to make your relationship better.

**What will I be asked to do?** You will be asked to attend an interview that takes about an hour to talk about the relationship you share with each other, what it means to you, what the strengths of your relationship are and what influence you feel that you have over each other. You will be interviewed separately.

**What are the benefits of taking part?** People usually enjoy talking about their strengths and often find telling their story a positive and helpful experience.

**Do I have to take part?** You do not have to take part. If you choose not to, this will not affect the services that your family receive in any way. If you do decide to take part you can also pull out of the study at any time up to two months after the interview.

**What do I do if I want to take part?** If you want to take part all you need to do is tell me of your interest. Once you have done this I will arrange to contact you to explain the research further and arrange for you to complete the consent form.

Will all the information be kept confidential? Yes it will. I will not be using your names. The only time when someone will need to know who you are is if you tell me that a child is being hurt or that someone intends to hurt someone. All information collected will be kept in a locked cabinet in the psychology department at Birmingham University.

What are the possible disadvantages or risks of taking part? Sometimes talking about relationships brings up sensitive issues and I will make every effort to put you at ease during our meeting. It is very unlikely that you will be upset by the interview, but if you are you can stop the interview at any time. If you are upset after the interview, you can speak to me or any professional who is helping your family. I will also give you a list of numbers you can call.

What happens when the research stops? I will send you a summary of the findings of the study. The findings may be published in a journal, but your names will not be used and no-one will be able to tell who you are. As you and your partner will both be interviewed it is possible that you may recognise each other's comments. If you say something in the interview that you later decide you do not want to have entered into the research paper you can tell the researcher this at any time before the paper is published.

Who is organising the research? This study is organised by The University of Birmingham.

Thank you for your time

If you would like to know more about the research project, please contact me, Karen De Claire through the Offender Management Unit at HMP Swansea/HMP Prescoed.



## Consent Form

Please feel free to ask any questions about taking part in the study. By signing this form you are showing that you understand and agree to the following:

- I understand that I am being asked to participate in a research project being carried out by Karen De Claire as part of her doctoral thesis in forensic psychology in association with the University of Birmingham.
- I have been informed in writing of the nature and purpose of the study and have had the opportunity to discuss these in person with the researcher.
- I understand that I do not have to take part in this study and, if for any reason I am unhappy about participating, I can withdraw from the study at any time (including up to 2 months after completing the interview) without explaining my decision.
- I understand that taking part in this study (or withdrawing from the study) will not affect the care or treatment I or my partner receives in the prison.
- My name (and prison number) will not be shown on any published work relating to this study. Due to the nature of the research information I give may be identifiable to my partner the researcher will discuss with me any quotes that may be used in the published work following the interview.
- I understand that all details I provide will be treated as confidential as far as possible. Confidentiality will be limited if I provide information which suggests there is a threat to the security of the prison and/or the safety of myself or any other person, or if significant details relating to crimes that I have committed but not been convicted of are disclosed.
- The information I give will be anonymised and kept securely and safely for 10 years when it will be destroyed. I understand that I can ask the information I give to be destroyed at any time and I can have access to this information at any time.

I, \_\_\_\_\_(your name here) consent to participate in the study conducted by Karen De Claire in association with the University of Birmingham.

Signed:

Witnessed by:

Prison Number:

Name:

Date:

Signature:





DEBRIEF SHEET

Thank you for taking part in this study.

The aim of this study was to listen to individuals' experiences of their intimate relationships. The researcher is trying to understand the relationship you share with each other, what it means to you, what the strengths of your relationships are and what influence you feel that you have over each other. It is hoped that this will help to guide other couples to develop good things in their relationships and to help them to reduce future offending.

If you wish to withdraw your consent for the interview information to be used in the study please do so within the next two months using the contact details below. If you have any queries, questions or concerns regarding the study, please do not hesitate to contact me on the below contact details at any time.

**Contact details:**

Name: Karen De Claire

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University of Birmingham,  
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B15 2TT

Email: [REDACTED]

Or through the Offender Management Unit at HMP Swansea/HMP Prescoed.

The list below contains contact details of confidential organisations that offer individuals advice and support over the phone or via the Internet.

**Important phone numbers/websites**

**Samaritans 08457 909090 [www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)**

Samaritans provides confidential emotional support, 24 hours a day.

For serving prisoners please contact your local Listener

**Women's Aid 0808 2000 247 [www.womensaid.org.uk/](http://www.womensaid.org.uk/)**

**Free phone 24 hr Domestic Violence Helpline.**

**Women's Aid is the key national charity working to end domestic violence against women and children. They provide** advice about finances, housing etc. and the number of your local support services.

**Safer Wales 02920461564 [www.saferwales.com](http://www.saferwales.com)**

Safer Wales manages 14 key community safety projects which work to protect the most vulnerable in society, and make communities safe for all. They support victims of hate crime, attack and harassment, burglary, rape, domestic abuse, and prostitution.

## APPENDIX 5

### INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

#### Male partner

How long have you been together? How did you meet? When did you first make a commitment to each other?

How would other people close to you describe your relationship? What do you like to do together? What do you enjoy about the relationship?

Can you tell me about a really positive time in your relationship? Can you tell me about how you have dealt with difficulties in your relationship? Can you tell me about how your relationship has changed over time?

When you talk about your offending with your partner what kinds of things does she say? What kind of things do you say? When you talk about this sentence with your partner what kinds of things does she say? What kind of things do you say?

How have you kept the relationship going throughout this sentence? How often do you have visits/talk to each other? What do you talk about? How do you talk to each other?

What do you think is going to happen to your relationship in the future? How do you think your relationship will help you in the future?

#### Female partner

How long have you been together? How did you meet? When did you first make a commitment to each other?

How would other people close to you describe your relationship? What do you like to do together? What do you enjoy about the relationship?

Can you tell me about a really positive time in your relationship? Can you tell me about how you have dealt with difficulties in your relationship? Can you tell me about how your relationship has changed over time?

When you talk about their offending with your partner what kinds of things do you say? What kind of things does he say? When you talk about this sentence with your partner what kinds of things do you say? What kind of things does he say?

How have you kept the relationship going throughout this sentence? How often do you have visits/talk to each other? What do you talk about? How do you talk to each other?

What do you think is going to happen to your relationship in the future? How do you think your relationship will help you in the future?

## APPENDIX 6

### 1. HAVING A SPECIAL CONNECTION

#### CONNECTION

**This theme emerges as the way in which the couple feel linked to each other without any specific tangible elements. The feeling is abstract but has its own identity within the relationship.**

- the link is an unspoken feeling
- the connection feels emotional
- the connection feels physical
- their experience of the connection felt instant
- there is a sense of strength within the relationship
- there is a sense of closeness between them
- they make each other feel happy
- they experience an ease of communication between them
- they feel a similarity in their personalities

#### KNOWING EACH OTHER

**This theme emerges as the way in which the couple feel that they have knowledge of each other that is special and quite exclusive to them.**

- the idea that they have seen more of each other's real self than other people have
- they have shared more information with each other than they have with others
- they know patterns of the other persons behaviour
- they know each other's needs
- they know how each other feels
- knowing what not to do when interacting with the other person
- the importance of time to know each other
- the feeling that they want/need to know everything about each other

#### RELATIONSHIP JOURNEY

**This theme is concerned with the distance they have metaphorically travelled within the relationship experience. As all participants are part of long relationships this theme is limited to their explicitly referring to changes over the**

- references to phases of the relationship developing over time
- references to the relationship building in complexity
- explicitly stating the skills that they have learned to maintain the relationship

course of the relationship.

### **SHARED IDENTITY**

**This theme is an amalgamation of all the elements of sharing experienced by the participants that emerge in the interviews and contribute to their sense of identity as a couple.**

- Shared past experiences both positive and negative
- Similar past experiences that were not shared but that give them insight into each others' past.
- Shared goals for the future
- Shared sense of humour
- Shared tastes or interests
- Shared time together
- Shared emotional experience

### **POSITIVE IDENTITY**

**This theme is concerned with the way in which the individuals attain a positive self identity from the relationship, view the relationship as having a positive identity of its own or define a very positive identity for their partner.**

- they say very positive things of the other partner
- they speak of their own positive qualities in the context of the relationship
- they talk about the relationship itself in a positive way
- they discuss the relationship as unique or special

### **PROTECTION**

**This theme emerges from the sense of being preserved from harm or wanting to preserve the other partner from harm.**

- the experience of feeling rescued from a difficult life by the other partner
- trying to protect the other partner from difficult emotions
- trying to protect the non offending partner from knowledge of offending
- trying to protect them from others
- a sense of feeling heroic after protecting the other partner
- feeling protective towards the other partner



## **SECURITY/STABILITY**

**This theme emerges as a sense of feeling safe and secure within the relationship**

- stability of the relationship
- personal stability within the relationship
- feelings of safety in the relationship

## **2. CHALLENGES AND THREATS**

### **ISOLATION/LONELINESS-**

**This theme is concerned with the quality of feeling isolated or lonely rather than the condition or fact of isolation**

- references to the feeling of being isolated
- references to feeling lonely
- feeling cut off from others and unable to talk to them

### **RESTRICTION**

**These participants are physically restricted this theme is therefore related to the experience of feeling restricted not the state of restriction.**

- feeling restricted within the prison
- feeling restricted in activities outside of the prison because of the sentence
- experiencing the sense of restriction to their privacy

### **GUILT/SHAME/RESPONSIBILITY**

**This theme is related to the experience of the feeling of guilt and taking responsibility rather than the fact of guilt/responsibility. The shame element refers to a more significant feeling of disgrace.**

- expressing feelings of guilt
- expressing the feeling of being ashamed
- taking responsibility for behaviour

### **POWERLESSNESS**

**This theme is concerned with feeling helpless or ineffectual. It emerges in the interviews in relation to the other partner.**

- feeling powerless to influence their partner's offending behaviour
- feeling powerless to influence the other partner's emotions
- feeling powerless to help them cope

## **INSECURITY**

**This theme emerges as a sense of vulnerability or instability**

- personal feelings of insecurity/vulnerability
- feelings of insecurity within the relationship

## **LOSS**

**This theme includes elements of what they have to adjust to as a result of the sentence. This theme is concerned with how they experience the sense of loss.**

- how they adjust to the impact of the sentence
- adaptations of behaviour and communication to cope with loss
- how they experience a sense of loss
- adjusting to a lack of sexual contact

### **3. DEVELOPING RECIPROCAL QUALITIES/BEHAVIOURS**

## **COMMITMENT**

**The couples are committed to each other because they have all been together for long time periods and indicated their intention to stay together prior to being part of the research. This theme is therefore related to how the act of commitment is recognised within the relationship.**

- they demonstrate a sense that their commitment is felt without the need to express it
- they talk about the importance of formalising their commitment
- they show early indications of commitment
- they discuss events that seem to trigger an act of commitment
- they discuss actions related to future commitment
- they have invested in the relationship

## **FEELING VALUED/VALUING EACH OTHER**

**This theme emerges from the individuals' experience of a sense of worth or how they feel respected or cared for within the relationship and how they value, respect and care for their partner. There is an element of not being cared for that can also emerge under this theme**

- they engage in behaviours that while not necessarily caring in themselves demonstrate that they care
- they engage in specific actions that are caring
- they make an effort for each other
- they listen to each other
- they express the view that they do not feel valued when their partner is offending
- they say things that are caring
- they describe feeling cared for
- they show respect for each other
- they put the other person's needs first
- they show concern for each other



## RE-ASSURANCE

**This theme emerges as a sense of the way they try to remove each others' doubts and fears about their coping , emotional experience, fidelity and commitment.**

- the provision of emotional support
- engaging in behaviour changes that help to reassure
- ensuring regular contact with each other
- providing detailed information during their contact with each other

## MANAGING CONFLICT

**This theme is limited in that it does not emerge often within the interviews and it does not emerge as particularly meaningful when it does arise this is likely to be because more complex themes are capturing the strategies used that pre-empt or minimise significant conflict . The theme is therefore limited to elements of managing disagreements, how the issues are resolved and how responsibility is explored.**

- the manner in which partners may avoid conflict situations or disagreement
- the process of resolution of conflict situations
- the way responsibility is considered, attributed and who accepts it

## INFLUENCE

**This theme emerges in the interviews as the potential power to effect behaviour change in each other naturally and the methods that are actively used to do this. There is also the element of being influenced by other people.**

- the manner in which they influence each other
- the influence exerted by other people
- the strategies that are used to try to exert an influence over the other partner

## COPING

**This theme emerges as the experience of coping and the**

- the manner in which they provide support for each other
- the cognitive strategies they used to manage their emotions
- the manner in which they use visits and other forms of



thoughts, strategies and actions used by the participants to cope with day to day stress in relation to the sentence and their day to day lives. This theme is also concerned with adjusting both naturally adapting or making an effort to adjust.

contact

- the strategy of focusing on the future
- the feeling that they have reached their limit
- how they adjust to the impact of the sentence
- indications of re-evaluation of the relationship
- adaptations of behaviour and communication

#### 4. MAINTAINING BELIEF IN THE FUTURE

##### HOPE V FEAR

This theme emerges in polarity. The participants experience the expectation and desire for positive outcomes in the future but they often simultaneously experience the emotion that these outcomes are under threat.

- hope for behaviour change in terms of offending or substance use/fear this won't happen
- hope for better life in the future/fear this won't happen
- evidence that increases the sense of hope
- belief or faith in behaviour change

##### EXPLANATIONS OF BEHAVIOUR

This theme is concerned with the manner in which the offending and other negative behaviours are understood or explained by each partner.

- explanations that are related to negative past experiences
- explanations that involve the environment, influence of peers or other situational factors
- explanations in which they share responsibility
- explanations that include characteristics of the individual's immaturity or personality
- explanations that reflect a sense of higher purpose

##### INVOLVEMENT OF OTHERS

This theme is concerned with references to other significant people who may have a personal association with the couple and may affect the relationship or impact upon their belief in the future.

- the views expressed by significant others on the relationship
- the support that other people offer the couple
- the conflicts cause by others or experienced with others
- the acceptance received from significant others

APPENDIX 7 Theme	C1F-Ellen	C1M-Neil	C1
<b>CONNECTION-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling happy</li> <li>• communicating easily</li> <li>• similarity of personality</li> <li>• Emotional connection</li> <li>• Physical connection</li> <li>• Unspoken feeling</li> <li>• Closeness</li> <li>• Strength</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant a sense of connection developed from a sense of feeling relaxed at the beginning of the relationship and being able to communicate easily with each other. For her this results in a sense that they want to be together to the exclusion of others and she feels they have similarities in their character that connect them. Their connection has developed from an intense physical and emotional connection to a more realistic but satisfying love. She almost views her initial connection to him as ridiculous in its intensity and feels embarrassment at her youthful naivety. This participant demonstrates a strong empathy for her partner's difficult past experiences and this is evident in the way she describes their connection. This sense of connection is valuable to her.</p>	<p>For this participant the overall emphasis of the connection is indefinable. He experiences chemistry an unspoken feeling. The connection is positive and his partner evokes a feeling of happiness in him. He believes they have a rapport and that they communicate easily. Their emotional connection is strong and provides him with positive feelings, although he also experiences difficulties during his day in prison because he thinks about what she is doing a lot of the time. Other than chemistry he does not emphasise the physical connection.</p>	<p>Both participants experience this sense of connection and both express it warmly they seem to value the connection. The key elements of communicating easily, physical and emotional connection are evident in both interviews.</p> <p>The female partner expresses a more empathic connection to her partner while he experiences a sense that he is thinking about her every day.</p> <p>The connection is valuable to both of them and provides a sense that they have something special.</p>
<b>KNOWING EACH OTHER-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seen more of real self than other</li> <li>• shared more</li> <li>• knowing patterns of the other persons behaviour</li> <li>• knowing needs</li> <li>• knowing how they feel</li> <li>• knowing what not to do</li> <li>• the importance of time to know each other</li> <li>• wanting/need to know each other</li> </ul>	<p>Throughout the interview this themes emerges powerfully for this participant in the sense that she knows her partner very well. It is almost as if she has studied him. Knowing him so well is important to her because she feels comfortable with him when she does not generally feel comfortable with other people. She knows about his past and this helps her to understand his character and as a consequence to be more understanding about his negative behaviour. She knows to some degree how to manage him and when</p>	<p>For him this theme emerges as a sense that they have shared more and know more about each other's real selves than anyone else. There is a sense that he must be ok if she is still with him. Sometimes her knowledge of him is frightening probably because he does not want people to know the real him, but generally their knowledge of each other makes him comfortable. He also describes short cuts to communication that have arisen between them because they know each other so well and there is</p>	<p>Their separate interviews seem to complement each other within this theme. She knows him well and he feels known. She knows a lot about his past and he feels that he has shared more with her than with anyone else.</p>

	<p>not to damage his fragile ego. Knowing him so well helps her to view some of his behaviour as emerging from his insecurity rather than as a reflection on her. She is also able to identify patterns of emerging risk and she uses this to try to help him develop his insight into his behaviour. There is a sense that she tries not to judge him and she draws some positive feeling from being the person who knows him best. What she does not refer to is a sense that he knows her.</p>	<p>a sense that this provides evidence for him for how good they are together. For him the fact that she knows the worst of him and is still with him seems to be underlying some of the things he says and a very important element to this theme for him.</p>	
<p><b>COMMITMENT-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• felt without expression</li> <li>• importance of formalising</li> <li>• early commitment</li> <li>• event triggering commitment</li> <li>• action to ensure future commitment</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant commitment came naturally in the beginning she felt it without there being any formal expression of commitment. His first prison sentence triggered more commitment which seems to be a result of his needing the support from her and her family. She doesn't talk about any formal expressions of commitment between them and this does not seem to be important. She does however suggest her commitment through words and actions that suggest that they are working towards the future as a couple. For her it seems that the commitment is there for both of them she feels it and it does not need to be expressed in a formal way. Commitment means being there for each other.</p>	<p>For this participant commitment seems to be fundamental to the relationship without actually being expressed. The commitment came early and his own vulnerability following the death of his mother triggered the strengthening of the commitment. There is a sense that for him the commitment is result of his needing to fill a gap in his life nevertheless it is strong. There is no referral to formal commitment in the interview and there is a sense that this formality is not necessary. Commitment means having someone there for you.</p>	<p>They share a sense that commitment is natural and came early for them. They also share the view that his vulnerability triggered commitment although they discuss different events as being the catalysts.</p> <p>Neither of them refer to any formal form of commitment and there is a genuine sense that this is not important to either of them.</p>
<p><b>FEELING VALUED/VALUING EACH OTHER-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviours that demonstrate</li> </ul>	<p>This theme holds more negative elements for this participant. Although there is an overriding sense that she knows her value</p>	<p>This theme is not evident throughout the interview. He does express concern for his partner and he feels that he is lucky</p>	<p>There is a sense that at the current time neither partner feels particularly valued within the relationship.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>caring</li> <li>actions that are caring</li> <li>making an effort</li> <li>listening</li> <li>not feeling valued when offending</li> <li>words that are caring</li> <li>feeling cared for</li> <li>showing respect</li> <li>putting the other person's needs first</li> <li>concern for each other</li> </ul>	<p>to him and she demonstrates her concern for him his offending undermines her experience of feeling valued in the relationship. When he is gambling and using drugs she feels that he does not listen to her or respect her. This is less evident now that he is in prison but he still fails to listen to her. The fact that he does not show her how he values her is important to her and the experience makes her angry.</p>	<p>that she has stayed with him despite the things he has put her through. This shows that he values her and he expresses the intent to give her a better life. The fact that she has stayed with him gives him some sense of feeling valued and he also understands that she loves him which makes him feel good. However this is not a strong emerging theme through this participant's account of the relationship.</p>	<p>They both express concern for the other but this does not seem to be translated into an experience of feeling valued.</p>
<p><b>POSITIVE IDENTITY-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>of the other partner</li> <li>of themselves in the relationship</li> <li>of the relationship</li> <li>the relationship as unique/special</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant this theme is more about viewing the relationship as positive in that they are good together at managing issues. She also sees herself as unique in that she can criticise him when others would not be able to. The relationship is special and she is frustrated by the fact that other people cannot see this. She is frustrated that his offending overshadows other people's views and as a consequence the relationship does not get discussed for its own sake as other people's relationships do. There is a sense that she needs other people to acknowledge the relationship as valuable and important.</p>	<p>He holds positive views of his partner and does not refer to her in a negative light at any point in the interview. The fact that she stays with him seems to provide him with a sense that he is worthwhile. He also views the relationship as special because other people were jealous of how they were together. He holds onto this view even though it was a number of years ago. This sense of other's being jealous of the relationship seems important to make him feel good about himself.</p>	<p>They both hold positive views of the relationship and their engagement in the relationship translates into some positive self appraisal. They both also have a sense that other people seeing the good qualities of the relationship as important, although for her this is a source of frustration as her family do not view the relationship as good.</p> <p>They differ on this theme in that he expresses very positive views of her and she does not do this suggesting that she is currently finding it difficult to talk about him in a positive way.</p>
<p><b>RE-ASSURANCE-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>emotional support</li> <li>behaviour changes</li> <li>regular contact</li> <li>detailed contact</li> </ul>	<p>Reassurance is a key element of the way she interacts in her relationship. She tries to reassure her partner of her commitment to him and her fidelity through changes in her behaviour. To her it seems obvious that because he is in prison he will worry about her finding someone else, she has therefore</p>	<p>For this participant re-assurance is very important. Contact is key to re-assurance not necessarily the content of the contact but the amount and the regularity of it. For him this provides re-assurance that he is loved and allows him to re-assure his partner that he loves her. This contact</p>	<p>This theme is key to both partners in different ways. He does not refer to being re-assured of her fidelity but this may be because she works hard to anticipate his concerns and alters her behaviour to ensure he is not experiencing distress. The lack of</p>

	made a conscious decision to provide re-assurance by limiting her social life, making sure she always answers the phone and giving him a detailed account of what is happening in her life. She expresses the view that when he is released from prison she will not tolerate this level of possessive behaviour but that it is acceptable in the circumstances. Regular physical contact is viewed as essential but difficult. There is a sense that he is not good at communicating positively on the phone and that she needs to see him to be re-assured that he is ok and that they can communicate well as a couple. Re-assurance for her means re-assuring him that she is waiting for him and seeking re-assurance for herself that he is physically and emotionally ok.	is generally written letters and phone calls he does not refer to visits as particularly important in this context and that seems strange in itself perhaps suggesting that there are some negative associations to visits.	evidence for this in his interview may also be a result of his not disclosing this to the researcher because he generally likes to present himself in a positive light.  For both of them his being re-assured is the key and this is likely to be the result of his being in prison. Regular and detailed communication provides them with re-assurance, but while she included visits as very important he does not refer to them.
<b>LOSS-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how they adjust to the impact of the sentence</li> <li>• adaptations of behaviour and communication to cope with loss</li> <li>• how they experience a sense of loss</li> <li>• adjusting to a lack of sexual contact</li> </ul>	Adjustment for this participant appears to be a combination of a natural process of emotional adjustment over time to the sentence and self directed adjustment to behaviour in order to make the sentence easier. The emotional adjustment is related to a sense that she is becoming numb to the impact of his going to prison and that this has happened before and become easier the second time rather than more difficult. As the sentence has progressed she has become used to the impact naturally. The behavioural changes she has made to manage his jealousy are viewed as a temporary adjustment. There is sense that this participant has naturally adjusted to the impact of the sentence and accepted	Adjustment has occurred naturally in their communication which has reduced over time as he moves closer to release. There is no particular evidence of this theme emerging for any other element in this interview. He does not really consider the impact of the sentence on his behaviour or emotions.	For both partners there is a sense that the prison experience is not new and adjustments while necessary occur naturally.

	that she has to do this in order that the relationship survives.		
<b>POWERLESSNESS-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to influence offending behaviour</li> <li>to manage the other partners emotions</li> </ul>	<p>In this case powerlessness relates to frustration that she wants what's best for him but cannot influence this through influencing him to stop offending. She also feels powerless when dealing with his jealousy and this is frustrating because she has changed her behaviour to re-assure him. There is a feeling of underlying anger throughout the interview that seems to stem from her concern for him and for their future and a sense that she cannot affect change.</p>	<p>There is no particular evidence of this theme emerging within this interview.</p>	<p>Whilst not a strongly emerging theme the contrast between the partners is interesting. Her frustration and anger throughout the interview seems to be related to her inability to get him to see how much he is damaging himself through his offending. While he does not refer to this or give any indication that he feels powerless.</p> <p>This maybe because he is only days from release for her this may raise her anxiety and for him it may feel like he is about to regain control of his life.</p>
<b>EXPLANATIONS OF BEHAVIOUR-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Past</li> <li>Situational</li> <li>shared responsibility</li> <li>immaturity</li> <li>personality</li> <li>higher purpose</li> </ul>	<p>There is a sense that this participant has built a complex set of explanations for her partners offending. She needs to believe that his difficult past explains the way that he behaves and that he is not actually responsible for his gambling drug use and offending. She has actually developed a psychological formulation for his offending and this helps her to try to manage her feelings about his behaviour and to consider ways to support him. There is also a sense that while she forgives him because of his past she respects him for not using his past to explain his behaviour. In holding this view she can be compassionate in the way that she communicates with him and this feels important in her view of herself as a good person.</p>	<p>There is no particular evidence of this theme emerging within this interview. Although he refers to his difficult past he does not use this to explain his behaviour.</p>	<p>There is a definite sense that her provision of explanations for his offending would not be so meaningful to her if he used them as well.</p>

<b>PROTECTION-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling rescued from difficult life</li> <li>• protecting of emotions</li> <li>• protecting from offending</li> <li>• protecting from others</li> <li>• feeling heroic</li> <li>• feeling protective</li> </ul>	<p>This participant expresses the feeling that she was rescued from her own difficult behaviour and potential future problems by her partner this gratitude colours her view of him as almost a hero. Although, she feels protected in the relationship she sometimes experiences this as over protection, but she tolerates this. Another element is the definite sense that she is protecting him emotionally by not telling him the negative things that her family are saying. Protection in this way is not just about protecting him but about keeping pathway open for them to rebuild a future relationship. Protection for her is both about feeling protected and offering protection.</p>	<p>There is no particular evidence of this theme emerging within this interview.</p>	<p>They do not share this theme while it is important to her and she refers to him over protecting her it does not emerge in his interview.</p>
<b>RELATIONSHIP JOURNEY-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing over time</li> <li>• building in complexity</li> <li>• learning skills that maintain</li> </ul>	<p>This is a not a powerful theme within the interview. Apart from an ability to remain calmer when talking to him she does not actively discuss the skills she seems to have developed to cope within the relationship. There is a sense that the relationship has developed over time and that this development for her has gone from a state of naive belief that she can save him to the understanding that she can support him but he must want to change. The relationship journey has resulted in personal change.</p>	<p>For this participant this theme encompasses the move from childhood to adulthood within the relationship. There is a sense of their immaturity influencing the beginning of the relationship. This had simplicity for him that has diminished as the relationship and life has become more complex. He almost views the relationship as an entity on its own growing and surviving sometimes despite them.</p>	<p>For both of them there is a sense that the journey has been from naivety to a point of maturity. That maturity is not necessarily viewed as a good thing and there is a sense that they both preferred the relationship in its simpler form.</p>
<b>INFLUENCE-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• influencing each other</li> <li>• influence of other people</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant the sense that she needs to influence her partner to try to get him to change is evident throughout the</p>	<p>This theme encapsulates a number of issues for this participant. He recognises his partners influence over him and feels</p>	<p>This theme is important to both of them and once again there are complementary elements. She tries to</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strategies for influencing</li> </ul>	<p>interview. She recognises that in the past she has failed to influence him through talking. She continues to try to help him to recognise his patterns in behaviour. It is something she strives to do even though it creates conflict within the relationship. She seems to have reached a point where there is some evidence that he is ready to change and she is looking for practical strategies such as moving away from their home area. This participant understands how fragile her influence is but she has the strength to keep trying. There is some sense that for her this theme of influencing her partner has become her role in the relationship especially providing the realism she believes he lacks.</p>	<p>positive about it he seems to value her attempts to guide him in the right direction. He believes that she will not stick by him if he comes back to prison and there is a sense that he needs this ultimatum. In contrast to this he feels that he is losing his influence over her. He chooses a simple example of her musical taste changing due to the influence of her father and he feels she is moving away from their shared musical taste. There seems to be more to this as with him in prison she spends more time with her father and he seems to fear her father's influence. Being able to influence each other seems to be important to him.</p>	<p>influence his behaviour away from offending and he recognises and appreciates this. There is a sense that he is losing his influence over her coming through his interview that may be echoed by her not referring to his capacity to influence her.</p>
<p><b>INVOLVEMENT OF OTHERS-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>views on relationship</li> <li>support they offer</li> <li>conflicts/acceptance</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant the involvement of others in the relationship is generally negative. In the past her family have supported her and her partner but as he has continued to offend they have lost faith in him. The conflict for her impacts upon her loyalties and creates anger and frustration. Generally the involvement of others is a source of stress rather than support. She tries to understand that her family do care about her and her partner is responsible for the breakdown in relationships, without this impacting upon her feelings for him.</p>	<p>This theme is not key to his view of the relationship his nan who is the most important person in his family accepts the relationship and views it positively which is important to him. There is a sense that he knows that her family do not value the relationship but he does not refer to this directly. The involvement of other people may not be that important to him as he does not have many people who are important to him and when people are not positive about him he tends to not discuss them.</p>	<p>The involvement of others creates gaps in communication for them as she tries to shield him from her families' views.</p>
<p><b>HOPE V FEAR-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hope for behaviour change/fear this won't</li> </ul>	<p>She hopes that he will change his behaviour and move away from offending. One of her strategies for retaining hope is finding</p>	<p>For him he expresses hope for a better life mixed with some fear that this won't happen. He hopes that they will stay</p>	<p>There is a sense that as a couple he expresses hopes without the necessary evidence to back this while</p>



<p>happen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hope for better life/fear this won't happen</li> <li>• evidence for hope</li> <li>• belief in change</li> </ul>	<p>evidence for change in the smallest things that he does. Overall though there is a sense of fear that change is too difficult for him to achieve and she feels that she has been naive in her faith in him in the past. This fear of being proved to be naive causes a dilemma for her because it seems that she wants to have faith in his capacity to change.</p>	<p>together and that she will be happy. He wants her to laugh and this seems to come from the understanding that he has not recently given her things to laugh about. His hopes also seem focused on enjoying life which seems to be a reaction to his prison experience of not being able to be free and enjoy things. For him hope seems to be more about faith rather than based on any evidence for a better future.</p>	<p>she wants to have faith but is more fearful that he will not change and the future will not be positive. These differing viewpoints have created conflict for them as she tries to make set realistic expectations and he views this as a lack of belief in him.</p>
<p><b>CONFLICT-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidance</li> <li>• Resolution</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> </ul>	<p>In this relationship she accepts conflict as inevitable and does not seem to put too much weight on it. She sees this as an area of the relationship in which they as a couple have got better at communicating and resolving conflict. There is a sense that she views them both as responsible for individual instances of conflict and for the times they deal with conflict badly. There is also a sense that she gains some re-assurance from the developing change in their conflict patterns.</p>	<p>For this participant the emerging themes related to conflict are those of avoidance as a coping strategy and a sense of the conflict being caused by him. He views his partner as the one that resolves conflict and sees her ability to do this as based on her willingness to look for resolutions and to keep trying. He views conflict as complex and seems to feel that he cannot be the one that resolves their arguments but he appreciates her attempts to do this.</p>	<p>Once again this theme emerges in a complementary manner for both of them. Neither of them make too much of an issue of conflict and both take some responsibility for it. She sees them as improving their skills in resolution and he believes that this is down to her development of different methods of working towards resolution.</p>
<p><b>ISOLATION/LONELINESS-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling isolated</li> <li>• unable to talk to others</li> <li>• Coping alone</li> </ul>	<p>Her loyalty to him has cut her off from her family and that leaves her coping alone. There is a sense that she feels she has chosen this and must get on with it.</p>	<p>There is no particular evidence of this theme emerging within this interview. Other than a brief referral to being lonely in his past and knowing that if he did not have his partner he would be alone and lonely.</p>	<p>They both provide each other with support that helps them to manage loneliness and isolation.</p>
<p><b>COPING-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for each other</li> <li>• cognitive strategies</li> <li>• visits/contact</li> <li>• future focus</li> </ul>	<p>There is a clear tone to this interview that she has reached the limits of her ability to cope and that she would not wait for him if he went to prison again. Her main coping is through cognitive strategies she does not</p>	<p>There is a sense that his ability to cope within the prison environment and generally in his life is contingent on her support. Her visits are the key to his emotional coping and he is grateful for</p>	<p>She seems to have the coping role in the relationship and adopting that position might actually help her to cope. They have little support outside of the relationship therefore their</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reaching a limit</li> </ul>	<p>have the support of others and she does not draw support from him. It seems important to help her to keep going that other people view her as strong and she manages through the sentence by having realistic expectations. Her previous experience of the prison sentence helps her to understand that she can cope as she has before.</p>	<p>this. Knowing she is there for him makes him feel better about himself. This participant did not provide other strategies that he routinely used for coping. Speaking to his partner and feeling supported by her is the key to his ability to manage emotionally through his sentence without her he recognises that he would be lonely and depressed.</p>	<p>continued contact with each other is very important.</p>
<p><b>RESTRICTION-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within the prison</li> <li>because of the sentence</li> <li>to privacy</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant the theme of restriction applies to both her sense of being restricted in her behaviour outside of prison and the restriction experienced in the prison and to their privacy. The personal restriction arises because he is in prison and she needs to reassure him through her behaviour which limits what she does. The restriction to privacy means that that cannot be themselves in visits because they can be overheard. There is a sense that she feels that the whole of the visits process is restrictive and as a result she feels controlled. She also expresses the view that he hates the restriction to their privacy and the fact that others can view them</p>	<p>The theme of restriction is not clear in this interview other than the sense that prison is restrictive in terms of it allows others to be involved in the privacy he wants to maintain within his relationship. Although only expressed once in the transcript the impact on his privacy seemed to resonate for this participant.</p>	<p>They both value privacy and this is compromised by the prison experience. She is restricted by the sentence and there is a sense that they both recognise this.</p>
<p><b>INSECURITY-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>personal feelings of insecurity</li> <li>Insecurity in the relationship</li> </ul>	<p>Insecurity emerges in that she views some of her partner's behaviour as emerging from his insecurity rather than as a reflection on her. She does not appear to experience personal insecurity or to view the relationship as insecure.</p>	<p>This participant reveals his personal insecurity within the interview although he does not refer to it in this way. He understands that he was insecure in the beginning of the relationship that he was shy and needed to drink to have the courage to progress the relationship. He also thought she would discover the real</p>	<p>He experiences the insecurity and she recognises it she adapts her behaviour to help him to manage this. Her understanding of his insecurity and where it comes from helps her to make allowances for him and also to try to get him to see how his experiences have impacted upon his</p>

		him and then end the relationship. He talks about testing the relationship and engaging in behaviours that hurt his partner but he does not know why he does this. His past experiences suggest that his relationships with care givers have been insecure and to some extent he does see this. There is a sense that his personal insecurity impacts upon his current relationship.	personal security.
<b>SHARING-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past experiences</li> <li>• Similar past experiences</li> <li>• Goals</li> <li>• Humour</li> <li>• Taste/interests</li> <li>• Time together</li> <li>• Emotions</li> </ul>	<p>This participant's understanding of what they share as a couple is reflected more in shared characteristics such as humour and the experiencing of similar emotions. She particularly feels the shame related to his offending and there is a sense that she endures this because of the good things they have shared. She talks of their mutual shared experiences in warm tones and although this warmth is generally related to the past there is a sense that she views the time they spend together as more important than the time she spends with anyone else or doing anything else. This warmth seems to help her to manage the current difficulties.</p>	<p>Shared past experience shared goals and humour are very important themes emerging for this participant. There is a sense that he needs to revisit the things they share to maintain his belief in the future of the relationship. It is very important to him that they want the same things and this maybe an expression of his fears that they might be losing a shared view of the future. A strong element to this theme for him is that they shared experiences for the first time together. There is a sense that he needs these shared experiences and goals to feel good about his future.</p>	<p>This theme is important to both of them and although emerging slightly differently there is a shared sense that the positive feelings they both have about their shared experiences may help them to ride out the difficult time.</p>
<b>SECURITY/STABILITY-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of the relationship</li> <li>• personal stability</li> <li>• feelings of safety</li> </ul>	<p>This theme is not seen comprehensively in this interview but there is a feeling of safety and security within the relationship in that she feels secure in that she can feel comfortable with him</p>	<p>The relationship provides him with stability. This comes through as very important to him and something he recognises and values. The stability is not just about the relationship being stable but about the personal stability it provides for him. This theme seems to be related to how the relationship and the</p>	<p>It seems that in the past he has made her feel safe and secure but more currently she provides this for him and he needs this in his life perhaps more than she does. This theme is stronger within his interview and this makes sense in terms of his other theme of insecurity.</p>



		positive influence of his partner counters some of the insecurity he has experienced in his life. He even states that stability is the fundamental element that is required in everyone's life and for him the relationship provides this.	
<b>GUILT/SHAME/RESPONSIBILITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feeling guilty</li><li>• Feeling ashamed</li><li>• Feeling responsible</li></ul>	This participant feels the shame related to her partners offending and there is a sense that she endures this because of the good things they have shared. She also provides a sense that he knows he has to work to rebuild her trust.	There is a sense that he takes responsibility for the problems they have in the relationship. He feels guilty for what he has put her through, but not for the actual offending. He feels shame for his treatment of her when he becomes disassociated from his emotions. There is a sense that he finds it difficult to reconcile his behaviour with his love for her and that this causes distress for him. Generally guilt and responsibility currently underpin his interactions with his partner.	There is a shared sense that he is the guilty party and she endures this in the relationship. They both seem to look to the future with the knowledge that he will need to work to gain her approval.

Theme	C2F-Julie	C2M-Craig	C2
<b>CONNECTION-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• feeling happy</li><li>• communicating easily</li><li>• similarity of personality</li><li>• Closeness</li><li>• Strength</li></ul>	For this participant the connection between them is a highly salient theme within the interview. She describes the communication between them as easy from the beginning and the feeling of connection as instant. Due to the strong sense of connection (that she calls a bond) she expresses the view that the relationship was almost inevitable and she feels that they couldn't be without each other they need each other to feel complete. She attributes this to their shared humour, the	This participant evokes this theme strongly within his narrative he feels the connection with his partner as something indefinable. The connection was instant for him and is strong. He can trust her and he feels both physically and emotionally connected to her. There is evidence of him feeling happy with her and enjoying the time they spend together. He describes her as more than his fiancée she is his best friend. This connection seems to sustain the	This couple share the understanding of a strong connection. For them both the connection came early and it has a quality that seems to aid the maintenance of the relationship. The physical and emotional connection is strong and they both experience the indefinable bond and the strength of that bond.

	sense that they are only happy together and a strong physical and emotional connection. Connection to her means an indefinable bond.	relationship for him and means that he can continue to feel part of a relationship while he is in prison.	
<b>KNOWING EACH OTHER-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seen more of real self than other</li> <li>• shared more</li> <li>• knowing patterns of the other persons behaviour</li> <li>• knowing needs</li> <li>• knowing how they feel</li> <li>• knowing what not to do</li> <li>• the importance of time to know each other</li> <li>• wanting/needing to know each other</li> </ul>	For this participant the theme of knowing each other is hinged on knowing each other's emotions. She consistently refers to how he feels about things and also expresses the view that he will know that she will be faithful to him because he knows her well. She does not question their understanding of each other which suggests confidence in the relationship and states that they do not argue because they understand each other. She attributes this knowledge to the length of time they have been together.	This theme is not so evident for him he feels that his partner knows him enough to know he will not offend and he claims to know how she will be thinking and feeling about this. However the theme does not emerge in other areas of the interview.	This theme is evident for the female partner as a sense of knowing each other's emotions and he suggests she knows he will not re-offend. The lack of evidence for the theme suggests that other things are more important to this couple. They may also not know one another as other themes suggest he idealises her and did not tell her about his offending.
<b>COMMITMENT-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• felt without expression</li> <li>• importance of formalising</li> <li>• early commitment</li> <li>• event triggering commitment</li> <li>• action to ensure future commitment</li> </ul>	For this participant commitment occurred early in the relationship and was triggered by an unexpected pregnancy and by the loss of the baby. The tragedy seems to have made her evaluate the relationship and realise how important it was and also to need the formal commitment to have something to focus on. The formal commitment has become more important to her as a result of the prison sentence, once again it is the event of getting married that gives them something to focus on and perhaps for her gives her something to think about rather than the negative elements of moving on. It also seems like a method of drawing a line under the sentence and placing it in the path moving on to a new life.	For this participant the formality of commitment is a key part of the theme. There is a suggestion that he was ready for commitment and wanted to make this. He felt that she was the one he wanted to commit to early in the relationship and that he knew he wanted to marry her before her pregnancy. For him the event did not trigger the commitment it just coincided with it. For this participant the commitment seems to be part of a need to do things in the 'right' way but also that he wanted to do this for her. Their marriage helps him to visualise the relationship as lasting and there is a sense that he wants to make sure she won't leave him in the future and he thinks marriage will prevent this.	Both partners feel the importance of formal commitment and working towards this provides focus for their relationship. They differ on the underlying reasons for this commitment but the overall theme is that they are committed to each other and both of them visualise their future together.

<p><b>FEELING VALUED/VALUING EACH OTHER-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviours that demonstrate caring</li> <li>• actions that are caring making an effort</li> <li>• listening</li> <li>• not feeling valued when offending</li> <li>• words that are caring</li> <li>• feeling cared for</li> <li>• showing respect</li> <li>• putting the other person's needs first</li> <li>• concern for each other</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant her partners caring actions and the effort he makes for her throughout their relationship create a sense that she is valued and she feels appreciated by him. There is no point in the interview that she questions this. There is some indication that she feels she allowed him to care for her and she did not do enough for him and this is something that she wishes to rectify. This sense of gratitude to him may add to her determination to be with him in the future. For her feeling valued is not something that she questions and it gives her confidence in the relationship.</p>	<p>This theme comes through in his gratitude to his partner, he values her and he feels valued because she sticks by him and wants to marry him. He wants to show her he values her by going along with whatever type of wedding she chooses. He also seems committed to demonstrating how important she is to him by never giving her any cause to leave him in the future and by listening to her.</p>	<p>They both seem to feel valued in this relationship and to value each other. Gratitude seems to be evident for both of them for different reasons. Generally they show concern for each other and each intends to continue to demonstrate the fact that they care through their future behaviour.</p>
<p><b>POSITIVE IDENTITY-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of the other partner</li> <li>• of themselves in the relationship</li> <li>• of the relationship</li> <li>• the relationship as unique/special</li> </ul>	<p>Her perception of the relationship is positive she feels that the relationship is special and that together they have passed the test by staying together. The prison sentence has not broken them as it would do with other couples. She believes in the strength of the relationship. This theme does not include many elements for her of the relationship raising her self esteem or making her feel better about herself and although she is positive about her partner generally she does not talk about his positive characteristics in relation to this theme. For her the essence of this theme is the identity of the relationship they have as a very positive thing.</p>	<p>This theme emerges as prominent within this participant's interview. He has any extremely positive view of the relationship seeing them as unique as and stronger than the other relationships he sees around him. He takes pride in this and recognises that others see the love they have for each other. He also expresses a very positive almost idealistic view of his partner. He trusts her fidelity to him and although he has had other relationships she is the only person he wanted to marry. His positivity seems to be protecting him from some of the difficulties of being away from her. There is a sense that he is normally a very positive person and this theme is an extension of this.</p>	<p>They share the view that the relationship is special and the relationship has a positive identity. While neither of them seem to need to draw positive views of themselves from the relationship. They differ in that his view of her is very positive while she does not express this overtly in her interview when discussing him.</p>

<p><b>RE-ASSURANCE-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional support</li> <li>• behaviour changes</li> <li>• regular contact</li> <li>• detailed contact</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant there is a real sense of balance to this theme. They provide emotional support for each other through regular and detailed contact. The detail for her is about telling him the truth about what is happening day to day and about how she is managing. She sees the openness of their communication as reassuring. She provides the view that they re-assure each other and sometimes she needs the emotional support and sometimes it is him that needs her to provide the emotional support. This theme for her is about regular contact and she recognises the value of it in keeping him connected to life outside prison.</p>	<p>For this participant re-assurance comes from spending more time to together. When they have visits they are able to re-assure each other of how they feel and reassurance for him when she says how she feels. The letters and phone contact are important, but for him spending time together physically provides the most re-assurance. He expresses the intent to provide emotional support for her through routine telephone calls in which he seeks information about the baby and her day, there is a sense that he gets the most re-assurance from this that he is still part of their lives. This theme is important for him in that he seeks re-assurance but also wants to offer it.</p>	<p>They both provide re-assurance for each other and draw this from each other. For them the visits are very important part of this process as physical contact is key but they also used regular and detailed and open telephone calls to remain connected.</p>
<p><b>LOSS-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how they adjust to the impact of the sentence</li> <li>• adaptations of behaviour and communication to cope with loss</li> <li>• how they experience a sense of loss</li> <li>• adjusting to a lack of sexual contact</li> </ul>	<p>The theme of adjustment is characteristic of this interview. There is a real sense that the process has been key to her coping with the experience. She describes adjusting to the sentence finding closure when he was sentenced and adjustment to the way she communicates everything to him. There is evidence of the natural process of communication changes as she identifies that they talk so much that she runs out of things to say. She has also adjusted to the sense of loss and the lack of physical intimacy and this process had been achieved through natural emotional shifts but also her ability to accept that things cannot be changed and she must re-evaluate how she behaves and how she copes. This participant also anticipates how</p>	<p>This theme is important for this participant he has had to adjust to prison life and to the impact this has had on his relationship with his child. He has experienced a sense of loss in that he does not really know his son and he has had to adjust to his feelings about this. However, the main element to this theme for him seems to be a re-evaluation of his life and the relationship and what he wants for the future. He views coming towards the end of the sentence and having more freedom as an opportunity to restart the relationship and to get to know his child. This theme for him is about re-evaluation.</p>	<p>This theme is important for both of them and this may be because it is his first prison sentence. They have both re-evaluated the relationship and for him he is re-evaluated everything about what he believed to be important in life. They have both adjusted to the sense of loss and the loss of physical intimacy. She anticipates re-adjustment following release.</p>

	<p>difficult it will be for her partner to adjust back into society. The theme of adjustment here seems to be related to all aspects of her life and to be both a natural and a conscious process.</p>		
<p><b>POWERLESS-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to influence offending behaviour</li> <li>to manage the other partners emotions</li> </ul>	<p>Her feeling of powerlessness comes through as a theme at the time she was suspicious about his offending. She expressed the view that she could not influence him to stop. He would not listen to her and she became frustrated and ended the relationship for a short while. She described a feeling of dread and her experience of not being listened to at all. This theme does not emerge into the present for her as she does not describe any current feelings of powerlessness. For her this theme is not related to the sentence but to her inability to influence her partner at the time of the offending.</p>	<p>This participant recognises his sense of being powerless to influence how his child is raised and how his partner copes without him, as a consequence of his own personality. He views himself as being someone who is in control of things and prison stops him from being able to do this. This theme does not seem to carry through everything as he uses strategies to manage this but there is a feeling of frustration associated with his feeling powerless in the areas of his experience in relation to his partner and child.</p>	<p>There is no convergence for this theme for this couple. She has felt powerless to influence him in the past and he feels powerless to influence his child's life now.</p>
<p><b>EXPLANATIONS OF BEHAVIOUR-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Past</li> <li>Situational</li> <li>shared responsibility</li> <li>immaturity</li> <li>personality</li> <li>higher purpose</li> </ul>	<p>This participant provides many explanations for her partners offending and this seems to enable her to feel comfortable staying with him. Prior to his offending she has not had any experience of criminality she manages her feelings about his behaviour by taking some of the responsibility onto herself. She provides a higher purpose for his offending by believing that he was trying to support her and the baby and that her earning more money than him made him feel less of a man. She also blames friends of his for involving him and his own immaturity and</p>	<p>There is little evidence for this theme within the interview</p>	<p>There is a definite sense that she provides explanations for his offending and that as a consequence he does not have to. It does not feel as if he influenced her to develop explanations but that this was something she did spontaneously.</p>



	impulsive personality for stopping him from seeing what would happen. This theme is important to her as it protects her positive view of the relationship and allows her to see his offending as a one off which increases her belief in a future that does not involve offending.		
<b>PROTECTION-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling rescued from difficult life</li> <li>• protecting of emotions</li> <li>• protecting from offending</li> <li>• protecting from others</li> <li>• feeling heroic</li> <li>• feeling protective</li> </ul>	<p>This participant feels protected by her partner from the consequences of his offending. This feels genuine but may have been developed by her as a way of protecting her own emotions and her view of him as a good person. She expresses the view that she respects her partner for protecting her from prison by not telling her. There is a sense that she feels protected by him generally which may be why it is easy for her to attribute his failure to tell her the truth when he was offending as protection.</p>	<p>This theme emerges strongly within this participant's interview. He seems to experience a strong need to protect his partner. When she was pregnant he felt the need to protect her both physically and emotionally. He also expressed his intent to protect her from the consequences of the offending by not letting her know what was happening. He worries about her a lot and there is a sense that he believes others won't look after her properly. This adds to his distress within the prison environment as he feels that he is failing to protect her. Some of this seems to come from his view of her as vulnerable and needing him following the miscarriage and later postnatal depression. Some of this may limit her behaviour in that he states he won't allow her to drive. He does have some recognition that he is overprotective and that his worrying is extreme but this theme is definitely important in terms of his need to be the protector.</p>	<p>This theme is important to both of them he feels the need to protect her and she feels protected. There is a sense that she experiences his protection in a positive way.</p>
<b>RELATIONSHIP JOURNEY-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing over time</li> </ul>	<p>This theme did not emerge within this interview.</p>	<p>This theme did not emerge within this interview.</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building in complexity</li> <li>• learning skills that maintain</li> </ul>			
<b>INFLUENCE-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• influencing each other</li> <li>• influence of other people</li> <li>• strategies for influencing</li> </ul>	<p>This theme is not strong for this participant. She experienced frustration in the past that he did not listen when she tried to talk to him about offending. She does intend to change her behaviour to pay more attention to his feelings and encourage him to communicate better. There is a sense that she trusts him to change and she believes in his capacity to so it does not feel that she takes responsibility for influencing him or that she has to develop many strategies for this purpose.</p>	<p>The essence of this theme for him is not the influence he has over his partner but the sense that he will accept her influence in the future. He does not see the value of sharing his feelings and views bottling up his emotions as a positive strategy of control, however because she wants him to be more open about his feelings he expresses the belief that he is starting to do this and will continue to do so in the future. There is a sense that he does not now have confidence to make good decisions in his life and her influence in terms of decision making will be important in the future.</p>	<p>Influence is not key within their relationship. For them both it is evident that he intends to listen to her in the future and that seems to be enough for both of them.</p>
<b>INVOLVEMENT OF OTHERS-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• views on relationship</li> <li>• support they offer</li> <li>• conflicts/acceptance</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant the involvement of others is positive she gains support from her family and they are accepting of her partner. She appreciates her families support and is grateful. There is a belief that without them she would not cope.</p>	<p>This theme only emerges in that he is glad of the support his partner's family offer her and that he is glad they accept him. There is a sense that he does experience a sense of being beholden to them but he does not express this.</p>	<p>For them both this is about the support her parents provide. They both appreciate it although there is some sense he would rather not be so beholden to them but knows that she needs them.</p>
<b>HOPE V FEAR-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hope for behaviour change/fear this won't happen</li> <li>• hope for better life/fear this won't happen</li> <li>• evidence for hope</li> <li>• belief in change</li> </ul>	<p>This theme is strong within this participant's interview she expresses a clear belief in his intention to change and is confident in him and their future together. The only fear she expresses is for the impact the conviction will have on his ability to get work. She does not view him as a criminal but as a man who made a mistake he will not make again. She has a strong belief that now he realises what he has to lose he will not offend again. For her</p>	<p>Hope for a better life underpins this theme. He does not express belief in change and that seems to be because he has absolute belief that he will not offend again and he does not need to express this. His hopes encompass all areas of what he will want to achieve to enhance his relationship and his family life. The hopes he expresses are so detailed as to give the impression that thinking about the future is almost a pass time for him</p>	<p>They both experience hope and belief in a positive future and this is tied to his confidence that he will not offend in the future and her belief in his confidence.</p>

	hope for the future seems to keep her focused and strong.	within the prison environment. There is a sense that the time he has had to reflect on his life has helped him to re-evaluate what is important for him. His seems to experience hope with little fear for the future.	
<b>CONFLICT-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidance</li> <li>• Resolution</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> </ul>	This theme did not emerge within this interview.	This theme did not emerge in this interview.	
<b>ISOLATION/LONELINESS-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling isolated</li> <li>• unable to talk to others</li> </ul>	This theme did not emerge within this interview.	This theme did not emerge in this interview.	
<b>COPING-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for each other</li> <li>• cognitive strategies</li> <li>• visits/contact</li> <li>• future focus</li> <li>• reaching a limit</li> </ul>	<p>Coping is a theme that emerges often within this interview. The participant uses cognitive strategies to ensure that her faith in her partner is reinforced. She reframes his hiding his offending from her as something she can respect him for as he is shielding her from being involved. She also puts the offending in the past and demonstrates a readiness to move on. A large part of the theme of coping for her is about being focussed on the future and this emerges strongly throughout the interview. She also attributes their ability to cope to the contact they have visits, phone calls and letters. As the sentence has progressed the contact has become more fulfilling as they have been allowed more freedom. Her ability to cope has developed through the sentence and she feels that it became easier once he was given a sentence and they knew what to expect. There is sense that learning to cope has been a difficult</p>	<p>The key element of this theme is that contact is the factor that helps him to cope he draws support from this contact and provides it for his partner. He sees them as able to talk to each other to resolve problems and provides him with a feeling that they cope. He describes a tendency to focus on the future and to try to talk about positive things as cognitive strategies to help him cope. He expresses difficulty maintaining a sense of being in a relationship without physical contact and copes with this by telling himself that of course they are in a relationship, they are good together and they will be together. Positive outlook and regular contact are the key elements of his coping.</p>	<p>The methods of coping are similar for both partners but there is a sense that for her it is a very important theme as she has had difficulties coping without him to help her and has had to work hard to develop her skills in this area.</p>

	journey for her but that she is now more confident and motivated to continue to manage.		
<b>RESTRICTION-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• within the prison</li> <li>• because of the sentence</li> <li>• to privacy</li> </ul>	This theme only emerges in terms of the restriction placed on their privacy by the visits process. There is a sense that she just feels this as an inconvenience rather than with a sense of outrage. This theme does not emerge as important in the interview.	For this participant the restriction to privacy is the main part of this theme he does not discuss it often but he is emotional when discussing it. He understands the need for the rules but is angry that other prisoners flout the rules and stop people like him from enjoying physical contact during visits. There is a sense that he feels he should be rewarded for his good behaviour with less restriction and this doesn't happen.	This theme emerges through the same experience for both of them although for him it seems to be more of an emotional issue.
<b>INSECURITY-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal feelings of insecurity</li> <li>• Insecurity in the relationship</li> </ul>	This theme did not emerge within this interview.	This theme did not emerge in this interview.	
<b>SHARING-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past experiences</li> <li>• Similar past experiences</li> <li>• Goals</li> <li>• Humour</li> <li>• Taste/interests</li> <li>• Time together</li> <li>• Emotions</li> </ul>	For this participant sharing the emotions related to past experiences binds them together. Those experiences have been positive and negative and it is more the sense that they have come through these things together and felt the same about them. Shared humour and the ability to laugh together are an important element to this theme for her and sharing goals for the future keeps her connected to this. Having shared the experiences that they have seemed to keep her invested in this relationship.	This theme emerges as a combination of their shared emotional experiences related to loss, potential loss and then the positive experience of parenthood and the sharing of future goals. There is a sense that everything they have experienced binds them and provides good memories that help him to see the goals he discusses for the future feel achievable in relation to what he wants for their family life.	They both seem to feel invested in the relationship because of their past experiences. They have been through difficulties and come through them together and this is evident in both interviews. Their shared future goals are also strong and there is a sense that they want to share the future together as a family in their own home.
<b>SECURITY/STABILITY-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of the relationship</li> <li>• personal stability</li> </ul>	This theme is not expressed often in the interview although there is a sense that she is secure in the relationship	This theme did not emerge in this interview.	There is a sense that neither of them views this as important because they both experience security in their lives



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>feelings of safety</li></ul>			generally.
<b>GUILT/SHAME/RESPONSIBILITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Feeling guilty</li><li>Feeling ashamed</li><li>Feeling responsible</li></ul>	For this participant this theme refers to the guilt and responsibility expressed by her partner not in relation to her own emotions. She recounts what he says about feeling that he has let her down and their child and the rest of their families, but also she demonstrates an understanding of his emotional experience. There is a sense that she accepts his feelings and does not want to add to them. His expressed guilt and responsibility also add to her belief that he will not offend in the future.	He takes responsibility for what he has done and there is a sense that he feels guilt that he has put her through this but not necessarily guilt for his offending.	Although evident as an influence on this couple it is not a powerful theme within the relationship. There is a sense that this is because she has actively tried to understand his reasons and to try not to increase his sense of guilt.

Theme	C3F-Laura	C3M-Adam	C3
<b>CONNECTION-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>feeling happy</li> <li>communicating easily</li> <li>similarity of personality</li> <li>Closeness</li> <li>Strength</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant the connection was instant and from this it naturally developed through ease of communication. This communication makes her feel good and happy and is something she does not have with anyone else. The essence of this theme is closeness that is maintained through being together she suggests that if this closeness was not there she would not feel loved. The connection includes strength and she views this as something that keeps them working on problems together and sustains them through the bad times. There is a real sense of exclusivity of connection for this participant. She says she has never been loved before by anyone and her connection with her partner seems to be crucial to her.</p>	<p>For this participant he feels the connection with his partner as an unspoken feeling. He feels happy in her company and views their communication as easy between them. He describes faith in each other and a sense that they are so similar they even think alike. He seems to experience a comfort from the connection that he uses to help him deal with the separation.</p>	<p>They both share this theme although there are slight differences in the way they experience their connection. For the female participant it seems to be about communication and closeness while for the male partner it is indefinable and seems to comfort him. For both the connection seems to help them to maintain the sense of being in a relationship while going through the sentence.</p>
<b>KNOWING EACH OTHER-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>seen more of real self than other</li> <li>shared more</li> <li>knowing patterns of the other persons behaviour</li> <li>knowing needs</li> <li>knowing how they feel</li> <li>knowing what not to do</li> <li>the importance of time to know each other</li> <li>wanting/needing to know each other</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant this theme is not strongly expressed within the interview although there is a sense that she does know her partner well. They have shared more about themselves with each other than anyone else. The main element of this theme for her is that they know each other's feelings and she does not doubt this when they are together.</p>	<p>This theme emerges strongly within the interview for this participant. He seems to need to know his partner. There is evidence that the length of time they have known each other is important to him. They have shared more information with each other and for him this openness seems to mean they are strong and she knows the worst of him and is still there. He feels known by her and seems to experience this as protective in terms of his substance use.</p>	<p>The theme while stronger for the male participant is essentially the same in that they both express knowing more about each other because they have been open and shared more of their past experiences than they have with any other person.</p>
<b>COMMITMENT-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>felt without expression</li> <li>importance of formalising</li> </ul>	<p>She felt the commitment immediately and it was felt without expression. For this participant the formal commitment of</p>	<p>This participant seems to be committed to his partner but doesn't really express it. There is a sense that he does not want</p>	<p>Neither of them seems to need to express their commitment to each other in a formal way. There is some</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>early commitment</li> <li>event triggering commitment</li> <li>action to ensure future commitment</li> </ul>	<p>marriage is something she hopes for in the future but is not something necessary to her. There is sense that they are sure of each other they have been together a long time and have a family so discussing their commitment to each other is not really of concern to her.</p>	<p>to say the relationship will last in case he is tempting fate. At the beginning there is the feeling he was taking a risk moving in with her and when she was pregnant he talks about deciding he would try to stay with her as long as possible. This feels like the biggest commitment he was capable of making at the stage in his life. Despite this they have been together a long time and he now seems to be committed to her.</p>	<p>fear of expressing commitment on the part of the male participant. Nevertheless there is a sense that they are committed to each other.</p>
<p><b>FEELING VALUED/VALUING EACH OTHER-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Behaviours that demonstrate caring</li> <li>actions that are caring making an effort</li> <li>listening</li> <li>not feeling valued when offending</li> <li>words that are caring</li> <li>feeling cared for</li> <li>showing respect</li> <li>putting the other person's needs first</li> <li>concern for each other</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant the theme emerges as a contradictory one she feels valued by her partner when he is drug free but when he is using drugs she expresses the view that she is second best and this is hurtful to her. Her partner shows her he cares and she is able to tell herself it is not really about her but that he has a problem. Being able to rationalise his behaviour when he uses drugs seems to sustain her through the times when he uses drugs. Ultimately she feels that he has now chosen her and the children over drugs and that he recognises what she is going through and this makes her feel valued. Generally she believes that they show concern for each other and both try act in a caring way.</p>	<p>This theme is highly salient for this participant. His partner demonstrates many elements of caring for him and this helps him to feel valuable. There is a significant feeling that he needs to be cared for and her consistency in her words and actions makes him feel valued. It feels like this bolsters his self esteem and he enjoys it when other people see how much she cares for him. If she cares for him he must be worth caring for.</p>	<p>This theme is very important to both participants. They both need to feel valued and while she provides this for him consistently her experience of feeling valued is dependent on whether he is using drugs or not. Generally they value each other and both feel valued.</p>
<p><b>POSITIVE IDENTITY-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>of the other partner</li> <li>of themselves in the relationship</li> <li>of the relationship</li> <li>the relationship as</li> </ul>	<p>This participant has a very positive view of her partner as someone who is fun and happy. She sees their relationship as unique and special and takes pleasure in the fact that other people can see their love and affection they share. She views them as</p>	<p>This theme emerges throughout the interview. He views the relationship and unique and sees himself as a better person within the relationship. There is a sense that his feelings in the relationship of protection make him feel positive</p>	<p>This theme helps them both to gain self esteem from how good they are together. They express very positive views which feel very genuine for them both. There is a sense that neither of them have ever felt special</p>

unique/special	being able to achieve more things together than they can as individuals. This theme for her is based on how strong the relationship is. There is a sense that she gains self esteem from other people viewing her relationship as caring and affectionate.	about himself as a man and a parent. The fidelity in the relationship has helped him feel better about himself. Sharing their protective views about the children makes him feel like he believes a real parent should which seems to be good for him this links into his own past experience of not being protected as a child and makes him feel better than his own parents. His very positive view of his partner seems to give him confidence in the fact that she will be with him throughout the sentence.	but together they do.
<b>RE-ASSURANCE-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>emotional support</li> <li>behaviour changes</li> <li>regular contact</li> <li>detailed contact</li> </ul>	The key to this theme for this participant is about physical contact. She needs to see him to know he is ok. There is a sense that if she could not see him she would worry more about him than the situation warrants. She needs to know that he survives. She also needs to know he is connected to the children's lives and is not missing out as they grow. There is a sense that this contact keeps her going from day to day but she also knows that he needs to be reassured that they are waiting for him as well. It is providing re-assurance but it is also difficult to leave him.	Regular contact provides them both with re-assurance. Phone calls help them to deal with problems but the main theme is that they get peace of mind it doesn't matter that he doesn't have much to say it is just re-assuring to be connected to life outside the prison. He still feels part of the family. He seeks re-assurance through letters and phone calls and she provides this for him by always being available. She also tells him about everything which he feels re-assures him that she won't meet anyone else.	The both experience peace of mind from seeing each other physically. Reassurance for her is about knowing he is safe and for him it is about knowing she is still there for him.
<b>LOSS-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>how they adjust to the impact of the sentence</li> <li>adaptations of behaviour and communication to cope with loss</li> <li>how they experience a sense</li> </ul>	This theme is about missing her partner adjusting to being alone. It is evident throughout the interview she misses him being around, she misses the physical contact and having his support. There is a real sense of loss for her and this is likely to be because she has no support network she	This theme did not emerge within this interview.	Adjustment may be more important to the female partner because she is left alone to cope while he is more used to being in prison and grew up in institutional environments.



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>of loss</li> <li>adjusting to a lack of sexual contact</li> </ul>	<p>is alone with their two children. There is evidence of changes in the way they communicate in order for them to adjust to the sentence. Adjustment seems to be a difficult process for her.</p>		
<b>POWERLESS-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to influence offending behaviour</li> <li>to manage the other partners emotions</li> </ul>	<p>This theme did not emerge within this interview.</p>	<p>This theme is not prevalent in the interview and for this participant only refers to a sense of his being powerless to manage his substance use.</p>	
<b>EXPLANATIONS OF BEHAVIOUR-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Past</li> <li>Situational</li> <li>shared responsibility</li> <li>immaturity</li> <li>personality</li> <li>higher purpose</li> </ul>	<p>It is very important for this participant to view her partner as not responsible for his offending because of his drug use. She completely accepts that he has to offend in order to support his drug habit and because she will not allow him to use their money to buy drugs. On this occasion she accepts his explanation that he was spiked because she needs to believe that her efforts to help him stay drug free were working. The theme of providing explanations for his behaviour is helping her to cope with maintaining her belief that he loves her and that they have a better life ahead of them.</p>	<p>This theme refers to explanations for his substance use. This participant blames his past experiences for the start of his heroin use and then explains relapses through situational factors outside of his control. He then uses his substance use to explain all other negative behaviour. This seems to serve two functions for him; he can maintain his perception of himself as someone to be cared for and he can ensure his partner continues to feel compassion for him.</p>	<p>They both accept his substance use as the sole explanation for his behaviour. It is very important to her to believe that this time he was spiked so that she can maintain the belief that he has changed and views them as more important than drugs. He needs to continue to believe that he is not responsible so that he can feel comfortable with the support she provides him with. For them this theme is protective of their relationship.</p>
<b>PROTECTION-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>feeling rescued from difficult life</li> <li>protecting of emotions</li> <li>protecting from offending</li> <li>protecting from others</li> <li>feeling heroic</li> <li>feeling protective</li> </ul>	<p>There is balance for her in this theme she feels that her partner rescued her at the beginning of the relationship and there is a sense that she now needs to protect him. She protects him emotionally and there is a sense that she does not see him as a emotionally strong as she is. She fears for him in prison without her to support him. There is a sense that she feels protective of him in terms of his emotions and the</p>	<p>This participant has a specific view of himself as the protecting his partner from others. He needs to be seen as her protector and it makes him feel good about himself to be heroic. There is some balance to this theme in that he feels that they protect each other. For him being viewed as a hero by his partner seems very important.</p>	<p>They protect each other and this is positive for both of them. They have both had difficult pasts and feeling protected is something they can do for each other that improves the feeling of their relationship.</p>

	impact they have on his substance use. For her wanting to protect him from substance use is a constant theme.		
<b>RELATIONSHIP JOURNEY-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing over time</li> <li>• building in complexity</li> <li>• learning skills that maintain</li> </ul>	This theme did not emerge within this interview.	This theme did not emerge within this interview.	
<b>INFLUENCE-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• influencing each other</li> <li>• influence of other people</li> <li>• strategies for influencing</li> </ul>	For this participant influencing her partner almost feels as though it is her job she is involved in managing his contact with others and talking to him to influence his behaviour. She talks about reaching a limit and then using an ultimatum to influence his behaviour. However, her main strategy seems to be supporting him and showing him how good life is without substances. There is a real sense that she wants him to have a better life and she does things that feel harsh to her for his own good.	This is a strong theme for this participant. His partner influences him to manage his substance use in many ways. There is a sense that he is proud of her for the inventive strategies she uses to almost manage him. He also wants to repay her for the years she has supported him and appreciates the strength she had shown in giving him an ultimatum to change. This participant gives the impression that without his partner he would have many more difficulties in his life. This participant does not talk about influencing his partner but shows concern that other people should have an influence over her. This suggests that he sees her family as interference. In his relationship influence is a positive thing.	This theme emerges strongly for both participants. For the female partner it seems to be her job to manage his substance use taking up her time and energy and he views her attempts to do this as caring and supportive. They almost have roles which they need to maintain.
<b>INVOLVEMENT OF OTHERS-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• views on relationship</li> <li>• support they offer</li> <li>• conflicts/acceptance</li> </ul>	There is very little in relation to this theme. There is a real sense that she has no one following the conflict with her mother and their relationship is her only emotional support.	There is a sense of bitterness that they get no support from family but also a sense that they do not need other people as the only family contact creates conflict for them.	Both interviews highlight their isolation as a couple they have no one but each other.
<b>HOPE V FEAR-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hope for behaviour change/fear this won't</li> </ul>	This participant draws hope from her belief that her partner has changed and that this sentence is not his fault but an anomaly in	For this participant he wants to hope for the future but there is a real sense that he is fearful that events will occur that	They both have hope for the future but while his is tinged with fear she will not allow this into her thinking.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>happen</li> <li>hope for better life/fear this won't happen</li> <li>evidence for hope</li> <li>belief in change</li> </ul>	<p>what has been a sustained period of change. Her hope is based on her belief that he wants to be with his family. She wants a secure future and there is a sense that she does not want to introduce doubt into her mind so avoids any expression of fear that things won't change.</p>	<p>will interfere with his ability to change. He wants to believe they can have a future together and he fears that if they do not last he will be alone. There is a desperate quality to what he hopes for the future and a real sense that he has to make it work this time.</p>	<p>Her belief seems to help her cope while it may be pressure for him.</p>
<b>CONFLICT-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Avoidance</li> <li>Resolution</li> <li>Responsibility</li> </ul>	<p>This theme did not emerge within this interview.</p>	<p>This theme did not emerge within this interview.</p>	
<b>ISOLATION/LONELINESS-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>feeling isolated</li> <li>unable to talk to others</li> </ul>	<p>This theme did not emerge within this interview.</p>	<p>This theme did not emerge within this interview.</p>	<p>Although they have no one else neither seemed to believe they were isolated as they have each other</p>
<b>COPING-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>support for each other</li> <li>cognitive strategies</li> <li>visits/contact</li> <li>future focus</li> <li>reaching a limit</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant her partner seems to help her to feel strong enough to cope, he talks to her in a way that helps her re-evaluate problems. She also copes for the sake of her children using her commitment to keep them happy to reign in her emotions. She uses cognitive strategies to help her to manage how she is feeling, putting things in the past and moving on from them and comparing herself to others in her position. There is a sense that they both try to support each other and that contact helps them to do this.</p>	<p>This participant copes through the support of his partner; visits are important in allowing them to discuss issues and continue to work together on shared problems. His main personal strategy is putting a positive spin on the elements of the sentence that are generally viewed as restrictive.</p>	<p>Coping for both is about the support they draw from each other from visits and other contact.</p>
<b>RESTRICTION-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>within the prison</li> <li>because of the sentence</li> <li>to privacy</li> </ul>	<p>This participant is restricted by the sentence in that she cannot work in a way she is also serving a sentence. She recognises that privacy is restricted but this does not feel like a big issue within her interview.</p>	<p>His guilt comes from his recognition that he restricts her needs. There is a sense that she is unable to live the life she wants because of his drug use, he recognises that which makes him feel guilty.</p>	<p>They both understand the restrictions his sentence place upon her life.</p>

<b>INSECURITY-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>personal feelings of insecurity</li> <li>Insecurity in the relationship</li> </ul>	<p>This theme did not emerge within this interview.</p>	<p>For this participant insecurity is part of his experience of relationships. His past experiences made him wary of the relationship he did not think this relationship would last; he had not trusted other women and did not feel that she would want to stay with him when she got a flat in another area. He didn't really think she wanted to be with him giving her a different motive for her interest in him a sense that he did not feel enough for her. This insecurity stays with him and he worries that his partner copes so well that she doesn't need him.</p>	<p>Without expressing it the female partner is likely to be aware of his insecurity and manages this through her re-assurance of him.</p>
<b>SHARING-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Past experiences</li> <li>Similar past experiences</li> <li>Goals</li> <li>Humour</li> <li>Taste/interests</li> <li>Time together</li> <li>Emotions</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant the similarity of their difficult backgrounds is very salient when considering the things they share. She seems to feel more comfortable with him than anyone else because of this. They also have a history of spending time together enjoying simple family things that means a lot to her. She views their time together as fun and there is a sense that she does not have much fun in her life so this time is very special. Shared goals seem to be about security for her as there is a sense that there has not been much security in their past.</p>	<p>For this participant the experiences he has shared with his partner help to connect them. They have the same past experiences and he feels that this helps them to understand each other. There is a sense that this participant has missed out on many of the important experiences and therefore exaggerates the key experiences that he has been there for due to a sense that he should have been with her. Shared experiences for him bring them closer and lead them to share goals for the future. There is a sense that he relies upon their shared memories to re-assure him that they have a future.</p>	<p>Their similar past experiences and the time they have enjoyed together sustain them through the sentence so that they can look to the future.</p>
<b>SECURITY/STABILITY-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>of the relationship</li> <li>personal stability</li> <li>feelings of safety</li> </ul>	<p>There is a real sense that the relationship makes her feel safe and secure. This was immediate in the relationship and despite his substance use she expresses with</p>	<p>This theme did not emerge within this interview.</p>	



	conviction that he makes her feel safe and always has. This theme for her is about a feeling with no real need to explain it.		
<b>GUILT/SHAME/RESPONSIBILITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feeling guilty</li><li>• Feeling ashamed</li><li>• Feeling responsible</li></ul>	This theme did not emerge within this interview.	His guilt comes from his recognition that he restricts her needs. There is a sense that she is unable to live the life she wants because of his drug use, he recognises that which makes him feel guilty.	

Theme	C4F-Jenny	C4M-Karl	C4
<b>CONNECTION-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling happy</li> <li>• communicating easily</li> <li>• similarity of personality</li> <li>• Closeness</li> <li>• Strength</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant the theme of connection emerges in many ways throughout the interview. There is a sense that they were just immediately comfortable with each other attracted to each other and wanted to be together, they were both happy. The connection for her is intense in terms of emotional and physical connection. She believes they have a close bond this means that when he is not there she has a difficult time missing the physical and emotional connection. There is a sense that they have a connection that is maintained despite the lack of daily interaction and is more obvious to them when they are not together. The connection is surviving the sentence and for her it feels that they are becoming closer because of this. The physical connection is an important part of their relationship but it is not the only thing that connects them there is sense that their emotional connection is more important and that physical contact helps maintain that connection the fact that they can still be in a relationship without sex demonstrates for her the strength of the relationship.</p>	<p>This theme is very salient within this participant's interview. There is a sense that his feelings were strong from the beginning and the beginning of the relationship was effortless. There is a sense that they have so much in common they feel connected to each other on a number of different levels. They enjoyed spending time together, he felt that he wanted to be with her rather than anyone else the relationship seemed to be getting better and better the connection was growing stronger. He feels that they are absolutely alike and this is important for him within the relationship makes him feel good about them. He is excited to see her she makes him happy and they are able to maintain their physical and emotional connection through the visits. Their connection feels like it extends to the whole of their family unit they share an identity as a family that provides a greater sense of connection. He misses the physical connection that they draw their sense of closeness from not necessarily the sex and this is difficult to adjust to. The physical contact on the relationship course allows them to maintain their connection and their closeness. He feels that they both feel the connection. The relationship is growing stronger and this is very comforting to him.</p>	<p>They both allude to all of the elements of connection embodied in this theme. The connection is strong on a physical and emotional level and they both experience it as a key part of their relationship. There is no sense that their connection has weakened through the sentence and they both gain strength from it.</p>
<b>KNOWING EACH OTHER-</b>	For this participant understanding each	This theme for him is about knowing how	This theme for them is essentially

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• seen more of real self than other</li> <li>• shared more</li> <li>• knowing patterns of the other persons behaviour</li> <li>• knowing needs</li> <li>• knowing how they feel</li> <li>• knowing what not to do</li> <li>• the importance of time to know each other</li> <li>• wanting/needing to know each other</li> </ul>	<p>other's feelings provides evidence for knowing each other. There is sense that she wants to know about his past to know him better, she is compassionate about his past and about his difficulties managing his own emotions and understand how this affects his behaviour. This allows her to understand the issues that cause him difficulty in prison and know what he needs from her. She knows him emotionally but also feels that he knows her. This theme for her is essentially about the importance of knowing her partner emotionally and having the feeling that he knows her to.</p>	<p>they feel. He does not express this often but there is sense that he feels that she knows how to manage his emotions and he knows how she will feel about things that happen.</p>	<p>about the importance of knowing each other emotionally which helps them to know how to behave with each other.</p>
<p><b>COMMITMENT-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• felt without expression</li> <li>• importance of formalising</li> <li>• early commitment</li> <li>• event triggering commitment</li> <li>• action to ensure future commitment</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant there is a sense that they felt committed to each other from the very beginning. Almost as if it was inevitable that they would be together and that they were both confident about this. They made an early formal commitment following pregnancy. This formal commitment seems to have been very important to her in that she is proud of his making a commitment to her in front of others.</p>	<p>For this participant the formal commitment is important. He believes that they are both re-assured about their feelings for each other and about their future by the things that they say and the sense that they share a commitment to each other, for him the need to make a formal commitment seems to reinforce his feelings about the relationship which retains the identity of the relationship as important.</p>	<p>This couple are sure of their commitment to each other and both gain faith in the future of the relationship from the formal commitment they have made.</p>
<p><b>FEELING VALUED/VALUING EACH OTHER-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviours that demonstrate caring</li> <li>• actions that are caring making an effort</li> <li>• listening</li> <li>• not feeling valued when offending</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant feeling valued is highly salient within the relationship. She recounts many ways in which her partner demonstrates that he cares for her through words and actions. She values his opinion of her and values what he does for her. She also shows concern for him and tries to ensure that he feels valued. There is a strong sense that she values being</p>	<p>For this participant feeling valued and valuing his partner is a very important emerging theme. He took pride in his proposal doing this properly and surprising her the event was important to both of them and demonstrated their love to everyone, he wanted to make her feel special and valued by him. They both demonstrate the value they place in the</p>	<p>This couple value each other and demonstrate this through their action and their words. This seems to be equal in that they both work hard to show the other how important they are.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• words that are caring</li> <li>• feeling cared for</li> <li>• showing respect</li> <li>• putting the other person's needs first</li> <li>• concern for each other</li> </ul>	<p>respected and listened to in the relationship and that they provide each other with consistent evidence for this.</p>	<p>relationship by communicating how they feel about each other and by writing to each other. He worries about his partner but they tell each other how they feel and this seems to help him feel valued in the relationship.</p>	
<p><b>POSITIVE IDENTITY-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• of the other partner</li> <li>• of themselves in the relationship</li> <li>• of the relationship</li> <li>• the relationship as unique/special</li> </ul>	<p>The relationship has a very positive identity for her and she feels that other people recognise how special it is and how much value she adds to his life. The relationship helps her to feel good about herself and his pride in her adds to this. She feels that they are different to other couples in a positive way and that they achieve things together the relationship is special because they are coping when others do not. These factors seem to help her to keep going.</p>	<p>This participant has an extremely positive view of his partner worries about her and feels concern that she has to cope alone but sees her as strong and an amazing person for coping like she does. The relationship is special and unique he compares how they behave on the relationship course to other couples and sees them as special because of their physical connection. The relationship is getting better despite the sentence they are special because they are surviving this together. For this participant this theme is a source of pride and it is evident throughout the interview.</p>	<p>This couple believe in the unique qualities of their relationship. For them the relationship has a very positive identity and they both have more positive views of themselves because of the relationship and each other.</p>
<p><b>RE-ASSURANCE-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional support</li> <li>• behaviour changes</li> <li>• regular contact</li> <li>• detailed contact</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant reassurance is a continual theme throughout the interview. She tells him how much she cares to re-assure him but she also proves this through the effort she makes to be with him and the letters that she writes. This contact is important as a form of re-assurance in itself that they are ok. She changes her behaviour to make sure he feels secure understanding his need for that not blaming him for thinking in this way and not viewing it as a slight on her that he would feel like this. Regular and detailed</p>	<p>This theme is major to this participant he needs her reassurance he knows he shouldn't and feels embarrassed by this but doesn't seem able to help himself, the sense that it is a constant personal battle for him and she tries to help him manage this through constant communication. Their contact does help him they tell each other how they feel about each other and write positive letters to each other this helps them both to feel valued within the relationship the reassurance is very important especially for him because he</p>	<p>This is key to the maintenance of their relationship and they both recognise this. They work hard to re-assure each other and to recognise what the other needs re-assurance about. They do not question this need or view it as a weakness they just accept it as a consequence of the prison experience.</p>



	contact helps them to feel reassured about their love for each other and that they are both coping and safe.	suffers with feelings of insecurity brought on by the prison environment.	
<b>LOSS-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how they adjust to the impact of the sentence</li> <li>• adaptations of behaviour and communication to cope with loss</li> <li>• how they experience a sense of loss</li> <li>• adjusting to a lack of sexual contact</li> </ul>	Adjustment is a major theme within this participant's interview. This is the first time she has coped without her partner and there are many areas of adjustment for her. She has had to adjust to the sentence having to cope without him on a practical level, adjusting to the loss and the realisation of how much he supported her and to the loss of their physical relationship acknowledging that realisation. Changes have naturally occurred in their communication to ensure that she can adjust. She has also changed her behaviour considerably to help him to manage his insecurity. The theme also includes re- evaluation the realisation that they were creating problems in their relationship and not focusing on what was important the sentence has given them the chance to recognise the problems and re-evaluate the behaviour to develop plans to change and value their relationship with their children more.	This theme encompasses adjustment to the sentence and missing the physical connection of their sexual relationship and re-evaluation of the relationship. He has considered the way in which they focused on things that did not enhance their relationship or their family life and he has decided to make changes. He is sure of his re-evaluation and commitment to change and hopes she feels the same way as this will help them to focus. He has realised the importance of family life having missed out on it. There is a sense that spending time apart has made him aware of what he has.	This couple have experienced adjustment in all elements of this theme. They have both experienced coming to terms with the loss and with not having sexual contact. They have made changes in their behaviour and communication to maintain a sense of being together. The main element for both of them is the re-evaluation of their relationship and the recognition that some things need to change to work out in the long term.
<b>POWERLESS-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to influence offending behaviour</li> <li>• to manage the other partners emotions</li> </ul>	This theme did not emerge in this interview.	This theme did not emerge in this interview.	
<b>EXPLANATIONS OF BEHAVIOUR-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past</li> <li>• Situational</li> </ul>	This participant needs to explain her partners offending behaviour in terms of him demonstrating family loyalty and	This participant offers some explanations for his offending but there is a sense that he takes responsibility and feels guilty for	Although they both give the same explanations of his behaviour; he does not seem to feel so strongly about it

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shared responsibility</li> <li>• immaturity</li> <li>• personality</li> <li>• higher purpose</li> </ul>	<p>protection. She views these qualities as positive the loyalty and the heightened emotional response. There is a sense that he can't really help it he is like that but he is not a real criminal. There is a sense that she feels that she cannot criticise him that she shares the responsibility to some degree, she feels that it is not who he is and because he did the right thing in court by pleading guilty other people will see him in a bad light because he did not get to explain his offence in court she is sad about this and feels defensive on his behalf. Explaining her partner's behaviour in this way helps her to maintain a very positive view of him and belief that he will not re-offend.</p>	<p>his behaviour and does not really have conviction in his own explanations.</p>	<p>as she does. She is convinced that his offending is an act of loyalty and this helps her to deal with the sentence.</p>
<p><b>PROTECTION-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling rescued from difficult life</li> <li>• protecting of emotions</li> <li>• protecting from offending</li> <li>• protecting from others</li> <li>• feeling heroic</li> <li>• feeling protective</li> </ul>	<p>This theme did not emerge in this interview.</p>	<p>This theme did not emerge in this interview.</p>	
<p><b>RELATIONSHIP JOURNEY-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• developing over time</li> <li>• building in complexity</li> <li>• learning skills that maintain</li> </ul>	<p>There is limited evidence for this theme this participant refers to learning about their parenting and accepting that they need to change this in order to manage conflict within the family in the future a sense that this felt like genuine and useful learning to both of them and that they will try to action this together.</p>	<p>This theme did not emerge in this interview.</p>	
<p><b>INFLUENCE-</b></p>	<p>This theme is not important to this</p>	<p>This participant does not explore his</p>	<p>He is influenced by the fact she is</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>influencing each other</li> <li>influence of other people</li> <li>strategies for influencing</li> </ul>	<p>participant as she believes her partner will never offend again she accepts that risky situations may arise but feels able to influence him if he needs her to.</p>	<p>influence over his partner there is a sense that she doesn't need to actively encourage change it is enough that he would feel her disappointment. He believes that if he was not with her he wouldn't make any changes the fact that they are together is a major influence on his changing his life to prevent offending in the future for her and their family. She has tried to influence him by saying that she will not wait for him if he goes to prison again he sees her message as simple and clear and there is a sense that he believes this.</p>	<p>there for him she does not actively need to do anything.</p>
<p><b>INVOLVEMENT OF OTHERS-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>views on relationship</li> <li>support they offer</li> <li>conflicts/acceptance</li> </ul>	<p>There is a sense that the involvement of other people is important for this participant. She needs the family support to help her with practical things and to cope with the separation from him and she appreciates this. She is also re-assured by his families acceptance of her and positive view of the relationship and her effect on him. His ex-partner tried to make things difficult for them but she couldn't and there is a sense of pride in this.</p>	<p>This theme did not emerge in this interview.</p>	
<p><b>HOPE V FEAR-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>hope for behaviour change/fear this won't happen</li> <li>hope for better life/fear this won't happen</li> <li>evidence for hope</li> <li>belief in change</li> </ul>	<p>This theme is very important to this participant there is a sense of excitement about their future together a sense that the plans are evidence for their hope for the future as they talk about them regularly and believe in the their ability to action them. She hopes that he has learned from the experience and the belief that he is missing them is enough. She believes what</p>	<p>This theme emerges as a sense of hope for a better life in the future there is some fear circumstances might create obstacles for change but his belief in change is strong. The goals he expresses for the future give a focus but also something for them to talk about that keeps them moving forward together it seems important to him to be confident</p>	<p>They share hope and a belief in the future. Their goals are detailed and keep them focused together on a better life.</p>

	<p>he says and his writing to the children is seen as proof he will change. Her recognition of his experience and the difficult time he has been through has given her faith in the belief that he would not put any of them through this experience again. Hope for the future is very strong for her and helps keep her focused.</p>	<p>about what they are going to do while recognising that some things such as getting work are not sure. Generally for this participant he sees change and a better life for them.</p>	
<p><b>CONFLICT-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidance</li> <li>• Resolution</li> <li>• Responsibility</li> </ul>	<p>This theme is not significant within this interview but where it emerges it is related to accepting that they have issues in the relationship and that they argue which does feel like they should be dealing with things better. There is a pattern to their conflict but she is able to see good points to how they resolve these arguments and there is a feeling that they do resolve things.</p>	<p>For this participant the theme is not significant within the interview their arguments have a pattern, he tends to feel responsible for them because he can be stroppy, but he is confident that they can resolve the situation. Their arguments are resolved more quickly than in his past relationships and this feels positive to him.</p>	<p>They identify the same issues in relation to conflict, there is the sense that they can positively resolve their issues together.</p>
<p><b>ISOLATION/LONELINESS-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling isolated</li> <li>• unable to talk to others</li> </ul>	<p>This theme did not emerge in this interview.</p>	<p>This theme did not emerge in this interview.</p>	
<p><b>COPING-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• support for each other</li> <li>• cognitive strategies</li> <li>• visits/contact</li> <li>• future focus</li> <li>• reaching a limit</li> </ul>	<p>This theme emerges as the level of support this couple provide for each other. Contact is key to their coping, visits allow her to provide the emotional support he needs and his letters and phone calls keep her emotionally stable. He is able to support her through phone calls even though he cannot physically be there his faith in her is enough to help her to carry on when she feels that she is struggling. She helps him by putting his needs first and thinking about how she can make him feel better. Letters are a very important source of</p>	<p>This theme emerges for this participant around support for each other. She is there for him and that in itself is a source of support. He uses thoughts about leaving prison to have her waiting for him to help him to focus so that he can continue to cope with the sentence. He believes that knowing she is there is the only thing keeping him emotionally stable. She keeps him focused on the future and all the good things they will share and this helps him to cope with the sentence and his negative emotions. He</p>	<p>There is a real sense that they draw support from each other through there contact. He copes because he knows she is waiting and she copes because of the letters and phone calls of encouragement that he provides. This is very important to both of them and evident through the interviews.</p>

	<p>coping being able to be open about their feelings towards each other helps them both to cope and to continue to feel connected. They are both available to draw support from each other. The day long visits are really important in helping them both to cope and to provide each other with support. There is a sense that a lot of their emotional energy is expended on coping from day to day and helping each other to do this.</p>	<p>has to do the same thing for her when she is feeling down. Phone contact allows them to do this when it is needed and that aids coping. Their shared future focus also helps him maintain his positive emotional coping.</p>	
<b>RESTRICTION-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• within the prison</li> <li>• because of the sentence</li> <li>• to privacy</li> </ul>	<p>This theme did not emerge in this interview.</p>	<p>This theme did not emerge in this interview.</p>	
<b>INSECURITY-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• personal feelings of insecurity</li> <li>• Insecurity in the relationship</li> </ul>	<p>For this participant insecurity as a theme is developing as a result of the sentence and realising how important he is to her has induced the fear of losing him. She understands that for him the prison sentence makes him worry about her not staying with him this feels like a natural thing that happens because of prison she does not view this as a lack of faith in her. This participant accepts the insecurity that the sentence creates within the relationship.</p>	<p>For this participant the theme of insecurity develops from being in prison. Prison makes him feel insecure in the relationship and he needs her to help him manage that contact through phone calls and letters helps him to be reassured that she cares for him and will stick with him even though he feels insecure because of the prison experience he recognise that the insecurity comes from him and tries to manage this.</p>	<p>Insecurity for this couple seems directly related to the prison sentence. They both accept this and she alters her behaviour to help him to cope.</p>
<b>SHARING-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Past experiences</li> <li>• Similar past experiences</li> <li>• Goals</li> <li>• Humour</li> <li>• Taste/interests</li> <li>• Time together</li> </ul>	<p>This theme is very important for this participant the sense that they share humour, goals, emotions and experiences. Sharing these things helps them maintain their connection and believe in the future of their relationship. There is the sense that they are open and try to tell each</p>	<p>For this participant sharing time together is very important. The time he spends with her helps him to cope with the sentence. They talk about their future goals and this helps him to focus. Remembering the time he has spent with her and with the children provides</p>	<p>The sense that they share, goals, emotions and experiences helps them maintain their connection and believe in the future of their relationship. There is the sense that they are open and try to tell each other things to ensure that they continue to share</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Emotions</li></ul>	other things to ensure that they continue to share experiences and keep themselves connected. Shared time together is also key to the maintenance of the relationship.	positive memories that lift his mood. There is also a sense that the experiences they have had are enhanced by their shared humour.	experiences and remembering positive memories would keep themselves connected.
<b>SECURITY/STABILITY-</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>of the relationship</li><li>personal stability</li><li>feelings of safety</li></ul>	This theme emerges in that the participant feels secure in the relationship confident that they will be together in the future the relationship feels stable, she has faith in it.	This theme did not emerge in this interview.	
<b>GUILT/SHAME/RESPONSIBILITY</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Feeling guilty</li><li>Feeling ashamed</li><li>Feeling responsible</li></ul>	For this participant there is some guilt in the beginning of the relationship she felt responsible for her partner being unable to see his child while knowing it is not her fault, she felt guilty but also valued as the one he had chosen. Other than this there is little evidence of a feeling of guilt.	This participant seems to experience guilt and shame and to feel responsibility for their experience. He feels responsible for cheering her up as it is his fault they are in this situation it makes him feel better that he can do something for her. He would hate himself if he offended again he understands the impact this would have on her and he feels that he would find this difficult to manage.	For them both any guilt they feel is associated with how they might hurt the other person. This theme is not very important within the relationship other than a motivator for the future.