Prisoners' family relationships and resilient adaptation in pathways to reoffending

Lucy Markson, Friedrich Lösel, Karen A Souza & Caroline Lanskey

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Presentation outline

1. Background theory and literature

1.1. Increasing rate of imprisonment
1.2. Resilience and desistance
1.3. Prisoners' families – general strain theory
                                            – social bonding theory
1.4. Pathways to reoffending

2. Empirical study
3. Interpretation and conclusions

1.1 Imprisonment

- Over half of male prisoners in England and Wales have children under the age of 18; a quarter live with a partner before prison (Ministry of Justice, 2012).

- Fragile relationships, struggle to maintain parenting roles and identity during an imprisonment and re-establish bonds after prison.

- Resettlement after release from prison therefore presents many challenges.

- However, most research focused on risks, deficits and negative outcomes. Much less is known about the other side of the coin: resilient adaptation in response to the challenges of imprisonment and release.

1.2 Resilience and desistance

- Resilience, e.g. "…a reduced vulnerability to environmental risk experiences, the overcoming of a stress or adversity or a relatively good outcome despite risk experiences" (Rutter, 2012: 336).

- Outcomes defined by specific competences, absence of mental health problems or social difficulties. But is a dynamic process.

- Resilience and desistance from crime can be compared. Both focus on positive processes and identifying strengths rather than risks or deficits.

- Both from the perspective of desistance and resilience research, the family is a key domain of protective processes. E.g. marital breakdown and offending, family contact and reduced reoffending.

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1.4 Prisoners' families

Social bonding theory:
- Offending results from broken or weakened societal bonds.
- Bonds through attachment to individuals, goals, activities, and common values.
- Protective influence, esp. against offending and drug use

General strain theory:
- Interpersonal problems create 'strain' and negative emotions.
- Low social support increases the likelihood for criminal rather than non-criminal coping.
- Offending and drug use may occur in response to feelings of anger and depression.

1.3 Pathways to reoffending

- The National Offender Management Service (NOMS) developed a reducing reoffending model.

- Coined as the seven *pathways to reoffending*

- Based on research on the correlates of reoffending and the role of personal and social factors in supporting desistance
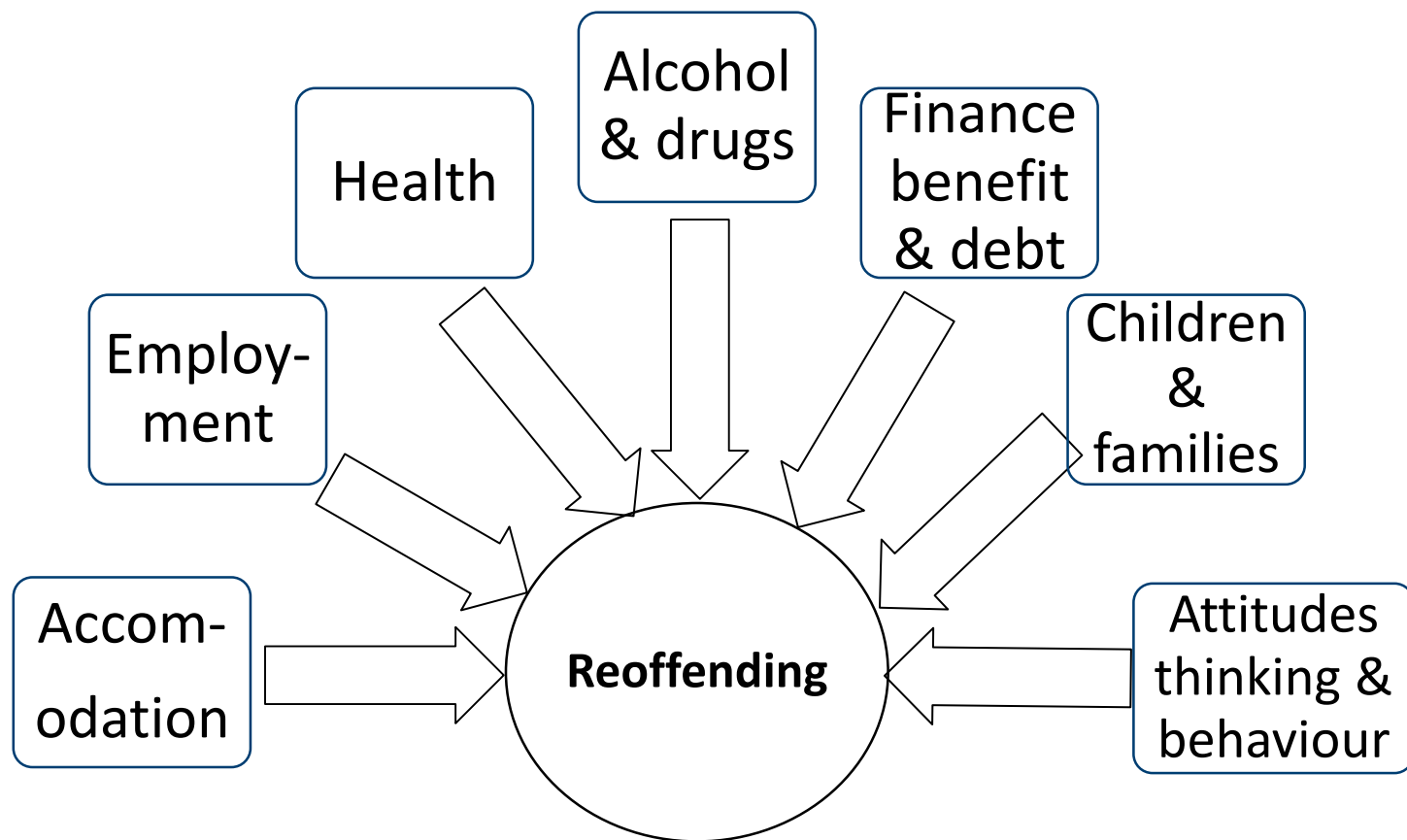
1.3 Pathways to reoffending

Figure 1. National Offender Management Service pathways to reoffending

1.3 Pathways to reoffending

- The NOMS pathways model can be used to study resilience in resettlement

- Difficulty with a pathway represents an increased likelihood of reoffending

- Positive experiences should be associated with a reduced likelihood of reoffending

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2. Empirical study

Do pre prison and pre release family relationships play a role for a resilient adaptation across the seven pathways during resettlement?
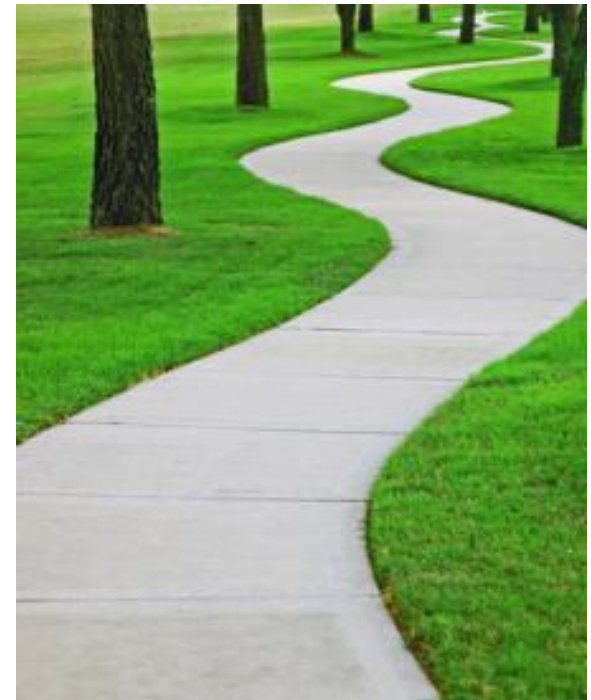
2.1 Design

- Interviews with prisoners, their (ex-)partners (the children's mother) and children

- Longitudinal design

- Time 1 within four months before release

- Time 2 interviews were conducted within approximately six months after release

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2.2 Sample

- Eight prisons in London and Eastern England
- Eligibility criteria

- Time 1: 54 families, Time 2: 40 families
- ✧ 74% retention

- Men:
  -M=32.10 years (*SD* = 10.47)
  - mostly violence (33%)
  -80% white British

- Women:
  -M=29.36 (*SD* = 8.26)
  -82% white British

[1]One prisoner reoffended in prison and was not released at T2, therefore analysis based on N=39 families

2.3 Procedure

- Interviews with men, women and children (aged 4+)

- Adult interviews approx 1 hour 20 minutes

- Man T1 on prison wings or legal visits

- Woman interviews mostly in homes

- Confidentiality and anonymity of reported data

- Independent from the Prison Service

2.4 Instruments

Semi structured interviews measured:

e.g. criminal history, childhood and family history (fathers only), education and employment, accommodation, family and relationships, child care and parenting, contact during imprisonment, coping, family adjustment, substance use, physical and mental health, prison programmes, education and training, formal and informal support, and post release adjustment.

2.5 Family relationships predictor

- **Pre prison relationships**

  Measured using two items from Time 1 (man and woman).

1) 'How good do you think your relationship was before prison?'
   (1=Not at all good, 5= extremely good)

2) 'How much were you/was the man involved with the children in a) helping with school work, b) discipline, c) daily care, d) play/leisure and e) discussion and decision making before prison?' (1= Not at all involved, 5= extremely involved)

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2.6 Family relationships predictor

- **Contact during the imprisonment**

  Measured using two items from Time 1 (man and woman).

1) 'How often do you have contact through a) visits, b) phone calls, and c) total written contact (letters and emails)?' (0=never, 6=more than once a week)

2) 'How much have you talked about the resettlement issues of a) accommodation, b) employment, c) finances, d) alcohol and e) drug use, f) maintaining family relationships and g) leading a non criminal lifestyle?' (1=not at all, 5= a lot)

2.7 Control variables (T1)

1. Age

2. Income

3. Employment

4. Number of alcohol units consumed

5. Illegal drug use before prison

6. Involvement with CJS (sentence length, total prison time, number of prison sentences, number of previous convictions)

2.8 Reoffending pathways (outcomes)

1. Accommodation difficulty   (M=1.92, SD= 1.53)

2. Employment difficulty   (M=3.10, SD=1.14)

3. Alcohol and drugs   (M=1.87, SD=1.38)

4. Financial difficulty   (M=2.97, SD=1.11)

Scale 1=*not at all*, 5=*extremely*

5. Family relationship   (M=3.68, SD=1.09) → (1= *not at all good*, 5=*extremely good*)

6. Health problems   (M=11.82, SD=8.31) → Scale range 0-36

7. Attitudes, thinking & behaviour   (M=41.82, SD=4.71) → Scale range 13-52

(coping competence)

2.9 Pathways factor analysis

- Two components
- Explained 43.16% and 18.40% of variance

Social-emotional and interpersonal?

	Factor 1	Factor 2
Accommodation	0.79	
Employment		0.82
Health	0.69	
Alcohol and drugs	0.70	
Finance		0.82
Family relationships	-0.80	
Coping competence	-0.71	

2.10 Results (family relationships predicting the pathways)

Man's Time 2 reoffending pathways	Family relationships	
	Bivariate correlation	Adjusted correlation
Accommodation	**-0.77****	**-0.68****
Employment	0.05	0.00
Health	-0.29	-0.23
Alcohol & drugs	**-0.62****	**-0.50****
Finances	-0.19	-0.07
Family relationships	**0.70****	**0.75****
Coping competence	**0.47****	**0.30***
Factor 1	**-0.78****	**-0.67****
Factor 2	-0.11	-0.10

*p=0.05, **p=0.01

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3. Interpretation

- Family relationships supported resilient outcomes in the accommodation, alcohol and drugs, family relationships and coping competence pathways

- Social bonding theory and general strain theory

- Two dimensions of resettlement experiences – social-emotional and interpersonal, work and finance

3.1 Study strengths and limitations

- Holistic picture of resettlement experiences
- Multi informant data

- Small sample
- Under representation of BAME
- Self report
- Single item measurement

3.2 Conclusions

- Supporting family relationships and facilitating maintenance during imprisonment could encourage positive resettlement experiences
- Resettlement experiences are multi-dimensional and interconnected- integrated approach to tackling resettlement problems
- Future research needed with larger, representative samples
- How to transfer correlational findings into policy and practice?

Thank you

lm473@cam.ac.uk

Markson, L., Lösel, F., Souza, K. A., & Lanskey, C. (2013). Prisoners' family relationships and resilient adaptation in pathways to reoffending. (submitted)

Read the full project report at:
http://www.crim.cam.ac.uk/research/fathers_in_prison/final_report.pdf